

## **Transcript of Interview with Kai Kleinbard**

Interviewed by Grace Sokolow

Recorded November 2, 2022

### **ABSTRACT**

In this interview, Kai shares about what his life in Brooklyn looks like, including his personal learning in computer science, work for UPenn startup StudyDuck, and career as the founding director of bodyLITERATE. He discusses how bodyLITERATE has grown over the years and touches on the joys of working with Kolotniks. Kai recalls his experiences from the early years of Kolot, including attending shabbat services at different homes and going to religious school in his basement. He reflects on his experience of becoming a bar mitzvah as well as on his family's relationship with Kolot.

### **Keywords**

Neurodiverse

Technology

Learning

Covid

Hebrew school

Saturday services

Bar mitzvah

Family

Founding

### **Note**

Please be advised that this transcript has been edited for clarity.

### **Kai Kleinbard 0:11**

Okay. All right. Well, that's recording. So hopefully everything will work out well. Usually it'll send me a link a few, like hours or so after I record it. So, hopefully that will work out.

### **Grace Sokolow 0:27**

Perfect, thank you.

### **Kai Kleinbard 0:28**

Yeah, of course, now, and I'll send it to you once they've sent it to me.

### **Grace Sokolow 0:33**

Wonderful. Okay, and so we can just quickly introduce ourselves for the record. I'm Grace Sokolow, I use she/her pronouns, and I'm calling from Middlebury, Vermont.

### **Kai Kleinbard 0:49**

Okay, awesome. I'm Kai Kleinbard. I'm calling from Brooklyn, New York. You can use whatever pronouns you'd like with me, we're open to that. So yeah, we can begin whenever you're ready.

**Grace Sokolow 1:00**

Perfect. And today's date is Wednesday, November 2 2022. Okay, so like, I'm just curious, you know, what's your daily routine like, and how all that goes?

**Kai Kleinbard 1:16**

Well, usually I wake up around 6:30 or so, I have a little baby. So I help, you know, make sure we wake the baby up by around 7am. And usually, in the mornings, I work on some coding projects that are more personal. And then I also run a business called bodyLITERATE.<sup>1</sup> So I do a lot of sort of admin stuff around that just making sure everybody is scheduled. And I do a lot of teacher training, so I check in on the quality of the work that's happening around me. I do a lot of, you know, emails to people making sure that they are aware of what's going on, I do client calls also, oftentimes. I do a lot of caring for the baby too during the day if my partner is away. And then I, mainly for fun, I do some sports coaching at this school, and really love that, I do that three times a week. So that's usually what I do after a day of either doing my business stuff, or coding stuff, or just caring for the baby, I'll go to the school, do some coaching for a few hours. And then I usually have to go to the office at that point, usually late in the evening, or late afternoon and either meet with clients or do remote meetings and stuff like that. And then I get home usually in the evening.

**Grace Sokolow 2:55**

Very full day.

**Kai Kleinbard 2:56**

Yeah. [chuckles]

**Grace Sokolow 2:57**

What sort of personal coding projects are you working on right now?

**Kai Kleinbard 3:03**

Well, I uh, I'm always working on a lot of different kinds of personal coding projects in terms of just mainly learning processes that I'm kind of undertaking. So I've been really interested in learning more front end technologies like React<sup>2</sup> and Flutter.<sup>3</sup> My expertise is really in the back end stuff. So I've done a lot with algorithms and kind of optimality<sup>4</sup> or like, uh, different types of coding, kind of computer based algorithms that are like proofs and things like that. So for the last year, I've been really trying to understand more about the front end, because that's where I'm oftentimes not able to proceed in a project. So I've been working on that. I also work with a small startup that I started with two other colleagues at

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<sup>1</sup> [bodyLITERATE](#) helps neurodiverse learners develop executive function skills through a combination of one-on-one executive function skills training and mindfulness and somatic practices.

