

Falling in Love (again) with Nature *Specialty Track 2*

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SUMMARY:	Jewish natural wisdom will guide us in our exploration while we play in nature. Fun games that reconnect us to the natural world will allow us to explore our surroundings with laughter and joy. - Submitted by [Josh Lake]
TOPIC(S):	Nature Games Natural Perspectives
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	1. Create safe and fun spaces and experiences that allow our campers, and us, to grow roots into the natural world. 2. Empower and enable us to tacitly interact with nature and get our hands dirty. Literally.
AUDIENCE:	Any age, outdoor use, groups of up to 15-20
TIMING:	90 minutes
APPENDICES:	None
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Magnifying glasses, spoons, a notebook (or paper), and pencils/crayons
SET-UP DETAILS:	Outdoors in a natural setting

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

The Game of Camouflage (10 minutes)

- Explain that on the trail we will be playing a game called “camouflage.” Here are the rules of the game and how to explain it to your participants:
 - At some point on the trail I am going to yell out “CAMOUFLAGE!”
 - I will then close my eyes and count from 15 backwards to 0. You have 15 seconds to hide.
 - You must drop everything in your hands and find a place to hide from me.
 - At the end of 15 seconds, I'll open my eyes and try to find you. I cannot move from my location, but I can pivot on one foot (as in basketball)
 - I am the prey, and you are the predator. You need to keep me in your sight, if you don't, I could get away from you.

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- At all times, you must be able to see me with at least one eye.
- If I call your name, or describe what you are wearing, or describe your location, you must come out and return to me. You have been caught; you have lost your “prey.” Do not talk to other people on your way out or even look at them, because you will give their location away to me if you do.
- You can hide in any direction from me, 360 degrees. Remember, I can also pivot my foot and look in all directions.
- After I have “found” as many people as I can, I will again close my eyes and count from 10 to 0. You must move closer and hide (camouflage) from me. But do not tag me, you must hide again.
- Again, I’ll open my eyes and try to find you. I cannot move from my location, but I can pivot on one foot (as in basketball), as in the first round.
- If I identify you by name, clothing, or location you must come back.
- After I have identified as many people as I can, I will close my eyes, raise my hand and say, “GO!”
- The first person to tag my hand is the successful predator and catches her/his prey. You have outwitted both the prey and the rest of the predators.
- The person who “wins” by catching the prey will be the next prey and will be able to call “CAMOUFLAGE” the next time we play. You must ok the time and location of the next game with me. Do not call “camouflage” without my permission.
- Be safe out there! This is only a game and it is not worth getting hurt in order to find the best hiding spot or to avoid being captured!

Introduction to Nature Games

Most animals play in order to experience and learn about their world. Humans are no exception. When we are very young we explore our surroundings. Excepting helicopter parents. And excepting when we got old enough we are sent indoors to learn in an environmental vacuum. Camp offers us the unique opportunity to be outdoors for a few months at a time, which means we have an opportunity (obligation) to supercharge our outdoor play and awareness skills. Here are some games we can play to help supercharge you and your camper’s summer!

Shomer Shabbat Camera (15 minutes)

Split the group into pairs. Ask them to find a partner they have not worked with or don’t know. Pull one person from group as an example. “Can I have a volunteer as a *doogma* (example)? Thank you _____, this will be painless (I hope).”

Explain to the group, “There are many types of vision. For today’s exercise we will limit ourselves to three types of vision. 1. **Direct object vision.** 2. **Peripheral vision.** 3. **Splatter vision.** Here is a very brief description of each.”

1. **Direct object vision:** Some people see an object and can describe that object. They look at an animal, tree, flower etc. and can describe exactly what they see.
2. **Peripheral vision:** Some people look and see how one thing may effect or affect something else. For instance, they see a tree casting a shadow. They see the tree, but they are noticing something on the periphery of that tree, namely its shadow.
3. **Splatter vision:** Splatter vision is not seeing any direct object, or any object that affects something else. Splatter vision is a blurring of the picture in front your eyes; sort of like taking a snap shot of everything. Your eyes focus on nothing in order to easily pick up movement or changes in the scene.

All cameras have a few things in common. They have shutters, film or memory, timed exposures, etc. The person you are paired with now, your partner, is your camera. The shutter is that person's eyes and the film is your partner's brain/ memory. You can control the timing of the exposure with your shutter button, which is your partner's earlobe.

