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The **CARES** Framework

From First Connection to Lasting Growth

The CARES Framework is a Torah-rooted model
that helps schools build an intentional culture
of responsibility, dignity, and growth.

Through the five stages: **Connect, Affirm, Responsibility, Empower, and Sustain,**
CARES gives educators a shared language and practical tools
to guide growth with dignity and consistency.

Why CARES

Schools shape far more than academic outcomes. They shape how young people understand:

- Responsibility
- Dignity
- Belonging and community

When a school's culture is intentional, everyday interactions, including moments of challenge, become opportunities to:

- Strengthen connection and trust
- Develop confidence and ownership
- Reinforce the values the school stands for

Jewish tradition offers a powerful perspective on how such cultures are built.

The Torah is not only a record of the past. The Torah is hora'ah: guidance for life.

זָכֹר יְמוֹת עוֹלָם, בִּינוּ שְׁנוֹת דוֹר-וָדוֹר, "*Remember the days of old; understand the years of generation after generation.*" (Devarim 32:7)

We study the narratives and experiences of previous generations not simply to understand history, but to learn how to build the future.

Within the Torah's teachings are profound insights into human nature, relationships, responsibility, and growth; principles that have guided Jewish communities and educators for generations.

In modern times, many educational systems have turned to psychology to better understand human behavior. These insights have provided educators with valuable tools.

Torah, however, begins from an even deeper premise.

Chassidus teaches that a person's essence is not instinct alone, but a divine soul.

As the Alter Rebbe writes: **וְנֶפֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִית בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, הִיא חֵלֶק אֱלוֹ-הַּ מִמַּעַל מַמָּשׁ**, *"The second soul in a Jew is truly a part of G-d above."* (Tanya, Chapter 2)

If a person's core contains inherent dignity and potential, then education is not merely about managing behavior, but revealing the responsibility, confidence, and leadership that already exist within each individual.

When education is grounded in this understanding, psychological insights become tools for developing what the Torah already teaches about the human being.

This perspective transforms how we approach classrooms, leadership, and community culture.

The **CARES Framework** was developed to translate these timeless Torah principles into a practical model for schools and communities. Drawing on both Torah wisdom and practical insights about human development, CARES provides educators with a clear pathway for guiding growth. From the first moment of connection to a culture that fosters responsibility, CARES builds confidence and a sense of belonging over time.

In a community guided by CARES, discipline does not interrupt the school's culture. **It reinforces it.**

— Rabbi Avremi Popack

The CARES Model at a Glance



The CARES framework provides a shared language that allows teachers, students, and leadership to approach challenges with clarity, dignity, and consistency.

The CARES Framework in Practice

Each step reflects an essential stage in building both individual responsibility and a culture of belonging.

C — Connect: Relationship First

Foundation: People can build together only when they understand one another

> In the story of the Tower of Bavel, the Torah describes a society that was able to build together because its people shared a common understanding: **וַיְהִי כָל הָאָרֶץ שָׂפָה אֶחָת וּדְבָרִים אֲחָדִים, *"The entire earth was one language and shared understanding."*** (Bereishit 11:1) This verse is not merely describing language. It reveals a foundational principle of human life: people can build together only when they understand one another.

In a CARES culture, connection means:

- People feel known and recognized; names, presence, and relationships matter.
- Trust and connection are built across students, educators, and families.
- When challenges arise, conversations begin from the message: *we are here for you, not against you.*

Connection creates trust—the starting point for all growth.

A — Affirm: Honor Reality

Foundation: The Torah instructs educators: **חֲנֹךְ לַנַּעַר עַל־פִּי דַרְכּוֹ,** "*Educate the child according to his way.*" (Mishlei 22:6)

In a CARES culture, affirmation means:

- Expectations and goals are clear, fair, and meaningful.
- Strengths and potential are recognized and communicated.
- Conversations focus on understanding reality and identifying the path toward success.

Affirmation provides clarity, fairness, and a clear path toward success.

R — Responsibility: Ownership Builds Dignity

Foundation: The role of education is not only to transmit knowledge but also to raise individuals who can stand on their own and take ownership of their community.

> As the Mishnah teaches: **וְהַעֲמֵידוּ תַלְמִידִים הַרְבֵּה,** "*Raise many students.*" (Pirkei Avot 1:1)
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> The language of the Mishnah is striking. It does not simply say to teach students, but stand them up — to develop individuals who can take responsibility and contribute as leaders.
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> The Torah affirms that this expectation is not unrealistic. Every person is capable of making good choices.
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> **וּבָחַרְתָּ בַּחַיִּים,** "*Choose life.*" (Devarim 30:19). People possess the ability to choose good; educators guide individuals toward ownership of their actions rather than control over their behavior.

In a CARES culture, responsibility means:

- Members of the community are encouraged to take ownership of their actions and contributions.
- Expectations are upheld calmly and consistently across the school.
- Individuals are given voice and choice in shaping their next steps.

Responsibility nurtures dignity, wise decision-making, and meaningful contribution to the community.

E — Empower: Build Capacity for Growth

Foundation: Even Yehoshua required strengthening and encouragement before leading the people.

> Although Yehoshua had already demonstrated courage and conviction during the episode of the spies, Moshe still strengthened him before entrusting him with

leadership. **וְחַזְּקֵהוּ וְאַמְּצֵהוּ**, *“Strengthen him and encourage him.” (Devarim 3:28)*. The Torah teaches that empowerment is essential even for those who have already shown strength.

In a CARES culture, empowerment means:

- Individuals are provided with the skills, tools, and support needed to meet expectations.
- Confidence grows through encouragement, coaching, and guided practice.
- Challenges are approached as opportunities to strengthen capacity and leadership.

Empowerment builds competence, resilience, and courage to lead.

S — Sustain: Culture Is Built Through Consistency

Foundation: The Torah reminds us: **בִּינוּ שְׁנוֹת דּוֹר וָדוֹר,** *“Understand the years of generation after generation.”* (Devarim 32:7). Growth becomes lasting only when it is reinforced consistently over time.

In a CARES culture, sustain means:

- Follow-through is reliable, and expectations remain steady over time.
- Progress is noticed, named, and reinforced.
- Reflection and continued conversation help lessons become part of the school’s culture.

Care and growth become part of the school’s enduring culture, not one-time events.

About CARES

The **CARES Framework** was developed by **Rabbi Avremi Popack**, an educational leader with more than two decades of experience guiding Jewish day schools. Serving as Judaic Principal and senior educational leader at the Hebrew Academy in Orange County, CA, he has focused on helping teachers translate values into daily practice and on supporting students in developing responsibility, confidence, and leadership.

When schools share a clear framework for guiding growth, culture becomes intentional, expectations become consistent, and every interaction becomes an opportunity to help students rise.

Bringing CARES to Your School

Rabbi Popack offers workshops and training sessions to help leadership teams and faculty:

- Learn the CARES principles
- Practice CARES-based conversations with students
- Develop consistent, school-wide approaches to discipline and culture

For inquiries about presentations, workshops, or consulting:

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