<sup>2</sup> [React](#) is a javascript library for building user interfaces, which are what people see and navigate through when they use computer programs or websites. A javascript library is a set of coding tools written in the language javascript.

<sup>3</sup> [Flutter](#) is an open source app development code base released by Google. This means that anyone can use or add to these coding tools that Google has created for free.

<sup>4</sup> In computer science, optimality refers to making code more efficient. This allows for programs to run faster and take up less storage space.

UPenn while I was there, called StudyDuck.<sup>5</sup> So I do work with that, though we've been on a bit of a hiatus the last month, so I haven't really had any projects with them. But otherwise, yeah, I'm usually doing personal stuff currently front end kind of learning or study duck stuff.

**Grace Sokolow 4:20**

Awesome. And could you elaborate a little bit more on what you mean by front end? Is that like, user interface?

**Kai Kleinbard 4:27**

Yeah, exactly. So, my expertise is really back end— like algorithms, working with data, creating efficient code and developing algorithms to solve pretty hefty computer puzzles. But I've been kind of curious about, like, the interfaces that users use, whether it's mobile, or on an app, or it's on a computer, a web interface. All that stuff is very amorphous to me, and I've been really curious about it. It's always been really hard for me actually, that the math stuff, like the back end stuff, is much more mathematical I feel like, and it's been something that I really studied in graduate school. And I really understand it, and I really like it, but I never feel like I can really do a project on my own because I can't do the front facing stuff. And I think the front interfacing stuff, I think a lot more people know that stuff, which is interesting, because I find it more difficult because it's not as much— it's much more about structure than it is about a computation I find. And I don't know, I have a harder time with that, for some reason, at least, it might be just because it's not something I've practiced a lot, but it's definitely something that I want to understand better.

**Grace Sokolow 5:56**

Yeah. And so, do you find that you feel a difference... like you said, in grad school, you really focused on the back end, and so you got that solid base... Now, trying to learn the front end on your own, how does that feel in comparison, like the learning style that you're going about with?

**Kai Kleinbard 6:15**

Well, I, you know, when I work on projects on my own, what I tend to do is I just, I work on like tons of different things, and most things I don't bring to completion, I'll just dabble, then hop to something else and dabble. So, like I really am full of different things that I'm working on. I think the problem sometimes for me is that I'm not as focused, and there isn't this sense of urgency that there is when I'm doing something as a project that I have to complete. So sometimes I'm a little sloppy with the depth of the learning. I'm not understanding everything, but I'm just moving from one thing to the next based on what my attention is interested in at the moment. So, I think the learning happens over a longer period of time, but it's more enjoyable, because I'm constantly continuing to just work on whatever kind of suits my current interest level.

**Grace Sokolow 7:13**

That's wonderful. And you mentioned that you're running a company, could you talk a little bit about that? And how you got into doing that?

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<sup>5</sup> [StudyDuck](#) is a startup out of the Wharton Venture lab at the University of Pennsylvania, aimed at helping users digest and retain the materials they're studying.

