

Detoxifying Masculinity

Elective

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SUMMARY:	This discussion and activity-based session will explore masculinity and work to help participants unpack, explore, and consider their relationship to masculinity in a way that is ultimately positive for and supportive of individuals and camp cultures.
TOPIC(S):	Gender, Identity Development
LEARNING OBJECTIVES:	<p>Participants will leave this session being able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define masculinity in a way that reflects one's highest ideals • Identify examples of positive masculinity in one's personal life and in those individuals we admire from afar.
AUDIENCE:	All and any ages are encouraged to take part in this program, and any group size that feels comfortable and supportive given your camp's make up.
TIMING:	90 minutes
APPENDICES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flower Power Worksheet
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blank paper (3 sheets per participant) • Scissors • Writing utensils • ~35 pairs of chopsticks (disposable are fine) • Large bowl (to hold the rice) and large serving spoon • 1 pound of rice (uncooked) • 1 large bottle of rainbow cake sprinkles • ~25 bowls
SET-UP DETAILS:	It is recommended that this session take place in an open space area where people can sit in a circle on the floor/ground and spread out as needed during the various activities both seated and standing.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS:

- Masculinity should not be confined by reductive definitions (e.g. “All men like sports.”), shallow criteria for male expression (e.g. “Real men don’t show emotion.”) or outdated value judgements (e.g. “Gay men are less male than straight men.”)
- My identity, and the way that I relate to men, manhood and masculinity are bound up in the relationships I’ve had with boys and men in my life.
- Masculinity, like most identifiers is, at face value, neither good nor bad.
- Camp is a place where we come to explore our inner life alongside others in order to become our highest selves.

AFFECTIVE OUTCOMES:

- Participants may feel challenged and supported when invited to consider masculinity and its presence in their life.
- Participants may feel a sense of camaraderie, loyalty or connection to others that is deeply rooted in shared values like pride, loyalty, courage and perseverance.
- Participants may also feel a deeper sense of empathy for masculinity and/or masculine-identifying people, and may consider their role in supporting positive representations of masculinity.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS: Participants will leave this session having considered the following essential questions:

- *What is toxic masculinity, how does it impact my life, and how am I contributing to it?*
- *How can masculinity be positive?*
- *Where am I in this global and cultural conversation?*
- *And what do I want to do about it at camp and beyond?*

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

- **0:00-0:10 OPENING : Framing/Set Induction -- Allergy Fruit Salad!**
- *Participants are each given a set of chopsticks to serve themselves from the shared bowl of “Fruit Salad” (actually uncooked rice with rainbow cake sprinkles mixed in).*
 - *“You are a person with several food allergies and cannot eat everything in the fruit salad. In fact, you can only eat one or two of these fruits. (It’s ok that they’ve touched other “fruits.”) And, in the house where you’re being served, it’s considered extremely rude to only take the fruit you will eat from the salad when serving yourself. So take a scoop, and using your chopsticks only “eat” from the two colors of sprinkles that you’ve identified, i.e. the fruits you desire.*
 - *Note: It is considered equally rude to take the other “fruits” out of the salad to leave behind the fruit you do not like. Better to take the fruit you want (e.g. red and blue sprinkles) from the whole.*

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- There are prohibitions on Shabbat, the 39 *melachot*¹, acts of creation, that are the source of some of our most stringent restrictions. One of those often overlooked by Jews who choose not to guard these weekly prohibitions is that against removing things you do not want from those that you do desire. This is considered either sifting or gleaning, both of which are forbidden.
- **What might this teach us about our topic today?**
- *Just as Shabbat frames the removal of that which we despise as prohibited, and highlighting that which we love as permitted (ne celebrated!), so too must we look to men, manhood and masculinity with an eye towards elevating that which we find desirable and honorable. Try as we might to detoxify cultures of masculinity, we can be more effective promoting honorable behaviors and habits. Rather than use our energy on rooting out that which we despise about cultures of masculinity, may we constructively lift up the things that we think all of us are capable of doing. May we ignore those features which toxify, and celebrate those which repair and build up our communities.*
- **0:10-0:35 ACTIVITY 1: Qualities of the Self: Yetzer Ha-Tov and Yetzer Ha-Ra**
- **0:10 --** *Judaism teaches that we each have two competing halves of our selves -- the yetzer ha-tov and the yetzer ha-ra, the good and wicked inclinations. These are considered to be innately programmed aspects of our being, each with a commitment to its own purpose. **The challenge of life is not to eliminate the yetzer ha-ra, but to moderate it and make it work for the other.***
- **0:11 --** Fold a sheet of blank paper in half, lengthwise, and cut out the silhouette of a person's body using a pair of scissors.
 - Using a pen or markers, "dress" your paper doll in qualities that you believe present positive aspects of masculinity.
 - Where do these qualities live in the body/self?
 - How do they manifest themselves in your hands? Your eyes? Your ears? Your feet? Your belly?
- **0:18 --** On the opposite side of your paperdoll, list, draw or color the qualities that are negative and degrading to masculinity?
 - Where do these qualities live in the body/self?
 - How do they manifest themselves in your hands? Your eyes? Your ears? Your feet? Your belly?

