
INCLUSION TRAINING GUIDE FOR JEWISH SUMMER CAMPS

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CHAPTER 11: SPEAKING TO THE BUNK ABOUT INCLUSION AND DISABILITIES (TIPS, CONVERSATIONS AND ACTIVITIES)

The question of whether to “tell” bunk members about the disabilities of one bunk member comes up quite frequently. In cases of a visible disability, it is obvious that there is something different about this camper. In some cases, discussions will feel natural and comfortable. If a camper uses a scooter, wheelchair or walking stick, it will be necessary to speak about keeping the bunk organized and obstacle free so no one gets hurt. It may be useful to have the inclusion coordinator speak with the family ahead of time to ask if and how they have had similar discussions in the past, in other settings. It is never acceptable to “out” a camper or to share something about the camper which may have been shared in confidence.

In programs which offer separate bunks for campers with disabilities, such bunk discussions may or may not be necessary. If a camper raises a question about another camper, it may be handled with a simple response: “some campers are good at X; some have difficulties doing Y” or “people all do different and unique things—Sammy spins in circles and it comforts him.”

When a camper with disabilities is fully part of a typical bunk AND his disabilities are more invisible, there can be tension or even resentment among bunkmates. There may be a sense that certain behaviors are getting in the way of bunk bonding, or that too much attention is being devoted to a particular camper. Sometimes a bunk meeting to address the situation can be beneficial. Night time, just as the campers are winding down and in their bed and the lights are off can be a good time for a bunk discussion. There are many wonderful “trigger stories” about similarities and differences and “specialness.” The discussion is not about “the person,” but the campers will usually “know” which person or people are being alluded to. We might underscore that each person is “made” differently and has different strengths and weaknesses. We might validate their feelings. We might ask for strategies from the group. Oftentimes, the person exhibiting the behavior is not aware of it. And, he or she badly wants to be accepted in the group. Peers delivering the message that the behavior is annoying can often go much further than a counselor or division head deliver the message. After all, he or she wants to be liked or accepted.

It is also possible to frame the discussion in terms of Jewish law and values. One camp offered materials below on framing discussions around some important Jewish values. These may be useful in facilitating bunk discussions.

There are times where the camper with the disability will feel empowered and relieved if he tells the group about his disability. He may disclose that he has Asperger’s, for example, and tell what that means and why he exhibits certain behaviors. On other occasions, it may make sense NOT to have the person with the disability as part of the group—it is best to discuss this first with supervisors and even the child’s parents since this is not “being inclusive” and should be reserved for unusual circumstances.

The approach suggested below assumes that the camper’s disabilities have been disclosed to the bunk:

Tips for speaking to a group about a camper with disabilities

A proactive approach is always best. All of these options can be used *before* an actual problem arises as well as when tension does start to arise in the group.

One of the first options can be having the child herself speak to the group about her disabilities. This can be a good option if:

- The child is old enough and mature enough to do so
- She is comfortable and wants to address the group
- The parent of the child with a disability is also comfortable with this

The above is a good option to use if campers are expressing curiosity and asking questions and as a proactive approach to including the child in the group. Another way to use this option is to have each child take a turn at being “the star of the morning” and introducing themselves to the group and having the group ask them questions.

Another option is to take the child with a disability on an errand away from the group and have an adult-lead discussion with the group using the following guidelines:

- Set the tone by letting the group know that the purpose of discussion is to help everyone in the group with ways to include the camper with a disability and make him feel welcome in the group.
- Let the group know that you are happy to answer questions that help everyone meet this goal.
- Describe the camper’s abilities and challenges but try not to focus on labels or names of disabilities because that sometimes leads to preconceived notions based on other people they may know with the same disability. For example, a child might say “my neighbor has autism and he hit me once.”

Ask for input from the campers using guided questions such as:

- What are three things each of us can do to help (camper with disability) to feel included in the group?
- What do you think (camper with disability)’s favorite activity is? Why?
- What activity do you think is most challenging for (camper with disability)? How can we modify/adapt the activity to make it more fun for her?
- What is your favorite activity? Why?
- Which activity is most challenging for you?

This is an option that can be used when you see that there is tension in the group or if campers are getting annoyed with a camper’s behaviors related to the disability. This can also be used when the child isn’t able to answer questions himself or in a situation where it might not be comfortable for him to do so. If the camper is taken out of the group for a discussion, it is best if the inclusion counselor can stay with the group to help answer questions.