**Kai Kleinbard 7:25**

Yeah, sure, bodyLITERATE I started on almost like over a decade ago, actually. And really what it was, at first, just a one on one practice that I was doing working with young, neurodiverse individuals who are struggling with learning. And I was really working with them on both a somatic practice, movement, and how they can use their bodies better for focus and attention as they're learning. What it coalesced into was something really around this skill set called executive function skills, for how people attend and organize information in the moment, and then how they use that information as they learn new things. So, you know, over the years, my practice kind of became too full. And at that point, I started to bring in other people, you know, I come from a very unique background, I wasn't trained in a particular method, I sort of honed this technique over years of doing this work, and sort of developing— being able to combine my movement background, which I am a certified Alexander Technique<sup>6</sup> teacher, as well as just a rigorous interest in how the brain works and how learning works, and having many years of working with young people. And then I kind of combined the two and, you know, over the years kind of made many adjustments to this process, and then developed this practice that I do and then word of mouth kind of built a business out of it. That was just a one on one practice that became too full for me to just, you know, I was turning away most people because I just had no space left. So I started to seek out other people who had a kind of— I mean, nobody has the background that I have, but eventually I realized that, you know, I'm not going to be able to have somebody be me, and that was okay, but if I could find people who can do elements of what I do, people who can teach somatic work, which I think of as mindfulness practices, and also how the body can support somebody to connect more into their focus and their attention and how they can use their body to better attend to whatever they're doing in the moment, sort of like regulating themselves by being aware of their body. I can find people who kind of had those practices, and then I can also find people who were real, like, academics, were really able to teach and help young people, then I could teach people how to do things, like teach people executive function skills around academic work, and then support them to use their own background and somatic practices to apply to executive function skills teaching work. But, you know, when I bring people in, now, I am more interested in sort of guiding them, rather than teaching them what exactly I do, but rather, helping them uncover what they do to then translate that to neurodiverse learners. This work is very amorphous, it's not a science, it's more about developing relationships with young people, and then understanding their interests, and then helping them kind of direct their interest towards these types of challenging skills, which are executive function skills. So now I have a group of around five educators that I manage. There are a lot of issues that I find with this work, because it's very... it's very service heavy, it's very analog, it's very in person. And I have now this computer background, so I'm very interested in finding ways to make this work more accessible and more scaled for more people. But that's what my overall goal is for understanding the technology side of things, is to eventually be able to translate this work, which is human resource heavy into more of a computer and technology focused process.

**Grace Sokolow 12:29**

Yeah, that's amazing. So, you work with the startup StudyDuck, which you helped found. How do you conceptualize going about taking this, as you say, very human centered work and making it more technology driven? Like, what are the steps?

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<sup>6</sup> The [Alexander Technique](#) is a movement and mindfulness practice based on using the movement patterns people are born with to reduce chronic pain and tension and achieve musculoskeletal balance.

**Kai Kleinbard 12:57**

That's a very difficult thing, because there are so many things, you know, even trying to teach people what I do, I eventually stopped trying to do that, because I realized, I'm drawing from years and years of movement based practices, and years and years of kid based work, where a lot of what's coming to me is intuitive. And it's not something that I mean, I certainly, I certainly could teach somebody– if my internet's getting a little funky, just let me know. Yeah, 'cuz I know, the internet in this room's a little weird, so just let me know. And I can always shift my internet to another one that's better, that I always forget to do when I get into this room, so just let me know. But so what I'm saying is that, what I have to do is really pull off pieces, small pieces of what I do, and then like, try to figure out if I can code this little thing, and find ways that you know– and it's really hard. I mean, I think I've been unsuccessful at it so far, StudyDuck hasn't been like, we've actually had, you know, we've had some good success like getting going into what are called pre accelerators, which are basically like, you know, Y Combinators<sup>7</sup> is like a very famous accelerator program, which we obviously haven't been accepted to, but we've been accepted to other smaller ones, which give you a little bit of funding and a little bit of, like, a lot of coaching about like how to work with your business and find find inroads into like, different niches and things like that. But I think it's, you know, it's been really challenging because we don't have a lot of resources and for example, a lot of what I do is very– it requires a lot of brainpower and it requires would require a computer like an AI<sup>8</sup> to be trained, and we don't have the ability to train an AI to that scale, you know, we don't have the data or the, the expertise, really. So it's a lot about taking small little things that we can do, and thinking about, well, would this help teachers, or would this help students? What's the market that we want to focus on? And, you know, let's try this and see what works, and can we make this more performant? This thing, it's really slow, can we try to make it better? Is it even worth it? Like, financially, we have to pay this amount of money to the cloud to make this work. So it's a lot of trying to understand from all sides, like, is this realistic, technology wise? Is this realistic from a business standpoint? And is this going to be useful for people? So, it's a big question.

