Why Aren’t You Playing? Making Camp Games and Activities Accessible and Inclusive

Elective 1

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| **Author(s):** | Ariella Rosen |
| **summary:** | Adaptations of favorite camp activities to make them more accessible to all campers, inspired by the lessons of various Jewish folk tales. - *Submitted by* *Ariella Rosen* |
| **Topic(s):** | Inclusion and accessibility, camp traditions |
| **Learning Objective:** | Participants will leave with tangible ways of adapting three camp activities, and the tools to notice barriers and make modifications on their own. |
| **Audience:** | All activities can be done with participants of all ages (though ideally ages 10 and up). Discussion can be modified to be age appropriate, as well. Ideal group size is 15-40. |
| **TIMING:** | 90 minutes |
| **AppendiCes:** | Handout 1 (Folk Tales), Handout 2 (Equality Picture), Handout 3 (Talent Appreciation Cards) |
| **Materials Needed:** | Butcher paper, 2 buckets filled with water, sponges, markers, tape, pens, paper, chairs or benches, blank cardboard puzzles, Ziplock bags, glue, tissue paper, assorted art supplies, fidgets (koosh balls, Play-doh, etc.) |
| **Set-UP DETAILS:** | Both indoor and outdoor access is ideal, or a large indoor space.  Set up in advance: Chairs in a circle (to be moved mid-way through), two layers of butcher paper taped to the wall, one on top of the other. Top layer should have two side-by-side targets; the bottom layer should have one target on one side of the paper.  Art supplies should be off to the side for later. |

**Session Timeline & Outline:**

**00:00-00:07- Welcome and Defining the Problem**

**00:07-00:27- Hitting the Target**

**00:27-00:52- Epic Relay**

**00:52-01:12- Exploring the Forest**

**01:12-01:30- Debrief**

**Welcome (2 min.)**

Welcome participants, go around the room and share name, camp, and pronouns.

Point out that fidgets are available whenever anyone would like.

**Defining the Problem (5 min.)**

Begin by demonstrating an exercise in privilege that has gone viral over the last couple of years. (Learn more here: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/bmelchior/students-learn-a-powerful-lesson-about-privilege>)

Place a bucket in the front of the room, and give crumpled-up balls of paper to a few participants, sitting different distances away from the bucket. Tell them that whomever can make a basket wins.

After a couple of tries, step out of the exercise.

Discuss:

* What is the problem with an activity like this? Who benefits? Who struggles?
* What are rights that every camper deserves? How can we as counselors deliver on those rights?
* What are issues, obstacles, or barriers to participation in camp activities that might exist?
* What is the problem with saying “everyone must participate” given those potential barriers?

Explain: at camp, we don’t always realize where we are placing the bucket, which can cause some campers to be left behind. What are ways we can give our campers a more equal shot at success? We will go through a few activities that will model tools you can use to make common camp activities more accessible.

**Hitting the Target (20 min.)**

Cover the wall with 2 layers of butcher paper, one on top of the other. On the outer layer should be drawn two large targets. Divide the group into two teams and tell them that they will have 2 min. to hit the target as many times as they can with the wet sponges. One team will hit the target facing forward. The other will do so facing backwards. Teams should appoint one person to keep track of the number of target hits. At the conclusion of 2 minutes, ask each team how many times they hit the target. Commend the “winning” team.

Take down the butcher paper to reveal another layer of butcher paper on the wall. There should be one target drawn on the paper, on the same side which corresponds to the forward-facing group from the last round. Give each team their instructions for this next round individually (so that the other team cannot hear). Explain to the first team that their instructions remain the same: hit the target as many times as you can in 2 minutes. Explain to the second team that they must still throw the sponges facing backwards, but they should draw the target on the butcher paper AFTER hitting it. Give the team a few markers. Once again, each team should appoint someone to keep track of target hits. Team 2 should also appoint 2 target-drawers.

After the second round of this game, ask the group to come together. Discuss:

* What are your initial reactions to this game? Was it fair? Why or why not?
* In what ways was it inclusive. How can it be made more accessible and inclusive?

Explain: this game is based on a Jewish Hasidic folk tale. Read the story “Hitting the Target” together with participants.

* What do you think is the lesson of this story? Do you agree with it? Why or why not?
* Share the image of Equality vs. Equity (Handout 2). Which panel(s) did this game represent?
* How can we modify the game even further to get to the third panel?
* What are other examples of camp activities where this kind of modification might make the game both more accessible and more interesting? Is it okay to change the rules?
  + Archery, sports like basketball, etc.