A third option is to do activities with the whole group (including the child with a disability) that highlight diversity, inclusion and acceptance. Some examples are:

Diversity Bingo: Create a BINGO board and put in the boxes statements such as:

- Someone who has blonde hair
- Someone who loves chocolate
- Someone who has been on an airplane
- Someone who has the same birthday as you

Through this activity, campers get a natural opportunity to interact with the camper with a disability and campers learn what they have in common with the child with a disability.

Group Inclusion/Diversity Circle: Have campers form a circle. As you call out different statements, have campers move to the center of the circle if the statement applies to them. Use statements such as:

- Has brown hair
- Has more than two siblings
- Is the oldest child in their family
- Likes to watch _____ TV show
- Loves art
- Loves sports
- Has been to the beach

Then lead a discussion with questions such as:

- How did it feel to be in the center of the circle?
- What did it feel like when people were looking at you?
- How did you feel about the people in the center of the circle with you? How about those on the outside of the circle?
- What are three things we can learn from this activity?

Flower Activity: Divide into groups if necessary (about 6-8 in a group). Draw a flower with a circle in the middle and as many petals as group members on the outside. Have the group fill in the center with something they ALL have in common. Then have each camper choose a petal to write something completely unique about him/herself. Lead a discussion on similarities and differences.

Group discussion: If the campers are old enough you can lead a full group discussion on first impressions with questions such as:

- Have you ever had the wrong first impression of someone?
- What did you learn about them to change your impression?
- Has anyone ever had the wrong first impression of you?
- What did you do to change their impression or perception of you?

The above activities can be great overall icebreakers and can also be used if tension starts to arise in the group.

Tips for speaking 1:1 with a child who is having difficulty accepting/understanding a child with a disability in the group

- Start from a place of compassion, not punishment or judgment. Lack of knowledge and understanding of disabilities is usually the root of teasing or exclusive behavior.
- Avoid asking “why” the child is teasing. The question “why” is too open ended and the child herself may not really know why.
- Instead you can say, “Tell me three things that you think or feel when you are around (child with a disability)”. Let the child know she can be 100% honest about her feelings.
- Then say “Tell me three things you think (child with a disability) feels when she is in the group.
- Reassure the child that it is okay to notice differences and to talk about them.
- Let the child know he can ask you questions and you will answer them as honestly as you can.
- If they are annoyed with the behavior of the child with a disability, let him know that it is okay to be annoyed, just like he would get annoyed with any other friend or sibling but just like in those situations, he cannot treat the child disrespectfully.
- The child may need tips on how to interact with the child with a disability.
- It is better to focus on things they might have in common when giving tips rather than putting the child in any kind of “helping” role. While that may seem like a way to elicit compassion, it does not help the child understand how to relate on a peer level and it highlights the disability first, not the person first.
- Ask the child about a time when he/she felt different or excluded and ask how someone helped him feel included.
- Avoid saying, “We are all the same.” It is more important to give the message that we are all different and that is not only okay, it’s actually great! Explain that some differences are more visible than others.
- The direction and tone of the conversation certainly depends on the age of the child. Children at different ages have different reasons for being hesitant around their peers with disabilities.
 - Young children (around ages 3-7) can be afraid that:
 - They may also “catch” a disability
 - That their peer is in pain
 - Older children (around ages 7-10) can be concerned that:
 - They might not be successful with interactions.

- They won't get to play the way they want to if they include the child with a disability
 - Pre-teens and teens (around ages 11-14) may be worried about:
 - What other people will think if they "hang out" with someone with a disability
- In closing a conversation, let the child know that you are happy that you had the chance to talk about it and that he/she is welcome to always come to you to ask more questions or to share concerns.

Bunk Conversations about Disabilities

CONVERSATION 1 (GRADES 3-5)

Judaism Values *Hakhnasat Orchim*, Welcoming Others. It is important to take the first step to greet others, including individuals with disabilities.

1. Thumbs up Activity

- Thumbs up when you think of an activity you can do well all by yourself
- Thumbs up when you think of an activity that you do better if someone helps you
- Thumbs up when you can think of an activity that you can't do unless someone helps you.

2. Even though you all have different things you can do well and different things you may need some help with, your counselors welcomed you into the bunk and into your bunk community.