**Grace Sokolow 15:51**

Yeah. So many, so many little parts that have to all fit together.

**Kai Kleinbard 15:58**

Um-hm.

**Grace Sokolow 16:00**

Yeah. And then just in the interest of time, I want to switch gears a little bit. And talk some about Kolot, which is the reason we got to meet, which is so wonderful. And so, I'm wondering, I know that you were the first bar mitzvah student at Kolot Chayeinu, and so, I'm wondering if you could just tell me a little bit about that experience?

**Kai Kleinbard 16:28**

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<sup>7</sup> [Y Combinators](#) is a business that invests significant funding and management support to help launch startups.

<sup>8</sup> AI stands for artificial intelligence, which is when people write computer programs and feed them 'training data' that the computer program then uses to improve its performance.

Sure, well, it was a very long time ago, I think it was, I guess, 25 years ago, when I was 13. So, you know, I think my dad<sup>9</sup> and the original rabbi of Kolot, the founder, Ellen Lippmann,<sup>10</sup> had worked actually together in another form, you know, in education or something like that, or community building, well before Ellen became a rabbi. And then, you know, eventually Ellen became a rabbi, she started this very small little community synagogue. And, you know, the Hebrew school used to be in our basement in Brooklyn, in my own home. And then I would work with Ellen, a little bit like one on one at her home, to prepare for the bar mitzvah. And I just, you know, I remember going to Ellen's house, to work on these things, going to Hebrew school in our basement, with a bunch of other kids, who I had known through this service, but also through other venues, you know, it was a very small community at that point. A lot of us probably knew each other from different backgrounds, like maybe they were business acquaintances, and things like that, we just decided to join this kind of small service. And I think I remember, synagogue was in the basement, also in the basement of this church called the Church of Gethsemane, I think, which was in this area in Brooklyn called Park Slope. And we would go and I think my service was in the actual normal area of the church, if I remember correctly. And yeah, it was a great experience to have a bar mitzvah when you're 13, you get to lead a service, it feels like you're doing a big thing. And you work on a speech for a long time, I don't really remember my speech. And I remember having a party, you know, and I was going to this really fancy private school, actually, where I always felt a little bit, like, out of sorts, you know, just like everyone there was like, super rich, basically, you know, as far as I could tell— I mean, surely, there were some people who were more in my boat, who were a little bit more in the middle class world— but that was also a big thing, because, you know, I invited a lot of my classmates to the, to the synagogue, and it's like this small little synagogue. And only, I think only two came to the actual service out of like, you know, maybe the 30 that I invited, because there was another person's bar mitzvah that day, and I remember, she was a very wealthy person, but everyone went to her bar mitzvah, actually, instead, but, you know, I had like a party that didn't coincide with her party, so more people attended that. But it was fine, because, you know, you still got to, it was like a Saturday service you lead. And a lot of people of course, from the synagogue came, which is fun. And I mean, the synagogue was really just growing at that point. So there was probably, I don't know, maybe 100 members at that point, but maybe less? I'm not sure. But I know it's a lot bigger, try like 700 now, or something like that. So, you know, I think Kolot has met a real need in Brooklyn for you know, non conservative Jews who want more of a service and a system where I think there's more of a, like a, [pause] openness towards views of where you're from, interpretation of Torah, and, you know, things like that. I mean, because, actually, I live in a Hasidic neighborhood, or basically, neighboring one, you know, a very Hasidic neighborhood, where it's just like, there's a female and male entrance to some of these buildings, there's very big separation. So it's interesting to be in these extremes, where there's Kolot, which is really on one end of the really liberal Jews, and then, you know, all the way on the other end. And oftentimes, when I tell people I'm Jewish, I get the question of, oh, is your mom Jewish? You know, it's like, my mom's from Taiwan, and my dad is Jewish. But I always consider myself Jewish, because I got bar mitzvah'd, and my dad is Jewish, and I was raised going to synagogue. So... so, yeah.

