



# No Place for Hate® Activity Library

## Beyond the Score: Antisemitism and Bias in Sports

### Lesson Plan and Overview

ADL Webinar: “[Safe at Home: Kevin Youkilis on Baseball, Belonging and Being Jewish](#)”

While sports often bring people together, they can just as easily lead to incidents of bias. Through the lens of a recorded ADL webinar with retired professional baseball player Kevin Youkilis and student athlete Morgan Zietz, students will explore Jewish identity, antisemitism and where those intersect with athletics. Using ADL’s 6 Ways to Be an Ally, students will explore scenarios and brainstorm ways they can act as allies to ensure that athletics, like all other parts of their school community, remain No Place for Hate.

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**Grade Level**      **Grades 6-12**

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### Learning Objectives

- Students will develop a basic definition of antisemitism.
- Students will reflect upon the experiences of two athletes on Jewish pride and antisemitism.
- Students will explore strategies of allyship using the 6 Ways to be an Ally.
- Students will identify ways to act as an ally to support targets of bias, speak out against hate and take action to address incidents in athletics.

### Materials Needed

- ADL Webinar Recording: “[Safe at Home: Kevin Youkilis on Baseball, Belonging and Being Jewish](#)”
  - You are welcome to show the full webinar but to ensure this lesson fits in a class period, use time stamps: 18:26-22:47 and 22:48-29:07.
    - We encourage that, before showing any video to students, educators preview ahead of time and refer to any local policies regarding film/video content.
- [6 Ways to be an Ally](#)—a copy for each student
- [Being an Ally on and Off the Field](#)—1 scenario for each group

### Words You Might Use

- **Ally:** Someone who speaks out on behalf of or takes actions that are supportive of someone who is targeted by bias or bullying, either themselves or someone else.

- **Antisemitism:** Prejudice, discrimination, or hostility directed at Jewish people. It is generally based on negative stereotypes, myths, or misinformation about Jews, Judaism, or Jewish identity. It manifests in harmful beliefs, attitudes, language, exclusion, harassment, and violence against individuals or Jewish communities.
- **Bias:** An inclination or preference, either for or against an individual or group, that interferes with impartial judgment.
- **Identity:** The qualities and beliefs that make a particular person or group different from others.

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## Core Activity

- **Begin by sharing that discussing topics of bias and hate can be challenging and can lead to strong feelings.** In order to navigate these conversations and create a safe space in which everyone can share, group agreements and norms help. Share the following statements on a slide, whiteboard or chart paper.
  - Speak from personal experience.
  - Ouch (Own the impact of our words on others).
  - Oops (Consider the intent behind our words).
  - Respect others.
    - Clarify understanding from students and allow students to add additional rules.
    - Solicit agreement before moving on and refer back to these as necessary throughout the lesson.
- **Share a definition of antisemitism.**
  - To engage students, ask: *What is antisemitism? How do you define it?* And use their responses to generate a list on a whiteboard/chart paper/etc.
  - Then, share the formal definition of antisemitism. (*Antisemitism refers to prejudice, discrimination, or hostility directed at Jewish people. It is generally based on negative stereotypes, myths, or misinformation about Jews, Judaism, or Jewish identity. It manifests in harmful beliefs, attitudes, language, exclusion, harassment, and violence against individuals or Jewish communities.*) To elicit further reflection on this definition, consider asking additional questions such as:
    - *What common themes do you notice between the definitions you shared and the formal definition of antisemitism?*
    - *Based on the definition, what is unique about antisemitism? Are there any similarities to other forms of hate?*

- **Transition to sports.** Ask students: *How might our definition of antisemitism apply to sports?* (While the focus of this should ultimately be at the school-level, you are welcome to elicit responses related to professional athletics as well).
- **ADL Education Webinar “Safe at Home: Kevin Youkilis on Baseball, Belonging and Being Jewish”** show the selected clips from the webinar, pausing for reflection questions. Jewish identity in sports (11:16-14:54; 18:26)
  - Before viewing, introduce the two athletes in the webinar. (A note: if you are viewing the full webinar, you can skip as the bios are read in full there.)
    - **Kevin Youkilis:** Kevin Youkilis appeared in over 1,000 Major League Baseball games in ten seasons with the Boston Red Sox (2004-2012), Chicago White Sox (2012), and New York Yankees (2013). He earned the nickname “The Greek God of Walks” from the book *Moneyball* for his relentless ability to get on base. The right-handed hitter made his Major League debut in 2004 and was a member of the team who broke the Curse of the Bambino, ending an 86-year Championship drought in Boston. A Gold Glove Award-winning first baseman, Youkilis was a two-time MLB All-Star and a two-time World Series Champion. Beyond his baseball achievements, Youkilis has a rich family history rooted in Jewish heritage, marked by name changes and experiences of persecution in Eastern Europe. Raised in Cincinnati, he has proudly embraced his Jewish identity, fostering connections with other Jewish athletes. In 2023, Youkilis served as a coach for Team Israel in the World Baseball Classic and now serves on the Board of Directors of Israel Baseball Americas.
    - **Morgan Zietz:** A sophomore at the University of Michigan from Boca Raton, Florida. Morgan is a dedicated Maccabi USA athlete who competed on the Girls Volleyball Team in the Maccabi Games in Israel in summer 2021 and again in the Pan American Maccabi Games in winter 2023. She was set to compete in the 2025 Maccabi Games in Israel before they were postponed due to the ongoing war. As a Jewish student navigating the current campus climate at the University of Michigan, Morgan offers a vital perspective on how sports participation strengthened her Jewish identity and helped prepare her to face experiences with antisemitism both on and off campus.
  - Part 1—Jewish Identity and Pride: Time Stamps 18:26-22:47)
    - Pause and ask students: *Is it important that sports celebrate the different identities of athletes? Why or why not?*

