



LEADERS ASSEMBLY 2018: THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE **March 18-20, 2018 in Baltimore, MD**

Making Space for Grief: Jewish Customs on Death & Mourning at Camp
Monday, March 19 from 1:30PM-3:00PM

SESSION PRESENTER(S):

Jodi Sperling, JCC Association; Jeffrey Eisenstat

SESSION DESCRIPTION:

When a camp experiences a loss, how does the camp community respond? Whether during the year or while at camp, directors are often called upon to lead their communities through difficult times. In this session we'll be learning about Jewish customs and traditions on death and mourning, and discussing how we might adapt them to create rituals and healing spaces.

BIG IDEAS FROM THIS SESSION:

Death is a part of life, and as camp directors you are often called upon to lead your community through difficult times of grief and mourning, both during camp and year-round. We have a responsibility as community leaders to rise to the occasion, even though most often there's no prescribed script for how to proceed.

Jewish tradition and rituals can provide a road map for how to handle many of these situations. While Jewish tradition can give us a framework, in camps that are not bound by Halacha, Jewish rituals can be adapted and creatively interpreted. One example would be a girl's bunk saying the mourners' kaddish together each night with a camper returning from the funeral of a parent. Not Halachically correct, but meaningful and important for the mourner and her bunkmates. Often directors feel handicapped by their perceived lack of literacy around the traditional texts and meanings, not wanting to "do it wrong," when in reality what's right is what's meaningful for the camp community.