**Grace Sokolow 21:24**

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<sup>9</sup> Kai's father is Peter Kleinbard, founding member of Kolot Chayeinu. He has also participated in the [oral history archive](#).

<sup>10</sup> Ellen Lippman is the founding Rabbi of Kolot Chayeinu and is now Rabbi Emerita. She has also participated in the [oral history archive](#).

Thank you for sharing that. Yeah, I come from an interfaith family, and so I totally get that whole, like, “oh, wait, I'm confused about what I'm understanding about you.” [phone rings] Oh, goodness. Sorry. Yeah. And so I'm curious, just going back a little bit to the having Hebrew school in your basement. How did that feel?

**Kai Kleinbard 21:54**

Um, it was always actually kind of— I think back then I felt, you know, maybe [pauses] it was kind of fun to have the Hebrew school in the basement, to feel kind of like that, like I was, we were contributing. And I mean, we would have like Saturday service, and it would be at everyone— it would be a different person's house every week, and you would be responsible, that household would be responsible for getting bagels and stuff, so it just traveled from house to house. So there was always something very communal about that, you know, and I think one of the things that you had to do in order to get bar mitzvah'd was to go to Saturday service, so I remember going to different Saturday services. For me, like, I think I got bar mitzvah'd because my dad wanted me to get bar mitzvah'd, it wasn't a choice that I made. I'm glad I did, because, you know, it's just something that you can talk about with people. And I think I, I work with a lot of clients now who are getting their bar mitzvahs, or bat mitzvahs, like young people, and I can reflect with them on it, which is kind of fun. My younger sister didn't get bat mitzvah'd, and my older sister didn't as well. So I was, somehow, I was the one who got, you know, pulled in, and that always felt a little unfair to me. But, it's something that you can carry with you for a long time, so that's kind of cool.

**Grace Sokolow 23:26**

Yeah. Yeah, and so looking back all these years, like, what are the big takeaways you have from your bar mitzvah experience?

**Kai Kleinbard 23:44**

[pause] Well, I mean [pause] it's, I'm not sure if— like what I take away is the idea that I got bar mitzvah'd, and I can sort of remember a few things from that time, like a few of the beginnings of prayers, or, you know, I'll hear a song or something and then I'll know some— I've heard it before, maybe in passing or something like that. I love the music, and I still remember the music of that time, and in fact, when I was— at one point, I was really studying sound, I was really interested in the body and sound and I became interested because really, I could remember tone— I'm terrible at tone, but I could like actually control the tone of when I sang these Hebrew songs. So I tried to, you know, when the pandemic happened and everything was on Zoom, I would actually sometimes hop on to like the Saturday zoom sessions that they were having at Kolot. And that was fun, like, especially the singing, I would remember the singing, and I love looking at everybody's face, you know, like in the zoom and just seeing all these different people. And I would, I would go in sort of anonymously. I don't think most people knew who I was at that point— I mean, people don't— there are very few people who are recognized— I mean, I recognize Lisa Segal, she was a pretty close to original member, and I know she's a cantor and her partner, Arthur, was, for awhile, like a big part of the synagogue— I'm not sure if he still is— and I'm sure there are a lot of people from that original time that will hop in here and there, I imagine, but it's been so long since then, so that I don't really remember, you know, people don't remember, I don't think people have— I don't remember people's names that well anymore.

**Grace Sokolow 25:47**

Yeah. And you said that, like, you know, there's maybe 100 people in the congregation at the time that you were bar mitzvah'd. And a bunch of them came to your service. Did you— how did your relationships feel with those people then?

