



CORNERSTONE 2016 RESOURCE

Social Justice Track, Specialty Track 1

AUTHOR:	Sarra Alpert
SUMMARY:	Participants will learn a series of activities designed to highlight and celebrate diversity in the Jewish community. - <i>Submitted by Sarra Alpert</i>
TOPICS:	Communication Skills, Global Jewish Community, Group Dynamics, Identity, Jewish Culture, Jewish Values, Leadership Development, Social Justice, Storytelling, Teen Programs
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will learn a series of activities designed to highlight and celebrate diversity in the Jewish community.
AUDIENCE:	These activities would work best with groups of 40 people or fewer and can work for campers over age 13. These would also be excellent to run as a staff week session to set a tone of valuing diversity and to prepare staff to lead such sessions for campers.
LENGTH:	90-120 Minutes (can be broken down into sets of activities for 30-45 minute blocks)
APPENDIXES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Handout on best practices for Group Agreements ● Text study on Exodus 1:8-11 ● Text study on Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5 ● “Who Are You” worksheet
MATERIALS:	Handouts for all participants, pens or pencils, flip chart paper, markers. If possible, A/V setup to show a video (if that's not an option, there's an article to use in place of the video). If you choose to expand the "Who I Am" activity into an art project, you'll need assorted art supplies.
SETTING:	Chairs in a circle.

Session Description:

1) Starting with Connection (10 min):

Start with an exercise that immediately sets the tone of direct interpersonal connection and trust-building. For example: “Freeze walk”!

- Put on some slow-paced music and ask everyone to walk around the room/area at a leisurely pace, making as much eye contact as possible.
- When the music stops, get into a pair with whoever you’re currently holding eye contact with (or find a partner if you weren’t currently holding eye contact with anyone).
- Hold eye contact for 10 more seconds (tell them when time is up). Then introduce yourselves to each other, sharing your name and one of your favorite things.
- Repeat this at least six more times (or if you have time, you can do it as many times as there are people, so that everyone has a chance to meet everyone else this way. By later in the game, people will be consciously seeking out those people they haven’t partnered with).

2) Community Agreements (10 min):

Acknowledge that in this series of sessions, we’re going to venture into topics that people are

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often made to feel uncomfortable about. It will be important to try and break down some of those taboos and also to hold an understanding that everyone will be working through that discomfort. In order to do this, it's best have clear agreements for how to maintain respect, engagement and care for/with the topic and for/with each other. Handout #1 includes a list of several suggestions for important agreement points to establish.

3) Framing Text Study (10 min):

Share the following text: A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, "Look: the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase; otherwise in the event of war, they may join our enemies in fighting against us and rise from the ground." So they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor; and they built garrison cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Raamses." (Exodus 1:8-11)

Discuss:

- How do you explain or understand Pharaoh's reactions here?
- What role are the people of Egypt playing in this situation?
- In an ideal scenario, what might someone who feels like Pharaoh (reacting negatively to someone unfamiliar to them) do to address that?
- What parallels do you see to modern experiences of people who are perceived as outsiders?
- What are examples you've seen of people who encounter difference in a way that moves towards growth, learning and relationship-building?

4) Activity set #1 - Who Are You? (30 min):

Give everyone the handout of a page divided into three categories with the headings: Who I Am, Who I'm Not, Who I Hope to Be. Explain:

- The first list is for names/terms/titles that you wear proudly (for example: sibling, smart, feminist, Jew, mensch)
- The second list is for names/terms/titles that you don't like and which have either been applied to you or that you worry have been applied to you (for example: JAP, bossy, not really a Jew, bitch)
- The third list is for names/terms/titles that don't apply to you yet but which you hope will someday (for example: parent, graduate, ally).

Be sure to tell them that they will be sharing this list with other people. If they'd like to write down terms they don't want to share, they should put those on the back.

Give everyone time to fill out their lists.

Form concentric circles. Each person should allow their partner to read through their list, and then each person should choose one of the terms on their partner's page and ask them to share more about it.



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After a couple of minutes, switch partners (number of switches will depend on amount of time allotted for program).