- To start the game, your partner closes his/her eyes. (This is where you may employ blindfolds if you like, but it is not necessary.)
- Hold on to your partner's arm and encourage him or her to keep his or her other arm raised in front of them ("bumpers up" in outdoor gaming terminology).
- Carefully walk your partner to something you would like to capture on film. Remind him/her that in the Torah it says that you should not put a stumbling block in front of the blind (Leviticus 19:14). Here is your blind person; you must not trick them and cause them injury.
- Position her/his eyes (lens) toward the picture you want to take. Photographers, remember the three lenses you can use to take a picture.
- To open the shutter, gently pull on your partner's earlobe. The shutter will remain open for as long as you hold the earlobe.
- Camera, remember the three lenses you have to choose from.
- The photographer cannot tell the camera which lens s/he wants to use; it's sort of a funny camera that way. This is where your skill as a photographer comes into play. Can you skillfully capture your desired image? Do not over expose the film or you won't capture anything. Between 1 and 3 seconds is usually enough time.
- When you have taken the picture, release the earlobe and the shutter snaps closed (eyelids close).
- As with digital cameras, we can see the picture we took immediately.
- Ask your camera about what it saw. Is it what you wanted to capture? How does it differ? You may take 3-4 pictures.
- When you are finished, switch so that the camera now becomes the photographer and the photographer becomes the camera.

Oak Gall and Torah (10 minutes)

This is what wasps have learned to do:

They have learned to genetically manipulate a tree to grow a house/nursery around their babies!

Jews have derived Torah from this amazing interaction! Torah is *Eitz Chayim Hi!*

Now that you know **about** the oak gall, what can we learn **from** the oak gall?

What does it mean in Jewish terms?

Learning about Torah is one thing; learning from Torah is something completely different.

Share logic from Bal Tashchit.

Pokiach Ivrim Activity (5 minutes)

Find a tree. How big is this tree? Here is a new way of measuring trees. Come up with consensus.

Say the blessing, Baruch atah...pokiach ivrim!

WOW! Look under the ground to see the full size of the tree!

What would it mean if we could build our own homes out of completely natural materials? We have done that for 1000s of years! Only in last 200 have our homes been made out of toxic stuff.

WOW! Look under the ground. Look into the tree. Look into your camper! And, if you still feel silly doing this, this is still ok. Think about how much fun your campers will have learning to talk to trees/plants/animals (we will do a little more talking to animals later).

Build-a-Tree (10 minutes)

Gather participants under a tree. Ask them the following questions:

- What are the different parts of a tree?
- What is the role, or job, of each of the different parts of the tree?
 - If participants don't know, first tell them the name of the part as a way of triggering memory; then ask participants to name their functions.
 - If they still don't know, give them the answers. (The order of the parts reflects how you will build the tree, from the bottom to the top, but feel free to improvise if you need/want.)
 - **Roots:** Gather water and nutrients from the soil. There are taproots and lateral roots. Tap roots anchor the tree to the ground and grow down. Lateral roots grow outward, like the branches of the tree, and collect water and nutrients in order to provide fuel for the trees.
 - **Heartwood:** The wood that supports the tree in growing up, out and bigger. This wood is at the center of the tree. Just like bones in people. Believe it or not, heartwood is dead wood. Trees use wood much the same as people use wood, for support and in order to build higher, but trees grow their own support systems.
 - **Xylem:** (pronounced ZY-lum) Vessels in trees that transport water and minerals up from the roots to the rest of the tree. They are important because they provide nutrients for the leaves to perform photosynthesis.
 - **Phloem:** (pronounced FLO-um) Vessels in trees that transport energy/food made in the leaves to the other parts of the tree. Extra food is stored in the roots so the tree can survive during the winter when it's leaves fall off.
 - **Bark:** Provides protection for the tree, much like skin does for people. Why is it important for us to have our skin? What would happen if we didn't have skin? What would happen if the tree did not have its bark?
 - **Branches:** Provide structure and support for leaves off of the main trunk. What part of the human body could be compared to branches? Why?
 - **Leaves:** Contain the chlorophyll that produces energy (food) from sunlight. They are sun catchers. Without sun the tree wouldn't have food. And without leaves the tree would go hungry!.
- Now, imagine if each of the parts of the tree made noise. What sound would each part make?
- We are going to build a tree together. But instead of using actual parts of a tree, we are going to use our bodies and our voices. Each part will have a sound and an action.
- Can I have a few volunteers to be the roots? What sound would roots make in doing their job as part of the tree? Create an action/movement along with your sound as you pretend to be the roots. Excellent! Can you start the tree by standing here?
 - Point to a spot about 10 feet away from the group where you and the participants can start building their human-powered tree.
- What is next? Heartwood. Can I have some volunteers to be the heartwood? What sound would heartwood make? What motion would you make to portray heartwood? Excellent! Stand in the middle of the roots and help grow this tree!
- What is next? What sounds and actions does each part of the tree make?
- Continue to build the tree with the entire group.