**Kai Kleinbard 26:08**

Well, you know, it was very friendly. The people in the synagogue were very nice, I found. And I mean, for a while, and you got to go to people's homes, you know, it was a very small group of people that would go to Saturday service, maybe 10 people. So, it was like, there was service and study, or like, discussion on the Torah. So it's very small group. I still think they have Torah study Saturdays. And, you know, I think it's a pretty small group. I imagine that it's still those... but like, I, even over the years, I've worked with different Kolot members in bodyLITERATE, you know, some of them that I originally like, not originally, but later came on, but still from the early years, who wound up having kids, we will work with a little bit in our company. So, I mean, like, there's this nice shared, 'Oh, you got to Kolot, okay, yeah.' Like, there's this kind of, if someone goes to Kolot, you automatically know, you kind of have an idea of what their belief systems are, you know, maybe that's— maybe you're putting them into a bucket, because Kolot is like the most liberal synagogue that I can imagine. I'm sure there's probably more liberal, but, you know, they have to be okay with a lot of things. Like, for example, the rabbi is a female, like, that's a very unique thing, I think, to Kolot, at least, especially when it started, and that there's this, kind of celebration of LBGTQ+, you know, movements. And... yeah, so, I think it's always nice to see and work with, a Kolot person in a certain way, because, there's, there's so much now around, everything is so fiery with politics and stuff like that. So, sometimes when you can, like, work with somebody or meet somebody, and they have this background in an organization that you know has, like, you know the politics of the organization, and then you're like, 'ah, okay,' you know, like, 'Okay, I know, kind of what your beliefs are.' But that doesn't mean, like, we can't get along with everybody, but it is always a nice, familiar feeling to know that somebody has been part of Kolot.

**Grace Sokolow 28:51**

Yeah, even just from my small interaction with the Kolot community this semester, I totally understand that, that sort of like, 'Okay, you know, I, I feel like I— I know what I'm dealing with here.' And I can see how that would be nice. And so, like, what does your connection to Kolot look like now? I know, you said earlier in the pandemic, you were hopping on this, like zoom services when they're— are services still on Zoom? Are they in person?

**Kai Kleinbard 29:26**

I don't really know if they are still on zoom. I hope so, because I think that it allows people to go wherever they are. But I'm not totally sure, because I haven't been on— I haven't tried to hop on in about a year maybe. So, yeah— was that your question? Like, what was your [inaudible].

**Grace Sokolow 29:45**

Yeah, and, you know, I was just going to ask if there was some shift that happened in the pandemic, that you felt like— [pause] Sorry, I'm gonna I'll rephrase that. Like, you were going to services for a bit, and then what's drawn you away from the community, maybe?



**Kai Kleinbard 30:10**

Well, a lot of it was just, like, just getting very busy, you know.

**Grace Sokolow 30:19**

Totally.

**Kai Kleinbard 30:20**

Because for a while, I was teaching just at my home, or, you know, working with clients remotely, all of them. And so, I was just at home. And that was a nice way to, like, just hop on to a service, you know, and— I work a lot on Saturdays, so... but I would have opening time, but now, Saturdays, I just, I'm actually at my office. So there's just, I mean, I'm sure I could probably if there was a possibility to hop on to Kolot, I could, and I would like to keep it on in the background sometimes. A lot of times, it was just fun to just see faces, see faces of people. But that was, you know, I think it just sort of ended organically as I went back to the office and sort of had more things to do around the time when the services were happening.

**Grace Sokolow 31:10**

Yeah. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And then, so, also one of the areas of collaboration for this project is challenges. And so I'm wondering, either going back to sort of when you're a kid, is— [audio cuts out]

**Kai Kleinbard 31:29**

Oh, whoops. Oh. Sorry. You got muted for a minute.

**Grace Sokolow 31:33**

[overlapping] All good.

**Kai Kleinbard 31:34**

Okay. Sorry, okay.

**Grace Sokolow 31:36**

Okay. Yeah, so I was just saying that one of the project's areas of collaboration is challenges. And so, either going back to when you were younger, or even up into the present, are there— are there challenges, or things that you've experienced at Kolot that you might wish had gone differently, or could go differently in the future?

