

Symbols Of Freedom: Tie A Yellow Ribbon

Facilitator Guide

**What is my obligation to fight for other people's freedom?
How can I show they have not been forgotten using symbols and action?**



Yellow ribbons on a tree in Ashdod, Nov. 2023, Photo: Ira Mazor

Info For Facilitator



Target Audience:

All ages



Materials & Prep:

- Yellow or Blue Ribbons
- Scissors
- Paper
- Pens/ Pencils
- Markers
- Freedom & Justice Quotes Source Sheet
- Optional: Dominoes or small blocks

FRAMING THE ISSUE

Freedom is the ability to make choices and is a basic human right. What is the importance of freedom in everyday life? What is my obligation to fight for other people's freedom? How can I make a difference in such a big story? Each person on this planet deserves to determine their own fate, to make their own decisions.

Fighting for freedom requires staying power, patience, dedication and faith in our own abilities to effect change. Justice requires that we be creative to do everything we can to make people aware, and accelerate the return of all hostages to their families.

How can we send a powerful message to the families of the hostages in Gaza that they are not forgotten? How can we keep this issue alive for our leaders in government so they will work for their release?

LET'S EXPLORE

Stage 1: Symbols of Freedom

- Facilitator invites participants to take turns reading quotes about freedom and justice out loud.
- Ask each participant to:
 - Choose one or two quotes that speak to them or they identify with most strongly.
 - Write the quote on a piece of paper. Reflect: What does “freedom” or “justice” mean to you in light of this quote/the person who said it?
 - Try to think of a visual symbol that says “freedom” or “justice” to you. It could be as simple as a color. On your page, draw and add the symbol/color to the quote (above, below, around etc), or describe the symbol in words.
 - When you are finished, display your piece (either on the walls or on tables around the room).
- Facilitator invites the participants to silently stand up and walk around to look at each other's choices and symbols.

Stage 2: Tie a Yellow Ribbon

There is already an American symbol which tells the world that we believe in freedom and justice and that the hostages of the world are not forgotten: Tying a Yellow Ribbon.

For hundreds of years, tying ribbons in public has been a symbol that prisoners are never forgotten. Interestingly, this symbol has been used [in different countries](#) around the world, at different times, to remember and advocate for different hostages or as a gesture of support for people who are far from home (in the military, in jail, in captivity).



The symbol of a yellow ribbon became widely known in the United States in the 1970s as a reminder that an absent loved one, either in the military or in jail, would be welcomed home on their return. It was made popular by the song [“Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree”](#) recorded by Tony Orlando and Dawn in 1973. During the Iranian hostage crisis in the late seventies, it was used as a symbol of support for the hostages held in the US embassy in Teheran.

Watch the song here:



Since October 7th, this symbol has re-appeared as a reminder to the world that the hostages in Gaza and around the world are not free and not forgotten. In some Jewish spaces, the yellow ribbon has been changed to a blue ribbon, to more specifically call out the Israeli hostages. Below you find a number of ways you can use this symbol to create a visible campaign to keep the issue on the agenda.

While the hostages in Gaza are the most recent and unusual because of the sheer quantity taken captive in one day, there are other hostages in the world who are also suffering. For example, explore the story of [Jamshid Sharmahd](#), a Californian journalist who is being held hostage in Iran or the story of [Evan Gershkovich](#), the American Wall Street Journal journalist being held in Russia.

TAKE ACTION!

Tie A Ribbon:

Even one ribbon has an impact and many ribbons make a big impression. Let's tie as many ribbons as possible around trees, gates, lamp posts etc. in order to remind people that the hostages are not free.

- Break into small groups to brainstorm highly visible places.
- Make lists, split into groups, each with a roll of ribbons and go out tie yellow/blue ribbons on trees and other street-visible areas: such as lamp posts, electrical poles, porch posts, woven in fencing, car mirrors, etc.

You can amplify the impact of the ribbons by taking a picture and posting on social media, linking to information about the hostages and tagging #BringThemHome.

More information about ribbon campaigns and resources on the hostages can be found at: www.blueribbons.life

Optional Jewish Calendar tie-in Opportunity:

Tu B'Shvat - the Jewish holiday of Trees is on January 24-25, 2024

The Talmud tells us that parents used to plant trees when babies were born: a cedar tree for a girl and a pine tree for a boy. These trees represent their parents' hopes for their children to plant roots, grow, and blossom. Let's bring the hostages home so they can grow and blossom like the trees with ribbons.

CLOSING INTENTION

For the sake of justice, each and every one of us who is free, no matter how powerful or small, Jewish or not Jewish, must fight on behalf of those whose freedom was taken from them. The fight to liberate the hostages might take a long time so we must continue to make this issue public and concrete through highly visible acts and symbols, such as ribbons, and visuals such as day-counters and posters.

Every small act of visibility, joins together to make an impact and set in motion the process towards freedom for all.

Optional activity: Participants could build a domino structure which demonstrates how one small action can set in motion an entire movement.

FOR ADDITIONAL REFERENCE

General resources on Freedom and Justice:

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Bill of Rights Institute
- Resources for children on Freedom and Justice:
Horton Hears a Who! By Dr. Seuss This classic book follows Horton as he stands up for the tiniest creatures, the Whos of Who-ville, living on a speck of dust, emphasizing the power of one person to speak out for what's right.



Yellow ribbons outside a school in Jerusalem. Dec. 2023



Tying yellow ribbons around trees in Haifa. October, 2023.

Photo: Yael Horowitz



Bay Area Hillel students at Stanford tie Blue ribbons on trees. October, 2023