**The Epic Relay (25 min.)**

Divide the group into teams of 4-to-5 people (or approximately 6 teams). Explain that each team needs to work together to escape a deserted island where they have been shipwrecked. Give each team a bag with a puzzle in it.

While teams are working, set up two long parallel rows of chairs on the other side of the room (that is the sea that must be crossed). As teams begin to work, they will realize that they are missing some pieces, and that they have pieces that belong to another team. Do not tell them what to do, but let them figure out for themselves that they must collaborate with other teams. Once teams have their puzzles assembled, they will also need to put them together with the other puzzles in order to read the message.

The message written across all of the puzzles will read:

“You are one step closer to freedom. Like the Israelite slaves leaving Egypt, you will need to cross a sea. If your whole team makes it across the sea, you will get 1 point. If every person in this room makes it across, each person will get 5 points. Once you cross you may not come back. From this point on, no one’s feet may touch the ground, and no speaking is allowed.” (Other options: no one may bend their elbows, everyone must move backward, etc.)

Clarify instructions, if needed, but otherwise let the groups work on their own. If participants ask if they can use materials in the room to help them, the answer is “yes.”

Once everyone has crossed the sea, congratulate them on their freedom, and expand the chairs into a circle to sit down and debrief. (Pass around stickers, and let everyone claim their “prize” based on the number of points they got). Note that at their camps they can determine a prize that is both appropriate and exciting for their campers.

Discuss:

* General reactions to the activity. What did you notice that made this activity more accessible? How could it be more accessible?
* How did you strategize? Did it work?

Read the story “A View from Heaven” (Handout 1).

* What is the difference between heaven and hell? What are other examples of how simple actions can dramatically change a situation?
* Do you like the lesson from this story? Why or why not?
* How did you see pieces of this story in the activity?

In this activity, the condition that leveled the playing field was that no one’s feet could touch the ground. This would not be the right modification for every group.

* What are other ways of issuing a fair challenge to everyone? Give examples.

Unpack the epic relay activity that many camps do, especially during Maccabia.

* How does relying on others to move forward enhance the competition?
* What are other examples of activities where this type of modification could work?
* Note that this kind of modification that requires everyone to move forward to succeed does not mean that competition cannot happen at camp. Discuss how both can exist simultaneously.

**Exploring the Forest (20 min.)**

Explain to participants: it’s talent show time! Participants may work in groups or individually to showcase a talent. You may use any of the materials you see in this room: art supplies, boxes, furniture, paper, etc.

You may perform in front of the group, from behind the butcher paper (ask for 2 volunteers to hold it up), or may place your talent on the wall of our gallery for people to check out on their own. Sharing a talent is optional. Audience members will participate in the following ways:

* You can sit and watch talents.
* You can wander around and look at the gallery.
* You can fill out “talent appreciation cards” (Handout 3) for each contribution.

Give participants 10 minutes to prepare, followed by a 10-minute show. Allow as many talents as there is time for.

**Debrief (15 min.)**

* What is challenging about calling an activity a “talent show?” What else could we call it?
* What is helpful about having multiple ways to showcase a talent?
* Share that this talent show was inspired by the story, “Exploring the Forest” (Handout 1). Read the story and ask for initial reactions.
* Where are you a different version of yourself? What are conditions that help you get there? How can you set up your campers to be the “forest” versions of themselves? (Point out multiple modalities for participation)
* What are additional ways of participating that could be added?

Debrief of Whole Session

* Which of these activities would you try to bring back to your camp?
* What are the modifications and tools you’ve noticed from this session? (List on flipchart paper) Tools may include:
  + Multiple modalities
  + Requiring everyone to succeed to move forward
  + Equalizing conditions
  + Choices about how to participate
  + Alternative roles
  + Changing the rules.
* Which story do you think best exemplifies inclusion? Why?
* What is one idea that you are taking with you back to camp? Write it down.

**Additional Notes for Bringing it Back to Camp:**

Any one of these activities can be used both as a bonding, fun experience for campers and as a way to teach about inclusion. These activities can be used in staff training as well.

For the talent show, another alternative way to showcase a talent is to set up a projector screen with the light behind it and to act out the talent in silhouette.

The stories can be used in a number of settings, including bedtime, Shabbat, other more reflective moments. Think about other stories you know and love, what their lessons are, and how that lesson might give birth to an activity or game!