

CORNERSTONE 2017 RESOURCE

Gender and Sexuality Diversity at Camp

Eat, Pray, Invest

AUTHOR(S):	Jake Wassermann
SUMMARY:	At Jewish summer camps we have the responsibility to ensure the safety and happiness of all of our campers. By exploring the relationship between the LGBTQ+ community and Jewish prayer, you will gain a more dynamic understanding of how to make camp a space where everyone can thrive. Join us to explore how prayer honors the body, how it evokes love, and how it's private and public moments can inspire your campers. – <i>Submitted by Jake Wasserman</i>
TOPIC(S):	Gender, Sex, and Sexuality; Identity
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	The participants will not only have been able to discuss the issues of making the LGBTQ+ community feel safe at camp through the lens of prayer and holiness, but they will also feel empowered to take this knowledge back to their camps to create a more inclusive environment.
AUDIENCE:	It is never too early to learn about gender and sexuality diversity.
TIMING:	45 Minutes
APPENDICES:	Gender Unicorn Worksheet
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -10 Sheets of Flipchart paper -Flipchart markers -Pens for each participant -Gender Unicorn Worksheet for each participant -Siddurim
SET-UP DETAILS:	The room should be set up in a way that is conducive to movement and also for the comfort of the participants to sit in chairs, on couches, or on the floor. The room set-up is very fluid and does not have strong constraints.

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SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Provide session framework (2 minutes):

- Group Agreements:
 - Ask participants to affirm the following agreements and to add any they feel are missing.
 - Confidentiality - what's said here stays, what's learned leaves
 - Seek out productive discomfort
 - Ask clarifying questions
 - Self-care (if need to leave = ok)

Birkot Hashachar/Gender Unicorn: 15-20 minutes

The goal of this portion of the program is a conversation about our bodies, what we take for granted, and (vis-à-vis the Gender Unicorn activity) the aspects of our identity that others take for granted.

- Begin this activity by reading through *Birkot Hashachar* in English (either go around, or read to oneself) and discussing which blessing resonate with the participants the most.
- Then discuss why this prayer is necessary and what it adds to our daily morning reflection.
- This will lead directly into our conversation about the “gender unicorn” and these aspects of self. Essentially, if someone is “normative” they take for granted their privilege (i.e. gender identity) and therefore the world doesn't take the time to appreciate the fine details that make up a person. However, *Birkot Hashachar* and the gender unicorn help us do just that (i.e. gives sight to the blind, romantic attraction, etc.)

Gender Unicorn:

- Hand out the gender unicorn worksheet to each participant, making sure you have one for yourself as the facilitator.
- Take the participants through the worksheet step by step. If you feel comfortable, to give the participants a fuller understanding of the worksheet, provide your personal identity markers as an example.
- Explain to the participants the five categories defined by the worksheet (Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Biological Sex, Sexual Attraction, and Romantic Attraction), and for each one, let the participants know your identification.
- Invite the participants to fill out the worksheet for themselves and reassure them that this can be as private or as public as they want it to be.
- Give the participants about 5 minutes to complete this activity, and invite them to move around the room if they want privacy.
- Gather the group together, and ask if any of the participants would like to share their worksheet with the room. Explain to them that this is a way to normalize gender and sexuality diversity, and that no one should be ashamed, but it is also completely okay if they want to keep it private.
- After the shares, invite the room to reflect upon this experience. What did this activity make them think about and what takeaways does the activity provide? How does this tie in to *Birkot Hashachar*?

Language, Shema, and Love: 15-20 minutes

This portion is to inform the participants about the relationship between the words we use, how we listen to others, and how others listen to us.

- Room is set-up with flipchart post-it sheets pasted all over the room. On each sheet, there will be a different word that relates to the topic at hand and from the Shema. There should be a minimum of six sheets, and a maximum of ten. (Some words can include: Gay, Straight, Transgender, Lesbian, Queer, Love, Listen, One, etc.)

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- Invite the participants to take the time to walk around the room and write their general impressions of each word on the respective sheet. “General impressions” can mean the participants’ definition of that word, their feelings about that word, or their reaction.
- Give the participants about five minutes to complete this activity, and then instruct them to share with a partner their reactions after looking at everyone’s impressions. Ask them to discuss what surprised them, what they expected to happen, or what questions they may have.
- Gather the group back together and go through each sheet one by one, asking for the participants’ feedback about that word and writing their impressions.
- For each word, the conversation should end by the facilitator giving the group the dictionary definition of each.
- Once all of the words have been discussed, engage the participants in a conversation about the relationship between the correct usage of these words and what happens when the incorrect meaning is used.
- Then turn to the Shema to have a discussion about the intentionality behind how we listen (and how we use specific words).
- Recite the Shema, and have the group read the English.
- Invite the participants to think about the importance of listening in relation to the importance of the words we use.
- Not only do we need to listen to what others express and how others feel, but we need to listen to how our words come across to others... which transitions directly into *V’ahavta* ... Once we listen fully (to ourselves and others), then we can love and accept everyone.

Safe Space and Amidah:

This portion of the program is meant to identify how public and private spaces can be made safe and comfortable for everyone, through the model of the Amidah.

- Daven the *Amidah* as per the siddur, and emphasize to the group to take this time to reflect and really take advantage of the time they have to be with themselves
- This will transition into a conversation about how the *Amidah* is unique because it is a private AND public experience. We daven the *Amidah* together as a *kehillah* (in a public way), yet at the same time its’ public format is for the benefit of the private experience (of personal prayer).
- Brainstorm with the group what are public and private spaces in camp.
- Then brainstorm what the word “Safe Space” means.
- Instruct the group to think of an experience in their camp life when they have noticed that the environment was not safe to the entire population. (Example: an all-girls dance on a Shabbat evening is a public display of gender that can actually really be detrimental to anyone who is struggling with their gender) Invite participants to go around (or select a few) to discuss their scenarios. Ask the group what they think a solution to each issue might be. (Take as long as you deem appropriate for each scenario).
- Discuss the relationship and structure of the Amidah and how it can be a safe space (or how it could be unsafe).
- Ask the group if they have any questions for you as a facilitator (likely, one would have experience in this area and would have the knowledge to answer tough questions for the participants).
- Explain the value of *V’ahavta L’reicha Ca’mocha* (write it up on the flip chart) in Judaism, and the value of loving our neighbor like ourselves.
- Ask the group why this is important to them and to the outside world/camp (safe space, discussing this topic, language around the LGBTQ+ community).

Conclude by thanking the group for their participation and give them your contact information in case they have follow-up questions for you. Encourage the group to take what they’ve discussed back to their camps to make camp a safe space!

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

Discuss this program with people in charge and adapt it to fit the needs of the individual camp.