- If participants are having difficulty coming up with sounds or actions for their tree parts, use this guide to help:
 - **Roots:** They “slurp” or “suck” up water. They can pretend they are sucking up water and food through a straw.
 - **Heartwood:** Possible sounds/activity: They beat like a heart, ba bump, ba bump, ba bump. They can pound on their heart.
 - **Xylem:** Nutrients slide around the tree: “Whoosh, whoosh, weeee.” They imitate an elevator taking things from the roots and putting them into the leaves of the tree so it can make food through photosynthesis.
 - **Phloem:** Nutrients slide around the tree: “Whoosh, whoosh, weeee.” Participants can imitate a slide or a down elevator, taking things from the leaves and putting them in the roots and trunk of the tree.
 - **Bark:** Bark like dogs protecting their home: “Bark, BARK, BARK, BARK, RRRRRRuff, ruff, ruff...” They can make their sound while running around the tree.
 - **Branches:** Branches can creak and groan with movement. Wave your hands slowly in the air while “creeeking” and GRRRROOAAning.”
 - **Leaves:** Act like catching a ball, but you are catching sunlight. Sounds might be “plop,” or “thunk!” Leaves rustle in the wind, so perhaps “whosh, shoo.”
 - Be creative!
- When the tree is assembled, put the tree in motion by having everyone make the sound and motion of their part of the tree at the same time (see “hints for success” for ideas).

Critter Crawl (20 Minutes)

- Gather everyone in a circle.
- Explain that we often overlook things that are right in front of us, or in this case, below our feet.
- We are going to play detective and look for things that are hiding in plain sight, or perhaps slightly camouflaged.
- There is more life within 1-2 inches of the ground than there is above. We will be investigating this area with magnifying glasses.
- We need to get into pairs with our friends/fellow participants.
- Each pair will get a magnifying glass, a spoon, a notebook (or paper), and pencils/crayons.
- Your job is to find as many animals and other interesting things as you can and keep track of them in your notebook.
- When you find an interesting animal or item, write it down. Write a description of it and then draw it.
- You will search for animals and interesting things in this area (**SPECIFY AREA**, e.g., under these trees, or in this field.) The best way to find these animals is to crawl on your hands and knees using your magnifying glass to help you spot and examine things.
- Examples of things you might see are: insects, small plants/flowers, shells, worms, etc.
- You can search under the grass, under trees, dig 1 inch under the surface of the dirt.
- Let’s see which team can find the most unusual thing!
- Let’s see which team can find the most numbers of things!
- We have 10 minutes for this activity. Afterwards we will regroup and talk about what we found.
- **GROUPS SHOULD START INVESTIGATING.** Give them a 2-minute warning before time ends.
- Call all participants back to central spot.

Shinrin Yoku/Forest Bathing (10 minutes)

What is *Shinrin Yoku*?

In Japanese *shinrin* means forest, and *yoku*, although it has several meanings, refers here to a “bathing, showering or basking in.” More broadly, it is defined as “taking in, in all of our senses, the forest atmosphere.” The program was established to encourage the populace to get out into nature, to literally bathe the mind and body in green space, and take advantage of public owned forest networks as a means of promoting health.

Debrief Hevruta Style (10 minutes)

- Pair up with 1-2 other people
- Ask and answer these questions:
 1. How can you take anything we did in the last 90 minutes back to your camp?
 2. Come up with The Who, What, When, Where.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP: