

CORNERSTONE 2017 RESOURCE

Tzedakah: Exploring Root Causes *Spin It*

AUTHOR(S):	Sarra Alpert
SUMMARY:	In this session, we'll be learning to work with a tool to help trace social issues from their immediate manifestations through to their root causes. – <i>Submitted by Sarra Alpert</i>
TOPIC(S):	Social Justice, Tikkun Olam
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will learn to trace social issues through to root causes. They will have the opportunity to then consider how their volunteering or giving can help to address multiple layers of an issue.
AUDIENCE:	Older campers (12 and up) or staff
TIMING:	20 minutes
APPENDICES:	
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Chart paper, markers, small pieces of paper, tape
SET-UP DETAILS:	You'll need to be somewhere with wall space or an easel so that you can all see the "root cause" tree together.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Trigger Activity: Pin the Mitzvah on the Mensch

- In advance, prep chart paper with a generic outline of a person.
- Ask people to call out some examples of good deeds that an individual can do.
- Invite a few people to write those examples down on small pieces of paper.
- Invite those people to come up to the mensch-outline. Put tape on the back of their paper, blindfold them, spin them around, and have them play "pin the mitzvah on the mensch" by trying to tape that specific good deed to the part of the mensch that most closely corresponds to how you would do that good deed (i.e. going to a march or rally = legs; listening to a friend talk about their problems = ears).
- After a few examples, list a few reasons why that good deed might be needed. For example: Why might someone be in need of a friend to listen to them? They might be struggling with a particular problem or feeling depressed or feeling lonely.
- Key takeaway: Each good deed we do addresses an immediate need AND those immediate needs are also connected to larger issues and systems. Let's dig into those layers...

CORNERSTONE 2017 RESOURCE

Introduce the “Root Cause Tree” tool (credit to Advocates for Youth: www.advocatesforyouth.org):

- Draw a tree on chart paper.
- Ask everyone to name what they might see in the world as evidence of poverty. For example: people without homes, people without enough food to eat, neglected buildings (and sometimes neglected neighborhoods), etc. Write all of these answers up on the leaves and branches of the trees.
- Ask everyone to name the structures, institutions, major figures, practices and policies that/who impact the examples listed in the leaves. Another way to ask it is: Why do these problems happen? For example: laws, access to public benefits, affordable housing, landlords, low minimum wages. Write each of these answers on the trunk of the tree.
- Then ask everyone to name the underlying historical, social and systemic root causes of these issues. Another way to ask it is: Why do these structures and institutions cause these issues? For example: racism, sexism, a “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” philosophy.

Read back through the tree together. Debrief it:

- What does this tree help you see? How do the more visible aspects of poverty (the leaves and branches) get supported by certain structures (the trunk) and how are they rooted in larger systems (the roots)?
- What are some examples of what people are doing to address these problems at each level of this tree? For example:
 - Leaf - people without a place to sleep tonight. Way to address this immediate need: homeless shelters.
 - Trunk - lack of affordable housing. Way to address this: organizations that are building more affordable housing and making it available to people at an income-based rent.
 - Root - pick an example of a group that's homeless more than the average (for example, LGBTQ youth). Way to address this: campaigns that help to address homophobia and transphobia, better resources for families who are struggling with how to support a child coming out as LGBTQ, better resources for LGBTQ kids.
- What are some examples of organizations or projects that address issues like these at multiple levels? What are some examples of groups or organizations working together to support each other's work in each addressing issues like these at different levels?
- Discuss: How does this analysis help you think about where to donate your money? Or how to expand your ideas of potential volunteer projects? What does it make you want to learn more about?
- Key takeaways to cover in debrief conversation:
 - The importance of encouraging interventions at multiple points in this process, i.e. giving to organizations that are addressing the immediate needs as well as impacting the underlying systems.
 - The importance of different groups working together to address different leaves and branches and roots. When these groups all work together to encourage and support each other, that's movement-building.

CORNERSTONE 2017 RESOURCE

End with a text study (write this up on chart paper):

Rabbi Yonah said: "It is not written 'happy is one who gives to the poor,' but 'happy is one who considers the poor' (Psalms 41:2), that is, one who [not only gives but also] thinks about the mitzvah of giving and how to perform it."

- *Talmud Yerushalmi, Pe'ah 8:9*

Discuss: How will this Root Cause Tree help you think more about how you give and how you perform good deeds?