Come back together. Watch the Kaleidoscope trailer:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AnjuJ0wm_bM

(If you don't have setup to show a video, use this article instead:

<http://www.myjewishlearning.com/jewish-and/owning-my-identities/#>)

Discuss:

- What did you learn from hearing bits of these people's perspectives and stories? What themes or shared experiences did you notice?
- When have you had similar experiences to the ones these storytellers were describing? How did you feel? Was there anyone who actively helped to welcome you?
- Why might someone be alienated or feel disrespected by someone asking the question "What are you?" What are other similar questions that someone might ask in a Jewish community space that might make someone feel labeled as an outsider?
- One of the ways that questions about someone's identity often go wrong is when those questions aren't grounded in real, deep relationship-building. How can we create camp spaces for people to genuinely get to know each other's stories of who we are and where we come from?

*Note: depending on time frame and group interests, you could expand this activity into an art project where participants create posters that highlight the words they wrote down on their "Who I Am" list (it could be collage, drawing, etc).

5) Activity set #2: Who's in the room? (30 min)

Ask participants to call out some of the assumptions that are commonly made about various shared characteristics within the Jewish community. For example: Jews are white, Jews come from Eastern Europe, Jews love bagels and lox, Jews aren't athletic, Jews are smart, Jews are well-off.

We know that these assumptions are far from accurate. Within the Jewish community, there are people from many ethnic backgrounds, racial identities, Jewish beliefs and practices, gender identities, class backgrounds, sexualities, and personalities, with a wide range of Jewish rituals and customs, some of which are inherited and others of which are created.

(You can share a few facts as examples:

-- From the Pew Study: 20% of U.S. Jews report household incomes of less than \$30,000 per year; about six-in-ten Jews in this low-income category are either under age 30 or 65 or older.



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-- From the Institute for Jewish and Community Research: We estimate at least 20% of the U.S. Jewish population is racially and ethnically diverse, including African, African American, Latino (Hispanic), Asian, Native American, Sephardic, Mizrahi and mixed-race Jews by heritage, adoption, and marriage.)

We're going to read stories from some of the people who haven't always felt as if they are seen as "fitting in" to what others perceive as Jewish communal norms. Great examples of these stories can be found at the Jewish Multiracial Network's blog (<http://www.jewishmultiracialnetwork.org/jmn-blog/>) or the Bechol Lashon "Real People, Real Stories" page (<http://www.bechollashon.org/resources/holidays/real/real.php>). Choose the right selections based on the age group you're working with and the amount of time you have.

Split into small groups to read and then to discuss:

- What do you find especially eye-opening or thought-provoking about this person's perspective and experience?
- What could our camp community do to make sure that no one is made to feel as if they don't belong here?
- What might you say to this person to help to welcome them?
- What have people done for you in the past to help you feel welcome?

Study this text: Furthermore, only one person, Adam, was created for the sake of peace among people, so that no one should say to their fellow, 'My ancestor was greater than yours.... Also, humans [were created singly] to show the greatness of the Holy One, Blessed be God, for if a person strikes many coins from one mold, they all resemble one another, but the Ruler of Ruler, the Holy One, Blessed be God, made each person in the image of the first, and yet not one of them resembles their fellow. Therefore every single person is obligated to say, 'The world was created for my sake'" (Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5).

End with a game that's a variation of "Who's in the Room?" or "The great wind blows for...":

- In the usual version of this game, everyone stands in a circle with one person in the middle. That person shares an I statement -- i.e. I have brown eyes, I like to eat ice cream in the winter -- and everyone else who also identifies with that statement switches places within the circle, with someone new taking the center spot.
- In its original incarnation, the goal of the game is to identify commonalities.
- In this variation, we'll alternate between finding commonalities and intentionally seeking out unique differences that we can celebrate.
- For the person standing in the middle, their mission is to find an I statement that is completely unique to them.
- Until that happens, they remain in the middle (other people who share the statements along the way still step in and switch places around the circle).
- Once the middle person finds a completely unique identifier, everyone applauds them and someone else takes their place in the circle.