- Part 2—Antisemitism in Sports—Time Stamps 22:48-29:07)
  - Pause and ask students: *Why is it important to talk about the bias and discrimination (like antisemitism) that athletes experience?*
    - \* Trigger warning: Morgan speaks about death threats Maccabi athletes received.
- **Reflection questions** (turn & talk)
  - *How is our school celebrating and including different identity groups in our athletics?*
  - *We just heard from professional and collegiate athletes about their experiences with antisemitism. How might athletes in our school community experience bias and discrimination?*
  - *What action steps can students take to improve how our school's athletics welcome participants from all identity groups?*
- **Transition from viewing the webinar to the activity.** Distribute the handout: **6 Ways to be an Ally**. Read the handout with students and pause for questions/clarification.
- **Break students into groups of no more than 4.** Provide each group with ONE scenario to discuss. Instruct the students to:
  - Read the scenario as a group. Then, using the 6 Ways to be an Ally handout, consider the following question:
    - How can we act as allies in responding to the incident?
  - Ask each group to appoint a recorder and reporter for the share out portion of the activity.
- **Allow each group to share out** how they would act as allies in responding to the incident.
- **Close by asking students:** *Now that we've explored scenarios, how can we use the strategies from 6 Ways to be an Ally to make sure athletics, like all other parts of our school community, are no place for hate?*

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## Optional Follow-Up/ Going Further

**Note: These additional activities can be done as follow-ups to the core activity and they can also serve as an additional NPFH activity if the core activity is completed first.**

- After students have engaged in the core activity, distribute copies of the NJ.com article "[Yankees stand up for decision](#)" to students. Have students read about Core Jackson's mistake as a college freshman, and the steps he has taken to take accountability for that action. Have students discuss things like: How important is it for athletes to take ownership of their mistakes? How has it impacted Jackson's career to own this error so publicly? Why is it important to forgive people who have made errors and tried to learn from them? How can we bring what we've learned from Core Jackson into our own school athletic community?
- After students have completed the core activity above, direct students to ADL's [Calendar of Observances](#). Allow students time to explore the calendar. Ask them to compare the holidays for major religions around the world with the school athletic calendar (or general school calendar if more accessible). Ask students to reflect in small groups: Are there conflicts between religious observances and athletic events? How might a student feel if they had to choose between their team and their religious observance? What steps can be taken to make athletics more inclusive for all students? (View additional lesson plans for using the [Calendar of Observances](#).)
- Now that students have completed the core activity, direct them to create posters to display around the school (particularly in athletic facilities if possible) to remind their peers about the importance of inclusion and belonging in sports, the 6 ways to be an ally, and ways they can ensure that athletics are No Place for Hate.

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## Home Connection

Share ADL's Table Talk [Antisemitism Today](#) with families.

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## How Activity Meets NPFH Requirements

Students will reflect on the experiences of two Jewish athletes about pride in their identity and antisemitism that they have experienced. Students will engage in conversations around these experiences and explore what they can do as student-leaders to address and reduce bias and discrimination in athletics. This will contribute to a school community, including athletics, that is safe, inclusive and equitable.



# 6 WAYS TO BE AN ALLY

Here are some simple things you can do to be an ally to targets of name-calling and bullying. And remember—always think about your safety first when deciding the best way to respond.

## 1. Support targets, whether you know them or not.

Show compassion and encouragement to those who are the targets of bullying behavior by asking if they're okay, going with them to get help and letting them know you are there for them. Ask what else you can do and make sure they know they're not alone.

## 2. Don't participate.

This is a really easy way to be an ally because it doesn't require you to actually do anything, just to not do certain things—like laugh, stare or cheer for the bad behavior. By refusing to join in when namecalling and bullying occur, you are sending a message that the behavior is not funny and you are not okay with treating people that way. The next step is to speak up and try to put a stop to the hurtful behavior.

## 3. Tell aggressors to stop.

If it feels safe, tell the person behaving disrespectfully to cut it out. You can let them know you don't approve on the spot or later during a private moment. Whenever you do it, letting aggressors know how hurtful it is to be bullied may cause them to think twice before picking on someone again.

## 4. Inform a trusted adult.

Sometimes you may need extra help to stop the bullying. It's important to tell an adult who you trust so that this person can be an ally to you as well as the target. Telling an adult when you see someone engaged in bullying is never "tattling" or "snitching." So don't think twice—reach out to a parent, teacher, guidance counselor, coach or someone else who will get involved.

## 5. Get to know people instead of judging them.

Appreciate people for who they are and don't judge them based on their appearance. You may even find that they're not so different from you after all.

## 6. Be an ally on-line.

Bullying happens online, too, and through the use of cell phones. Looking at mean web pages and forwarding hurtful messages is just like laughing at someone or spreading rumors in person. It is just as hurtful, even if you can't see the other person's face. All the rules above are just as important to follow when texting and on social media. So online and offline—do your part to be an ally to others.

# Being an Ally On and Off the Field



## Scenario #1:

After soccer practice, you go into the locker room and find a swastika scratched onto a Jewish friend's locker.



## Scenario #2:

During a volleyball match between a Jewish Day School and a local Independent school, someone in the bleachers starts chanting: "Beat the Jews." Others start to join in.



## Scenario #3:

During track practice, the coach yells at a Jewish student: "Run as if your life depends on it, like you'll end up in an oven."



## Scenario #4:

During a baseball game, a member of the opposing team uses the N-word at a member of your team.



## Scenario #5:

In a team group chat, the co-captains of the field hockey team share memes with anti-LGBTQ+ slurs. When their behavior is questioned by the coach, they reply with: "everybody does it," "they're just memes, we didn't make them" and "we didn't send them during school time."

