

## UNIT 1: THE SANHEDRIN WAY

### Guidelines: Designing A Constructive Controversy Scenario

A constructive controversy is a tool to engage people in hearing and presenting differing ideas and perspectives before attempting to solve a problem or make a decision. The aim is to arrive at better solutions and make better decisions through deliberate, structured examination and advocacy of clashing ideas/perspectives.

David Johnson and Robert Johnson introduced this problem solving approach in 1979; the approach has been researched and validated as a model for developing robust and creative solutions to problems.

Think of Constructive Controversy as a strategic means of engaging in *mahloket l'shem shamayim*, constructive conflict.

When designing a Constructive Controversy Scenario keep the following guidelines in mind.

#### The scenario:

- Has to be relevant to participants' lives, so they could see themselves in the scenario
- Has to be specific
- Needs to have two clear sides, personified by groups' or individuals' stances
- The two sides (initial options) have to be clearly reasonable; in other words, each side makes sense and can be perceived as "correct."
- Is binary in the initial stages, but has the potential to be solved in **multiple** different ways
- Should be accompanied with Jewish textual as well as potential contemporary sources that can be used to support each side
- Is compelling, includes some stress/drama
- Is accompanied by a protocol to be used by the person conducting the constructive controversy. Make sure that the protocol allows adequate time for each stage and time for reflection