- How did your counselors welcome you?
- Did you notice that even if you did some "welcoming activities" together as a bunk, your counselors probably did something for each of you.
- Maybe someone needed help carrying their bags, but other could do this by themselves
- Maybe some of you needed help making your bed, but other could do this by themselves

3. Do you know the story of Abraham who ran from the entrance of his tent to greet three strangers

- Why is it important to welcome someone - to camp, to the bunk, to sit next to you at a meal, to play a game?
- Why do we sometimes welcome different people in different ways?
- Thumbs up if you can think of a way your counselor helped you or welcomed you to do something in a way that worked especially well for *you* (anyone want to share?)

4. In addition to your counselors, who else welcomes you and helps you do things at camp?

- How are your counselors helping you become more independent?
- We all need extra help sometimes, this is part of camp. Thumbs up if you can think of a way your counselor helped *you* that was different than how he/she helped others. (If you can't think of anything now, that's fine: this happens all the time and we are usually not even aware of it.)

5. Some campers need on-going extra help; these campers have an inclusion counselor who is there to provide the help they need.

- How can you help someone who needs extra help?
- How can you welcome someone to join you who may need extra help to do so?
- Why is it important to welcome and help everyone in the bunk?

CONVERSATION 2

Judaism Values: *Hanoach la-na'ar al pi darko*, educate each child based on their way (Proverbs 22:6). Fairness doesn't mean everyone gets the exact same thing from you; fairness means that everyone gets what he or she needs to reach the same achievement level. (We have been referring to that as the difference between equal treatment and equitable treatment, or equity.)

1. Sometimes we want things to be equal, at other times we understand that it is "more fair" for things to be different.

Thumbs up if you agree with each statement:

- Everyone should get the same number of items for free choice canteen.
- It is okay if everyone picks a different kind of snack for free choice canteen.
- As a parent, I should make sure all my kids get a good dinner.
- As a parent, it is okay if I give a sick child warm soup and tea even though the other kids are having pizza for dinner.
- As an American, I should be able to shop in any store in my town.
- Even if there are no other parking choices and I really need to shop, I still should not park in a handicapped parking space.
- As a teacher, it is okay that I spend extra time with a student who is struggling to understand the lesson.
- It is sometimes fair to treat different people differently. (if some disagree, remind them about the sick child, the struggling student)
- Fairness really depends on the situation.

2. A disability can also depend on the environment and the tasks one is asked to perform

- Some school-based disabilities are not a problem at camp
- "Small" vs. "Big" problems depends upon the situation
- Heart surgeon – injures one part of one finger on one hand and is unable to perform her job
- Stephen Hawking – famous scientist known for his work regarding black holes, wrote several books, suffers from ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) and uses a wheelchair. Disabled?

3. What do you think would be the hardest disability to have at camp?

- Trouble making friends

4. As a Division Head or Inclusion Coordinator, I help counselors learn how to make sure everyone gets what they need to become more independent. This means that it is okay if they treat different kids in the bunk differently from each other, as long as the goal, and end result, is to get each camper what s/he needs to have a successful experience.

- Thumbs up when you can think of something you are very good at doing. (Share)
- Thumbs up when you can think of something you are not very good at doing. (Share)
- Thumbs up if I work with children and adults who struggle doing X, and I help each of them in different ways (one size fits all doesn't work)

5. How do we treat everyone at camp fairly by treating different people differently?

6. How can you help?

- Taking another look at someone who may seem to have a disability – what is the fair way to treat him/her, what are his/her needs?

CONVERSATION 3

Judaism Values: *B'Tzelem Elokim* - all people are created in G-d's image (Go-d does not create junk) The difference between equity and equality.

1. We all have strengths and weaknesses

- Give thumbs up when you have thought of a task you feel you excel at. (we are not going to share)
- Give a thumbs up when you have thought of something about yourself that you like. (we are not going to share)
- Give a thumbs up when you have thought of something other people admire about you. (we are not going to share)

2. Define the difference between equity and equality, treatment that is different based on our various strengths

3. If we are all created in G-d's image how come we are all different? What does B'Tzelem Elokim mean to you?

- How do we judge others and choose to include or exclude them?
- If someone can't spell or does poorly on a math test, do we see them as not smart?
- Is someone isn't graceful, or has any type of physical disability (including speech/lang.), do we shy away from them?
- A challenge: Do you know everyone in this camp - name, strength?
- Find the strength in ___# of campers you don't know yet (in your bunks and/or in your division)

