



5 TOOLS FOR CONFRONTING ANTISEMITISM

by Yaakov Silverman



As a Jew that grew up in a predominately non-Jewish area, one of the only Jews in my school, I had to deal with antisemitism. Through the years I've narrowed confronting it down to 5 tools that I hope can help other young Jewish people wherever they are in the world.

1 BE AWARE

It is essential to know what antisemitism is. A lot of the time you can tell yourself something isn't antisemitic because you don't want to cause conflict or have to get involved. **Say it as it is, there isn't any room for it.** Another part of awareness is knowing that **none of it is true.** It can be harsh, and it hurts to hear ugly things said about you or Jews or Jewish practice or the Holocaust or Israel - it is all forms of Jew-hatred and it's our job to stand up for ourselves. I know it isn't easy, but just the simple act of telling yourself that it isn't true, even if you don't believe it will help, makes a difference in how you feel you can react. It can remind you not to act on the defensive, or to attack back with slurs of your own, leading to a fight that almost always ends badly. Never be ashamed and people will respect you more. Antisemitism comes from a place of insecurity, so **remember that it isn't personal** and you should be proud of your Jewish identity.

2 STOP IT WHEN IT'S STILL SMALL

Starting at the first crack, make sure the person knows that it isn't okay. Once it is established by the person or group that you aren't going to do anything about, it is much harder to stop it. So don't stand for any kind of it. Make sure the person knows that **if they're going to be friends with you, that kind of behavior won't fly** with you. If they are a real friend, they will understand and stop, if they don't stop, you will know that you have not allowed fear to stand in your way of saying something when **your knowledge and your voice can be your most powerful weapon.**



3 SURROUND YOURSELF WITH GOOD FRIENDS

Your friends should respect you, and your Judaism. If the person can't understand that it is something you are proud of; they shouldn't be your friend. The people you surround yourself with will dictate a lot about you. Make sure they learn from you the positive values of what it means to be a Jew. That will make sure they treat you with respect and will have your back when someone calls you names, or makes a joke about Jews - hopefully even when you are not there. This stuff is always easier to deal with when you're going through it with someone by your side. If possible, make friends with other Jewish people in your school/community. They will understand what you're going through and **as we have learned throughout history, we are stronger together.**

4 SEEK HELP

There a lot of people out there that will say stuff that will get to you, and it isn't pretty. Seek help from your friends, and your family. **Please do not keep this stuff in.** I know from experience that **having friends and family that have your back will help a lot.** They will give you the strength and courage you need, also perhaps giving you the tools and ideas on how to respond or handle situations creatively, helping change the mind of others who may not realize their hate is unfounded or misplaced.

5 SELF-DEFENSE

Unfortunately Antisemitism can expand to physical violence. My personal suggestion for the best way to deal with it is taking Krav Maga classes. Working out and other forms of self-defense are great, too. Increasing your ability to defend yourself won't only help against physical violence, but will **increase your confidence to defend yourself against all forms of Antisemitism, and your confidence in yourself as a whole.** You can even get friends together and organize a Krav Maga lesson; the special form of Israeli self-defense can lead to a safer community.

I hope you take these points for yourself. The most important thing to remember is no one can take being Jewish away from you, with all the pride and pain that comes with it.