



FIRSTSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

Breaking Out of the Gender Box: A Writing Workshop, Elective 2

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SUMMARY:	“Breaking Out of the Gender Box” is a writing workshop that uses poetry, Jewish text, and personal narrative as inspiration to explore how participants have been impacted by gender and gender roles at camp. - <i>Submitted by Ariella Rosen and Caroline Rothstein</i>
TOPICS:	Bedtime Ritual, Camp-wide/Large Group Programs, Communication Skills, Community Building, Gender, Sex and Sexuality, Group Dynamics, Identity, Inclusion- Special Needs, Jewish Text, Performance, Prayer- Alternative, Social Justice, Storytelling, Teen Programs, Theater, Tikkun Olam, Writing
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	The goal of “Breaking Out of the Gender Box” is to provide participants with ownership of their personal stories around gender and gender roles at camp, and to gain tools that enable them to comfortably express these stories with confidence. Additional objectives include providing participants with a Jewish context within which to explore and understand their stories, as well as the ability to facilitate such space for their campers as well.
AUDIENCE:	While this workshop activity can be facilitated for a group of any size, it can work particularly well as a bunk activity. While it can be done with any age group, it works especially well for older campers (13 and up) and staff.
LENGTH:	60-75 Minutes
APPENDIXES:	- STORY TEMPLATE PAGE HANDOUT for "Breaking Out of the Gender Box" - A link to Caroline's poem "My G-d Is a Queer G-d"
MATERIALS:	- Link to Caroline Rothstein’s poem “My G-d Is a Queer G-d” - https://youtu.be/vtsHnNx0isl - STORY TEMPLATE HANDOUT (enough for one per each participant) - Pens / writing utensils and paper for each participant - A computer from which to play Caroline’s poem/video and a projector / screen on which to share it for a group - Genesis 1:5 written out on large paper or individual pieces per participant in Hebrew (if applicable) and in English
SETTING:	We want to be able to have participants sit in chairs that are in a circle. Please and thank you!

Session Description:

- Invite participants to find a seat in the circle and each have a writing utensil, paper, and clipboard.
- Begin session.
- Welcome participants. Introduce facilitators. (5 minutes)
- Share goals and objectives of the session.
 - Mention confidentiality / using “I” statements.
- Share agenda for the session.
 - Will explore some Jewish text.



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- Will share some poetry.
- Will have opportunity for discussion.
- Will give participants an opportunity to create (and if they're comfortable, share) their own writing.
- Have participants share their name, pronoun, and answer the question: "When does day end, and night begin?" (10 minutes)
 - If the group is too large, have participants share their names and their pronoun, and then break off into pairs (the person next to them) to answer "When does day end, and night begin?"
 - Call on a few participants to share their answers.
- Write verse (Genesis 1:5) on flip chart paper and read and discuss it with the group. (10 minutes)
 - What comes to mind at first glance?
 - What are participants thoughts on the restrictiveness of dark and light, if any?
 - What is evening and what is morning? How are they different from day and night (if at all)?
- Handout STORY TEMPLATE to participants.
- Ask participants to talk about a time when they felt stuck in a category / space / experience that didn't feel right for them with regards to gender. (10 minutes)
 - Write it in the center of their STORY TEMPLATE.
 - Invite participants to think about this in terms of camp, though not a requirement.
- After they write, ask participants to underline something in what they wrote that surprises them.
- Ask participants to star something in what they wrote of which they're proud.
- Ask for volunteers who want to share what they underlined and/or starred.
- Explain to participants that they'll now have an opportunity to hear a live example how one person used writing / storytelling to "break out of the gender box."
- Caroline performs her poem "My G-d Is a Queer G-d." (15 minutes)
- Ask participants their reactions:
 - Did something resonate?
 - What stood out?
 - Was anything confusing?
- Discuss the notion of "twilight" and refer back to Genesis 1:5:
 - In what ways was this poem an example of twilight?
 - In what ways was this poem consistent with Genesis 1:5?
- Transition participants to writing workshop segment. Explain that it is now their turn to blur the fixed categories of "day" and "night" in their own stories.
- Ask participants to break into hevruta pairs. (10 minutes)
 - Ask participants (in hevruta) to take a look at their "fixed story" on their STORY TEMPLATE.
 - Ask participants to share their fixed story with their partner. Reiterate confidentiality agreement from the beginning, and let participants know it is okay to share only pieces of their stories if they would prefer.



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- Ask the pairs to discuss / talk about ways they could break out of the box / fixed story, and offer one another ideas on how to do so.
- Ask participants to return to working alone. (10 minutes)
 - Ask participants to write a list of three ways they can break out of their box at camp and/or in general.
 - Offer for them to consider: How can you live/exist in the twilight?
 - Invite participants to write (poem, prose, letter, etc.) in the spaces around the box in a way that explores ONE of these three ways in full - it can be a story, it can be a poem, it can be a letter to someone or something, their choice.
- Invite volunteers to share. (10 minutes)
- As a closing / debrief exercise, ask participants: (10 minutes)
 - How can you bring this back to camp as an idea/practice?
 - What are specific programs at your camp that offer space to live in the twilight? (What exists)
 - What are programs at your camp for which you can infuse twilight? (Where you can improve)
 - What are programs that happen literally at twilight at camp? How can you take advantage of that time of day
 - How can you use this as a bunk activity?
 - Explain the format of the STORY TEMPLATE as Talmud.
- Thank participants for coming.
- If small group, have everyone share one word to describe their experience and/or what they learned; if large group, have everyone write their word on the top of their page, and invite a few people to share.

Additional Notes for Bringing it Back to Camp:

Have fun!

APPENDIXES:

- STORY TEMPLATE PAGE HANDOUT FOR "BREAKING OUT OF THE GENDER BOX"

- A LINK TO CAROLINE'S POEM "MY G-D IS A QUEER G-D"