



## 4 Ways We Can Resolve to Be More Hospitable in 2019

By April Baskin

Now that 2019 is here, I see lots of posts on social media about improving our health and fitness in the New Year. They remind me that we, the Jewish community, also need to make our communities healthier when it comes to audacious hospitality.

Some of our best-intentioned communities still suffer from spiritual lethargy around diversity, inclusion, and equity. While many communities have a desire to improve in these areas, they may need help staying focused and consistent.

Here are four ways to start 2019 on the right track and maintain momentum throughout the year and beyond.

### 1. Set clear goals.

Setting clear goals is the cornerstone of any effective fitness routine. Successful people set clear goals and regimens, often by keeping a daily calendar and journal. Becoming hospitably fit requires similar tactics. What goals does your community have around audacious hospitality?

Perhaps your goal is to create a more gender-inclusive synagogue. If so, great! Map out the action steps you'll need to accomplish that goal. Will you need to remove outdated language in your foundational statements? Do you want to create gender-inclusive bathrooms? How will you make all congregants feel safe and welcome?

To reach your goal, assemble an audacious hospitality committee. This work is continuous, so it's important to have a group of people – even just a small one – to collaborate, ideate, support each other, and maintain accountability throughout the process. Schedule meetings to address existing issues. Be attentive to your congregants and follow up after receiving feedback about their experiences. Check-in monthly or quarterly to celebrate progress and set new goals as needed.

### 2. Remember that change takes time.

When people are a few days into their fitness routines and see no immediate results, or if they try to do too much too quickly and burn out, they often self-deprecate and give up. But sometimes change happens slowly (except when it happens more quickly than we are ready for!). The same is true when working to improve our Jewish institutions.

There are six pillars (or broad steps) of audacious hospitality: welcome, observe, learn, honor, do, and lead.

Many communities focus only on the “welcome” pillar, which is a great first step, but doesn’t consider that there are five pillars that follow. Many groups expect a “quick fix” after improving their welcoming skills – but in reality, there is no “quick fix” to becoming more audaciously hospitable. It requires time and effort. But if we keep our goals in mind, stay focused, and follow through, even when we don’t see immediate change, we can create the environments we wish to have in our communities.

It’s equally important to remember that mistakes will happen, and much like a slip-up on a dietary plan, it’s important not to have an “all or nothing” mentality – but rather to acknowledge the mistake, determine why it occurred, and aim to do better going forward.

### 3. Push through your plateaus.

Everyone who follows a fitness routine eventually reaches a plateau, a decrease in results after consistent progress. To push through plateaus, our bodies require “muscle confusion,” a term coined by fitness expert and personal trainer Tony Horton that means varying and intensifying workouts to see continued transformation.

Although frustrating, plateaus are also blessings in disguise, especially when it comes to audacious hospitality. Plateaus remind us how far we’ve come. Maybe you’ve had great success pursuing audacious hospitality: You’ve supercharged your welcoming practices and eliminated problematic language – all of which deserve acknowledgment! But as mentioned above, audacious hospitality has many pillars, and it’s inevitable that at some point, you will reach a stand still.

Maybe you’ve identified institutional areas that need more improvement than originally expected. As when you first started to exercise, you may feel discomfort and unfamiliarity. This is normal and good, so embrace this discomfort and keep pushing forward and challenging your community to continue to evolve! These changes may feel daunting, but if you stay consistent, you will look back a year from now and be happy you started this work.

#### 4. Remember your “why.”

Above all, remember why you started to make changes in the first place. When asked why they started working out and eating better, many people cite their desire to be healthier for themselves and for loved ones, while some seek superficial approval of others. Typically, individuals in the former group see better and longer-term results than those in the latter group because their “why” is more authentic.

Jewish leaders: What is your “why?” Is it to boost membership and celebrate how diverse you are? Or is it to create a legacy of audacious hospitality that lasts for generations? Your “why” should compel you to accept, include, and listen to Jews of every background within your community.

Your “why” should be grounded in the philosophy that your congregants are b'tzelem Elohim (created in God's image) and that your institution is mandated to act justly and righteously in all areas of operation.

Your “why” will push you forward, even when you reach an inevitable plateau.

If your “why” contains these values, and you work hard to reach your goals, your community will achieve a new level of hospitable fitness and more.

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