Shmonsters and MiShebeirach Bears

*Art Track*

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| **Author(s):** | Daniel Abramson |
| **summary:** | You will make your own cuddly felt monster or bear and learn how you can use the arts to make learning feel like a warm fuzzy for any camper.- *Submitted by* *Daniel Abramson* |
| **Topic(s):** | Visual Arts, Bedtime Ritual, Tefillah/Prayer Alternative |
| **Learning Objective:** | To understand how to use the arts as a tool to make T’fillah tangible, understandable, accessible, and approachable for young children. |
| **Audience:** | Younger Campers, 7-10-years-old, or older campers as Bikkur Holim project. This program is an ideal “intergenerational” camp project where older campers can help younger campers.\*\*\*\*With younger campers, this program needs lots of staff support. Recruit some friends, older campers, or other adults at camp to help out! |
| **TIMING:** | 90 minutes |
| **AppendiCes:** | Sh’monster planning page, pre-printed text of the Shema |
| **Materials Needed:** | 8x10 felt squares – 2 per participantNeedles – 1 per participantScissors – 1 pair for every 2 participants (enough to comfortably share)Polyester batting – 1 large bag (enough to fill each participant’s project)Paper strips for writing the Shema or a “Get Well Soon” wish – 1 per participantGlue Gun and Glue Sticks (Hi-Temp) – 2 (for adults or older campers to use to help younger campers) Upholstery Thread – One large rollPin Cushion – 1 or 2 for storing needles when not in useSh’monster planning page – 1 per participant plus extras (just in case)Material Scraps, Buttons, Googly eyes |
| **Set-UP DETAILS:** | Arts and Crafts roomAny space where participants can sit at tables or on the floor and spread out materials can be used. |

**Session Timeline & Outline:**

**Before the Session**

Thread enough needles for all the participants before they arrive. It is a bit time consuming, but it makes the whole process much easier. You will need to re-thread the needles as campers run out, so it is a good idea to designate one person to be on thread duty.

**Planning the Sh’monster - 15 minutes**

1. Draw a design of the Sh’monster and answer the fun questions on the Sh’monster planning page.
2. Campers can either can write the text of the Shema or other words in the blank space or they can use the pre-printed text of the Shema to stuff into the Shemonster later.

**Making the Sh’monster – 60 minutes**

1. Use the permanent marker to create the outline of their Sh’monter on one piece of felt.
2. Stack the marked felt on top of another piece and cut so that there are two identical pieces of felt.
3. Sew the felt pieces together using a “blanket stitch” along almost the entire outline of the shape leaving a space about three inches wide open. You can find excellent tutorials on how to do this stitch on YouTube. Here is one I recently watched...

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9D1KL8Zza8

1. Stuff the cotton batting into the pocket that has been created inside the two pieces of felt until the creation reaches the desired amount of fluffiness!
2. Using needle and thread, campers finish sewing the pocket closed.
3. Use scrap felt, buttons, fabric makers and other decorations to finish the Sh’monster.

**Sh’monster Parade – 15 minutes**

1. After tiding up all materials, campers can introduce their Sh’monsters to each other. This is a good time to take some Sh’monster selfies.
2. Ask participants to come together to close the program. Participants may wish to share the words that they chose to keep inside their Sh’monsters or they may not. You should take this opportunity to explain that one time that the Shema is traditionally said is before bedtime, so these Sh’monsters can remind us of that. Alternatively, if these were created as Mi She’beirach bears, participants can share who they are thinking of when they think about people who are in need of healing.

**Additional Notes for Bringing it Back to Camp:**

This program can be adapted in really cool ways to help connect young campers to other ideas presented in T’fillah. For example, campers can create bear stuffies to give to friends or relatives who are feeling sick as part of exploring Mi She’Beirach (Prayer for Healing) or as an Tikkun Olam initiative by donating them to a Kids Hospital as an exploration of Bikkur Holim.

This program can be run in Arts and Crafts or by bunk counsellors in their cabins depending of the objective of the staff.