**Kai Kleinbard 32:02**

You know, actually, I had a big— there was a big tension that I had at some point with the Hebrew teacher; I remember having a big, like, blow up, in a Hebrew school class at some point. I don't totally remember the details, but I remember feeling very upset about it. [pause] So, it's hard for me to remember what happened. And I remember, there is— and I made up with that teacher, and everything was good. You know, I think the Hebrew school experience for me, did oftentimes feel a little, [pause] like, I mean, it was hard to understand— I think the school has probably developed a lot since then, but it was really not, like, I don't think they knew exactly why we were going to Hebrew school for a long time, except that they had a Hebrew school, what they were teaching. And, you know, that probably takes, in early years of

the synagogue, I think, trying to understand what it is, you know, what you're trying to teach in the Hebrew school is an interesting question, because is it— Are you teaching about religion? Are you teaching about social justice? Are you teaching about, you know, like, technical, language, like Hebrew, Hebrew characters and things like that. So I think there was a little bit of like— it wasn't clear what was going on there. And it felt, you know, I got a lot out of working one on one with the rabbi, I think— that's really where I learned a lot. But I think, you know, the Hebrew school, which I went to, from the early days, from the beginning to the end of when I became bar mitzvah'd, kind of had to develop a lot. And it wasn't very developed while I was there. And it felt a little bit like, you know, like a waste of time sometimes for me. [pause] Yeah.

**Grace Sokolow 34:15**

Yeah. Thank you for sharing that.

**Kai Kleinbard 34:17**

Mm-hm.

**Grace Sokolow 34:18**

And— so, you worked a lot with, it was Rabbi Ellen Lippmann,

**Kai Kleinbard 34:23**

Yeah.

**Grace Sokolow 34:24**

Prepare [inaudible] bar mitzvah. Are— do you still, are you still in contact with her?

**Kai Kleinbard 34:28**

Just briefly, she, we'll say hello, every once in a while. She's close friends with my dad still. She's been in— she's, you know, connected with me a little bit, just like when I had our baby, and just to say, hello, really, and to actually initiate this process with me. Just to, you know, invite me to this project.

**Grace Sokolow 34:54**

Yeah. And I'm curious too on that front, what, what made you accept that invitation?

**Kai Kleinbard 35:00**

Well, [pause] I think, you know, I always want to be supportive to Ellen. And, I mean, I think, I really appreciate Kolot, like, I know I hold an important part of their history, somehow. And actually, I mean, my partner does a lot with oral histories as well, so, you know, we thought it would be interesting to do one. So there were just a few reasons why. You know, I like to be helpful, when I can. And I'm happy to be helpful with Ellen, and also Kolot. So, I think those are the main reasons why.

**Grace Sokolow 35:54**

Yeah. And then, I'm also wondering, so, it's my understanding that your dad is also doing one of these oral histories.

**Kai Kleinbard 36:05**

Oh, really? Oh, interesting.

**Grace Sokolow 36:08**

Yeah. And so I'm just curious what, like, what it was, like growing up and what it's like now to have this family dynamic going on in relation to Kolot.