CONVERSATION 4

Judaism values: Blessed are You, Lord our G-od, Ruler of the Universe, who makes people different (Mishnei Torah, Hilchot B'rachot)

- What does this look like outside the camp community; schools, shuls, etc.?
- What can you do to change things? (Be the change you want to see)
- Ask counselors to write down for themselves the best way they know to teach this value

Celebrating Difference with Campers in an Inclusion Program

Goal: Begin a conversation about difference with all the campers. Get them thinking about their own differences and the differences of those around them and find ways to appreciate each other's strengths and support each other's weaknesses.

Duration: This curriculum was used over the course of three 1-hour sessions.

MONDAY

Group A:

- Tell the campers that today we will be talking about differences in our community
- Ask: Have you ever felt like you were different from those around you? How did that feel?
- Introduce the text study by telling the *chanichim* (campers) that we will be looking at how different Jewish texts approach the topic of difference
- Text Study
 - Discuss:
 - Is it ever hard to get along with people who are different?
 - Why is it important to have differences within our community?
 - How do you think the inclusion program helps our camp community learn about and appreciate difference?

- How can we find ways to appreciate people's' strengths rather than focusing on their weaknesses?
- [In the camp which submitted this resource, the annual song night is called “Leil Hofa’ah; the division’s song is called “Ze Hasukaray;’ each camp can adapt the activity to fit its own needs]. Introduce “Zo Hasukarya” song for Leil Hofa’ah and tell the campers that we will learn the song on Wednesday and next week we will perform it for the whole camp. Then read the translation.
 - Give out worksheet with the following questions:
 - What is one thing you are really good at?
 - What is one thing you would like to work on?
 - What is one thing you think you can learn from another inclusion camper?
 - What is one thing you think you have to teach to the other inclusion camper?
 - Have campers share some of their answers
- End by telling the campers that our community is made up of so many wonderfully unique individuals that all help make the community special and kadosh (holy). They are a huge part of helping make our community holy by helping those around us to appreciate difference.

Group B:

- Read “The Boy Who Grew Flowers”
- Discuss:
 - What was different about Rink?
 - How did people treat Rink?
 - What does the story teach us about being different?
 - Have you ever felt different from your friends, either at school, at home, or at camp? What was that like?
 - Have you ever been treated differently?
- Introduce “Zo Hasukarya” song for Leil Hofa’ah and tell the campers that we will learn the song on Wednesday and next week we will perform it for the whole camp. Then read the translation.
- Ask: What is the message of the song?
- Give out worksheet with the following questions:
 - What is one thing you are really good at?
 - What is one thing you would like to work on?
 - What is one thing you think you can learn from another inclusion camper?
 - What is one thing you think you have to teach to the other inclusion camper?
 - Have campers share some of their answers
- End by telling the campers our community is made up of so many wonderfully unique individuals that all help make the community special and kadosh (holy). They are a huge part of helping make our community holy by helping those around us to appreciate difference.

Group C:

- Read “It’s Okay to be Different”
- Ask: What is one thing that is special/unique/different about you?
- Tell campers that our community is made up of so many wonderfully unique individuals that all help make the community special and kadosh (holy). They are a huge part of helping make our community holy by helping those around us to appreciate difference.
- Introduce “Zo Hasukarya” song for Leil Hofa’ah and tell the campers that we will learn the song on Wednesday and next week we will perform it for the whole camp. Then read the translation
- Have the campers draw a picture of themselves highlighting two things that make them different – one physical and one about their personality.
- Share pictures
- Trampoline

WEDNESDAY

Teach “Zo Hasukarya” Song

THURSDAY

- Review discussion from Tuesday
- Design quilt squares
- Record video of each camper talking about what makes them unique

Some people are tall.

Some people are short.

Some people have freckles on their faces,

And some people have long, long noses.

There are people who are big.

There are people who are small.

There are light people and dark people,

There are people in all different colors.

But, if someone is a good friend

And doesn't do you wrong,

It doesn't matter what they look like,

What's important is what's on the inside.

It's the candy and not the wrapper.

- What is one thing you are really good at?
- What is one thing you would like to work on?
- What is one thing you can learn from another inclusion camper?
- What is one thing you can teach the other inclusion camper?