

Creative Shabbat: Putting Down Our Burdens, *Spin It!*

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SUMMARY:	A ritual for entering Shabbat that involves reflecting on the week and using a traditional Jewish idea about carrying items on Shabbat, combined with a nature walk, to metaphorically “let go.” - <i>Submitted by Ariella Rosen</i>
TOPICS:	Community Building, Holidays and Celebrations, Identity, Jewish Text, Meditation, Nature, Prayer- Alternative, Shabbat, Spirituality
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will gain tools to engage in self- reflection and facilitate this experience for others. They will understand a traditional concept about Shabbat and make meaning of it for themselves and others.
AUDIENCE:	This activity can be done with people of all ages and abilities, but is perhaps best done as a bunk activity or with a small group of staff. This activity will be most meaningful for campers ages 12 and older. Optimal group size is around 15.
LENGTH:	20-30 Minutes
APPENDICES:	Ariella Spin It Creative Shabbat Text Handout
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 copy per participant of _____ doc. • 1 rock or stick per person (ideally gathered on the walk) • 5-10 permanent markers (can be shared among participants) • 1 bucket (10 quarts or so) • 6 ft. long pieces of string, yarn, or twine (one per participant) • 1 leaf per participant
SETTING SUGGESTED:	Wide open space. Weather permitting, the group will go outside to whatever open space is nearest to the meeting location. Indoor space should be wide enough for the entire group to spread out without touching. Chairs to sit in for discussion but no other space needs.

Session Description:

Nature Walk (5 min)

Lead participants on a walk into the woods, to the waterfront, a large field, or any other beautiful space in camp where there is room to spread out. Instruct all participants as they walk to look for and pick up a natural item on which one can write (a rock, a smooth stick, etc.). If such items are not easily found, pre-gather enough of these items that each person has one.

Upon arrival at the designated space, ask participants:

- What does Shabbat feel like?
- What makes Shabbat feel the way it does?
- How do YOU know it's Shabbat?

Explain to participants that throughout Jewish history, Shabbat has often been defined both by what one “gets” to do, and by what one cannot do. Participants will now have the opportunity to look at a Shabbat prohibition and try to understand it as something they GET to do.

Hand out the Shulchan Aruch text about carrying on Shabbat. (5 min)

Share context as applicable: The Shulchan Aruch is a code of law that is essentially a “how-to guide” for all actions Jewish. This particular text is addressing the law that carrying objects on Shabbat is a form of “melacha,” a category of behavior that is prohibited on Shabbat according to Jewish law. One more bit of useful information: a cubit is the distance from one’s elbow to one’s fingertips.

Ask Participants:

Is this a useful distance to be allowed to carry? Why or why not? Why be allowed to carry at all?

What is special about the amount of space that 4 cubits takes up?

What kinds of things do we find ourselves carrying? (From literal to abstract)

Explain: 4 cubits is a radius of a person’s height. In other words, it is the space that a person takes up, or one’s personal space.

Ask:

What does it mean to carry something in our own personal space but no further?

Putting Down Our Burdens (5 min)

Explain to participants that Shabbat is a time to put down one’s burdens. Participants will take a few minutes in their own 4 cubits of personal space to reflect on what they are carrying, and then they will have the opportunity to put it down to prepare to enter Shabbat.

Invite participants to spread out, and give each a string measuring 6 feet in length.

Ask them to use the string to mark a radius of their own height around them in all directions.

Participants may choose to mark the circumference of their space in the dirt or sand.

Each participant’s radius should border another person’s but not overlap with it.

Instruct participants to spend 2 minutes reflecting on what burdens they are carrying right now, what is weighing them down, worrying them, etc.

Which of those burdens would they like to stop carrying for Shabbat?

Hand out permanent markers and instruct each participant to write their burden in the form of a word or short phrase on the object they picked up earlier.

Begin a bucket brigade.

Ask each participant to place their “burden” in the bucket and take a moment to feel the weight of holding the bucket.

When passing the bucket, participants should make eye contact with the bucket’s recipient and wish them “Shabbat Shalom,” a peaceful Shabbat.

The last participant should dump out the bucket under a tree (or bury it in the sand, dump it in the lake, etc. depending on location).

Explain to participants that the moment they step outside their 4 cubit radius, they are leaving behind the rest of their week and entering into Shabbat.

Instruct all participants to take a deep breath and step out of their 4 cubits of personal space.

Debrief (5 min):

Gather in a circle and ask:

How did it feel to reflect in your 4 cubits of space?

How did it feel to leave your burden behind?

Explain: 8 weeks at camp out of 52 weeks in a year is proportionally similar to one day out of each week being set aside for Shabbat.

In what ways does camp feel like Shabbat compared to the rest of the year?

What burdens do you stop carrying when you enter camp?

How does it feel to pick them up again when camp is over?

How can your time at camp help you to “lighten your load?”

Bonus Option for Havdallah (10 min) (Time-permitting)

Explain: When Shabbat ends, we prepare to jump back into the rest of the week, hopefully rejuvenated and energized.

Invite participants back into their 4 cubits of personal space.

Hand each a leaf (pregathered), or something else that is physically light to hold.

Invite them to write what they are looking forward to taking on in the coming week.

Collect those in a basket and pass them from participant to participant, for all to experience the lightness of what they are now carrying.

Invite participants into a tight circle.

Explain that the burden can be made lighter by sharing it, and invite any participants who wish to share what they are carrying, and to ask for help in doing so.

End with shouting “Shavua Tov (may it be a good week!)” on the count of 3.

Additional Notes for Bringing it Back to Camp:

This can be done each week as a ritual leading into Shabbat, and/or at the very beginning of the summer as a way of leading into camp as a form of Shabbat break from the rest of the year. Paired nicely with the Havdallah bonus done every week as well, or as camp is ending. This activity is meant to be done before Shabbat, but can be done on Shabbat as well. For camps that observe Shabbat in more traditional ways, this activity should be done before Shabbat, or can be done on Shabbat by eliminating the writing element, and (if there is an eruv) only picking up items that are not alive (ie rocks or fallen sticks or leaves, but nothing that is attached to a bush or tree).

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APPENDICES:

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Shulchan Aruch Orach Chayim 349:1

כל אדם יש לו ארבע אמות ברשות הרבים שיכול לטלטל בהם ומודדין לו באמה שלו,
שכל אחת מהן ששה, נותנים לו ארבע אמות בינוניות של כל אדם, ואם אמתו קטנה
טפחים

Kol adam yesh lo arba amot b'reshut harabim she'yachol letaltel bahem
u'modedin lo b'amah shelo, v'im amato k'tana, not'nim lo arba amot
beynoniyot shel kol adam, shekol achat mehen shisha tefachim.

Every person has four cubits (amot) in public space in which one may carry
[on Shabbat]. We measure these cubits by one's own forearm. If one's
forearm is small, we allow for four average cubits, which are each six
tefachim (the length of one's fist).



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