**Kai Kleinbard 36:20**

Well, I mean, it's funny, because it's really, it's just between my dad and I, I think. It's like, I mean, I don't think... my younger sister Leily does know Ellen, and she went to services with us, but I don't know if she, you know, is as... if she has as much of a history as I do. So, it does feel like when you get bar mitzvah'd, you somehow get ingrained in the history of the synagogue somehow. And I definitely think I was there, you know, from an early time, I definitely remember playing stuff and like these events, like the sukkah<sup>11</sup>, and all these high holy days where they would be, you know, at people's backyards, and we would just kind of like, go to someone's backyard, hang out, do food and stuff there. And we would play with the other kids from the synagogue and the Hebrew school. You know what, I'm glad, but I think my dad feels very connected, because he also is very close with Ellen and has a very strong bond to Kolot, you know, and I think would go very much out of his way to support Kolot, which is— and I think that, you know, for my dad, to be part of these communities is really important to him; his older brother, which he— who, who died, but who he's very connected to became very connected to a synagogue in Philadelphia, and would go, you know, every Saturday to services and would do a ton of work for them. My dad also kind of tries to almost— or has like this, like, he shadows in a way, my dad's brother's, kind of, practices in a way, and I think for him, the idea of joining this community of— in a way is a shadow of his older brother, who was part of a much more religious service, but my dad has other connection to a much more liberal service, and it's also very deep because of their relationship with Ellen and all this stuff from their background. So, you know, for him, I think it's a very sacred connection, that goes into his family. And also his, you know, his work, his business, because of Ellen, and his history as someone growing up in Brooklyn, because of being, like, a founding member of Kolot.

**Grace Sokolow 39:06**

That's really powerful. [pause] Wow, I'm just like, awestruck, that's beautiful. I know, I don't want to— I mean, I could chat with you, like, all day, I'm having such a wonderful time. But I don't want to run over time, because I know you're super busy. And so—

**Kai Kleinbard 39:33**

Yes, my partner has to hop out for her work, so I do have to go at nine, but, yeah.

**Grace Sokolow 39:39**

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<sup>11</sup> Building the sukkah is a Jewish custom in celebrating the holiday of Sukkot, which begins on the 15th day of the Hebrew month of Tishrei and falls sometime during the Gregorian months of September and October. Sukkot celebrates the harvest as well as commemorates the 40 years the Jews spent wandering in the desert. A sukkah is traditionally a three sided structure with a roof that allows those inside to see the stars. Many Jews build, inhabit, and invite friends to these structures to celebrate the holiday.

Okay, so in our last minute or so, is there anything else that you want to say that you didn't get a chance to share?

**Kai Kleinbard 39:48**

Well, I mean, you know, it's really wonderful to reflect on Kolot, it's really cool to see that it's grown, and... you know, I feel like there's definitely, like, a place for people to connect to their religion in a way that's, [pause] you know, accepting and joyful for them. And I think that's the power of Kolot. You know, for, I'm sure, for a lot of people, it's a connection to God and the religious aspect, but I think, it's, like, a lot of it is about the community, and that, kind of, feeling part of a community. And so, I feel like I'm reminded of that having this conversation because if I remember everything about Kolot it's, it's just the community that lights up. And the moments with these people, rather than like, what I learned about God or anything like that, God feels very much like a personal journey. But you know, Kolot is much more about, like, a human connection. At least to me.

**Grace Sokolow 41:11**

Yeah. That's definitely the sense that I get as well, it seems like such a wonderful and supportive place. Okay, so I know it's nine. I feel like we should, we should end our recording here. But I just want to thank you so much for doing this.

**Kai Kleinbard 41:30**

My pleasure, Grace. Thank you. I'll make sure to send you the cloud recording. It says it's recording, so everything should go well—

**Grace Sokolow 41:39**

[interjecting] Perfect, thank you for doing that.

**Kai Kleinbard 41:40**

—in case it doesn't go well, we'll just figure it out. And I did record it also on my phone. So just to back it up on top of it. Yeah, you know, it's being executive functions coach. I did come late last time though, I felt bad about that. It was an un-executive functions skills move, [Grace laughs] but today, hopefully, I will have all this material and I'll make sure to send it to you.

**Grace Sokolow 42:00**

Thank you so much. I appreciate it.

**Kai Kleinbard 42:06**

All right. My pleasure. All right. Well, we'll keep in touch about this and connect against it. Okay. Talk to you soon, alright.

**Grace Sokolow 42:11**

Yeah, talk soon.

**Kai Kleinbard 42:12**

Ok, bye.

**Grace Sokolow 42:13**  
Bye.