¹ The [number of] principal *Melakhot* is forty minus one. [The forbidden *Melakhot* are]: Sowing, plowing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, sorting, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing wool, whitening it, combing it, dyeing it, spinning, weaving, making two loops, weaving two threads, separating two threads, tying [a knot], untying [a knot], sewing two stitches, tearing for the purpose of sewing two stitches, hunting a deer, slaughtering it, skinning it, salting it, curing its hide, scraping it, cutting it, writing two letters, erasing for the purpose of writing two letters, building, demolishing, extinguishing a flame, lighting a flame, striking with a hammer, carrying from one domain to another. These are the principal *Melakhot* - [they number] forty minus one. *Mishnah Shabbat 7:2*

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- **0:25** -- In groups of 2-5 people, share one quality that you labeled as positive and one you labeled as negative.
 - How do you see this quality contributing/detracting from a culture of positive masculinity?
 - Why is this quality important for to you to name?
- **0:35-0:40 BREAK**
- **0:45-1:10 ACTIVITY 2: The Whole Self Cares for the Whole: Assessment and Action Plan**
- **0:45** -- The question becomes how do we move from identifying the qualities and characteristics of positive masculinity and integrating them into ourselves, our camp cultures and the communities we call home. This requires us to create a map for action in the world.
- What is a Power Flower? A Power Flower is a way of mapping and reviewing the dominant forces of social identity influences in your life. While there are many ways to state our values and pursue their lived fulfillment, this [modified Power Flower](#)² exercise, used in anti-racist education, is meant to model what is possible through careful thought, planning and pruning of our behavior.
- *[Share example of Power Flower you created in advance of this program.]*
- **0:50-1:00 Create the flower.** On a new sheet of paper draw a single circle in the middle of the page. It should be large enough to write a few words or phrases. Then, create several (6-12) petals of your flower, radiating out from the center. They should be relatively uniform and evenly distributed. Finally, at the end of each petal add an additional petal, as if to double the reach of the flower's petals. These petals should also be able to contain a few words and/or phrases.
- Taking your time, fill out your own Power Flower using the following guidelines? You can write out a single idea (word/phrase) in each petal. Begin with the outer petal, then the center of your flower, followed by the inner petal (between the two).
 - **Outer** petal - How do you think others perceive you?
 - **Center** - How do you see yourself?
 - **Inner** petal - What adjustments need to be made to either or both of these petals?
- **1:00** -- Take a few minutes in hevruta/pairs to share with someone else what you noticed in filling out this Power Flower.
- Guiding question to ask each other: How did this activity (filling out the Power Flower) make you feel?
- We've now created a visual model for an integrated self, that incorporates our highest ideals with the challenges of daily life and social norms. Now we need to ask how do we deploy that integrated person? How do we invite that person to greet the world first every day?

² https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/edactivism/Activist_Resources/The_Power_Flower.html

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- **1:10-1:30 -- CLOSING: What's in a handshake? Presenting Our Highest Selves**
- *A handshake is* a simple interaction, most common in the West as a greeting of introduction-- sometimes to a new person, or a person you haven't seen in some time. It can be one of the many ways in which we initially present ourselves to others.
- In presenting ourselves to others, we are given the opportunity to offer respect to them and to show that we are also worthy of respect.
- *A handshake is* a form of physical communication and, even, intimacy. Therefore greeting one person may be different than how we greet another.
- *A handshake is* more than the place where two hands meet. It includes eye contact, words of greeting and other forms of body language (How are you standing? How firm/soft is your grip? Are your hands clean? Sweaty? Dirty?)
- **Consider the many ways you can extend your hand in greeting.** A handshake, a fist bump, a high-five, etc.
- For two minutes, walk around the room, freely. Experiment with greeting others through a hand gesture -- make sure to use a different one for each person you encounter. Is it playful? Is it serious? How does it show the other person respect? How does it show you respect?
 - What did you like from the many different ways you were greeted?
 - What did you dislike from the ways you were greeted?
 - Did anything change in you as this experience continued?
- Now, let's do it again. But first, we'd like you to silently make the following three statements to yourself -- silently or aloud. I will read these statements and then pause to give you a chance to recite them to yourself:
 - **I will be proud of the person I am becoming.**
 - **When I greet others, I will assume the best in them.**
 - **I will make room for others.**³
- Take another two minutes and greet others around the room again. Try to carry these *kavanot/intentions* that you've set.
 - What was different this time, if anything?
- **Closing Questions:**
 - In thinking about the first activity (paper dolls), what qualities do you think best represent you? Your camp?
 - How can you help your campers be their highest selves at camp? Your peers?
 - How does camp prepare us to present out highest selves?

³ Consider the teaching found in Pirkei Avot 1:6, "Yehoshua ben Perachiah and Nitai of Arbel received from them. Yehoshua ben Perachia says, "Make for yourself a teacher, acquire for yourself a friend and judge every person as meritorious." The beginning of this teaching informs us here, in this context, that each person holds for us an opportunity. Each person could be your next mentor or trusted confidante. That last part, וְהָיוּ דָן אֶת כָּל הָאָדָם לְכַף זְכוּת, *havei dan et kol ha-adam l'chaf z'chut*, is the most challenging part of this lesson. If each person's merit is equal to my own, then how might I carry the responsibility for making sure another person's merit is valued like my own? After all, when another person is devalued then I am devalued as well.

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ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

- Each of the activities in this session can be used on their own and/or in combination with one another.
- Some recommended reading if you are going to do lead/facilitate this session (either as a whole, or individual activities from this session):
 - [APA Guidelines for Men and Boys](#)
 - [Caroline Rothstein's WMC article](#) re: toxic masculinity
 - 2019 [Gillette ad](#)
 - [YouTube Playlist](#)
 - [Michael Steinhardt, a Leader in Jewish Philanthropy, Is Accused of a Pattern of Sexual Harassment](#)
 - [How Jewish Academia Created a #MeToo Disaster](#)
 - [How to Shake Hands](#)