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Additional Notes for Bringing it Back to Camp:

- Each of the above sets of activities could be done in their full grouping or could have elements pulled out for shorter opportunities like a bunk activity.
- The “Who Are You” section could also be done as art projects that highlight only the positive side of the list: have campers create a poster with words and images that represent the various parts of who they are.
- When you read the stories from Bechol Lashon or the Jewish Multiracial Network, you can also engage in activities that practice some of the rituals or other customs described by those people as specific to their personal Judaism. This can be a great opportunity to highlight Sephardic or Mizrahi recipes, or to learn about specific cultural approaches to various Jewish ritual moments.

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What are Community Agreements?

Community Agreements are a set of guidelines that help us to have challenging conversations in a productive way. Some of these agreements are to help people avoid problem behaviors (making “we” statements, etc), some are to help people notice their own growth points and what they’ll have to push themselves on.

Acknowledge that in this series of sessions, we’re going to venture into topics that people are often made to feel uncomfortable about. It will be important to try and break down some of those taboos and also to hold an understanding that everyone will be working through that discomfort. In order to do this, it’s best have clear agreements for how to maintain respect, engagement and care for/with the topic and for/with each other. Here are some suggestions:

- Speak from your own experience: Make sure you’re not generalizing to entire groups of people or presuming anything about someone else’s experience, stay with “I” statements.
- Seek out productive discomfort: Allow yourself to feel the discomfort that may come up, and be proud of yourself for working to truly grapple with it, as long as that grappling is getting you to a more productive point of engagement. Figure out how you need to process between sessions -- do some journaling, find a friend to talk stuff through with, etc.
- Multiple truths: We are all experiencing different things that are simultaneously true, even if they sometimes come into contradiction with each other or are difficult to hold together. Embrace that complexity and work to communicate with and understand each other.
- Learn to listen/listen to learn: When you find yourself with a point of disagreement, work to find the question that’s inside that instead, and ask it. Then really listen to the responses you receive.
- Speak up, listen up: Pay attention to how much you’ve been participating. If you find that you haven’t been speaking up, push yourself to do so. If you find that you’ve been speaking up more than other people, take a step back and make sure others have a chance to contribute.

Note for facilitators of programming on sensitive topics: Since people will sometimes have unexpected reactions and can benefit from regular time to process, be sure that your planning includes a good balance of time for journaling, time for small-group or paired dialogue, and time for full-group exercises or discussion. You’ll see options for all of these methods reflected in these outlines, but as you decide which pieces you’ll use in various sessions, keep an eye out for making sure that balance is always there.

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Text Study #1:

A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, “Look: the Israelite people are much too numerous for us. Let us deal shrewdly with them, so that they may not increase; otherwise in the event of war, they may join our enemies in fighting against us and rise from the ground.” So they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labor; and they built garrison cities for Pharaoh: Pithom and Raamses.” (Exodus 1:8-11)

- How do you explain or understand Pharaoh’s reactions here?
- What role are the people of Egypt playing in this situation?
- In an ideal scenario, what might someone who feels like Pharaoh (reacting negatively to someone unfamiliar to them) do to address that?
- What parallels do you see to modern experiences of people who are perceived as outsiders?
- What are examples you’ve seen of people who encounter difference in a way that moves towards growth, learning and relationship-building?

Text Study #2:

Furthermore, only one person, Adam, was created for the sake of peace among humans, so that no one should say to their fellow, 'My ancestor was greater than yours.... Also, Adam [was created singly] to show the greatness of the Holy One, Blessed be God, for if a person strikes many coins from one mold, they all resemble one another, but the Ruler of Rulers, the Holy One, Blessed be God, made each person in the image of the first, and yet not one of them resembles their fellow. Therefore every single person is obligated to say, 'The world was created for my sake.' (Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5)

- What would it look like to live this idea in our day-to-day life as individuals?
- What would it look like for this idea to play out in our societal structures?

<u>What I Am</u>	<u>What I’m Not</u>
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<p><i>(names/titles/descriptors that you were proudly)</i></p>	<p><i>(names/titles/descriptors that you don't like and which have either been applied to you in the past or that you worry have been applied to you)</i></p>
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What I Hope to Be

(names/titles/descriptors that don't apply to you yet but which you hope will someday)