

Each One of Us Has A Name: Poetry Magnets and the Power of Words *Elective 1*

AUTHOR(S):	Noam Katz
SUMMARY:	Our words, whether in conversation or on Twitter, have power and meaning -- not just for the intended audience, but for us too! The words we speak, especially in the intense 24/7 environment of summer camp, can profoundly affect self-esteem, group unity, and individual relationships. In this elective, you will use refrigerator magnet poetry to explore the intended and unintended effect of your words, and explore a new way to build trust and safety within the cabin community. - <i>Submitted by Noam Katz</i>
TOPIC(S):	Lashon HaRa, Cabin community building
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will be extremely mindful of the words they use with each other and with campers. They will have a visual tool that can utilized in a cabin to build a culture of kindness, compliments before cut-downs.
AUDIENCE:	Can be adapted for ANY age group, no more than 30-40 participants is ideal
TIMING:	90 minutes
APPENDICES:	Balaam and Balak text study – Appendix 1, Refrigerator Magnet Poetry – Appendix 2, Each Of Us Has a Name bunk activity – Appendix 3
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Sticky wall, Post-It notes (individ. medium-sized), pens, 1 long piece of butcher paper, markers, Printouts of Appendix 2 terms on Index Cards
SET-UP DETAILS:	Indoor location that has flat wall for Sticky mounting paper, but with nearby large uncluttered space (indoor OR outdoor) for “human barometer” activity

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Timeline

- 0:00-0:05 **Opening**
- 0:05-0:10 **Balaam/Balak text study**
- 0:10-0:20 **Human Barometer**

- 0:20-1:00 **Refrigerator Magnet Poetry**
 1:00-1:20 **Lashon HaRa cabin activity**
 1:20-1:30 **Bringing It Back to Camp**

Outline

1. Opening (5 mins.)

Turn to person next to or near you whom you do not know, introduce yourself, and tell about a time that you tried to compliment someone but it “came out wrong” – so instead of feeling complimented they were actually insulted. (OR, you intended it to be a back-handed compliment.)

2. Balaam/Balak text study (10 mins.)

Distribute excerpt from Balak/Balaam story – Numbers 24:1-5, 9-10 [**Appendix #1**]. Depending on the group size, facilitator may choose to have participants read and discuss in *chevruta* pairs, or as an entire group.

3. Human barometer (10 mins.)

Have all participants stand in a circle facing *outward* (with their backs to each other). Explain that you will be reading a list of statements. After each statement, participants will have to decide whether it applies to them. If it does, they should move one step forward (i.e., away from the center of circle)

THIS ACTIVITY MUST BE DONE SILENTLY AND TAKEN SERIOUSLY. PARTICIPANTS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO ASK CLARIFYING QUESTIONS AFTER EACH PROMPT.

“Take a step out if...”

1. ...you have EVER heard **lashon hara**, negative truths or gossip
2. ...you think gossip has EVER been spread about you
3. ...you have rolled your eyes or made other physical motions about or towards another (otherwise known as *avak lashon harah*, the dust of **lashon harah**).
4. ...you have made any negative-false statements about anyone (known as *motzei shem ra*).
5. ...you feel like you should apologize to someone about something you said about them.
6. ...you have said something positive about someone else, but the person you said it to took it in a negative way.
7. ...you haven't kept a secret you know you should have.
8. ...you *have* kept a secret you know you *shouldn't* have.
9. ...you have lost a friend because of gossip or harmful words spoken.
10. ...you have made someone cry because of something you said.
11. ...you have cried because of something someone said about you.
12. ...you have overheard gossip but decided not to put an end to it.
13. ...you have spoken disparagingly about another member of this community behind their back in the last 24 hours.
14. ...you have lied to someone (even a little white lie) in the last 24 hours.
15. ...you honestly do not think you can go for the next 24 hours without gossiping or making a judgmental comment about someone else.

- **Did you step forward more than half the time? $\frac{3}{4}$? Nearly every time? Why do you think that is?**
- **What is the effect of having us move outward away from one another?**
(all of these statements divide us, drive members of a community away from one another)
- **If we know we're not supposed to spread gossip and rumors, why do we do it anyway?**
(makes us feel better about ourselves, we don't know the difference between spreading information and rumors)

4. "Refrigerator" Magnet Poetry (40 mins.)

Facilitator explains that the next set of exercises will allow us to explore the power of words, both its positive and negative (i.e., *Lashon HaRa*) implications through life-size Refrigerator Magnet Poetry.

Disclaimer: there may be some words/language to come that some may find challenging, even offensive. Our true intention is to create a safe space whereby we can explore the impact of such words as we think about the kinds of cabin and camp communities we hope to build.

A long piece of sticky mounting paper is affixed to an accessible wall. It contains a jumble of large "refrigerator" poetry magnets [**Appendix #2**] printed on index cards. In addition, there should be a pile of blank cards for participants who wish to write additional words or word fragments.

Facilitator explains how we will have three separate prompts, using these magnets. Hand out pens and Post-It notes (3 per pp), as participants will first write their responses on Post-It, before having the opportunity to manipulate words on sticky wall.

A) **Six-word Bio:** using word magnets, introduce yourself (like 6-word bio) in 6 words or less.

B) **The Ultimate Take (or, Smack-) down:** write the ultimate "diss" or takedown of someone that frustrates you (hypothetical or real) in 6 words or less.

Discussion Questions:

- *What do you think are the most damning or hurtful words that you or your peers came up with?*
- *What are the hurtful words you hear people say about each other at camp?*
- *How might being labeled in this way affect the person who is being spoken about?*
- *How might it affect the person who is speaking these words?*

C) **The Twist:** write another 6-word (or less) description of that same (type of) person, but from a more compassionate POV that sees the potential good in them, or at least more understanding toward the way they think and act.

e.g. *Takedown* = “Cocky Spineless Fake Storyteller”

Twist = “Self-Trusting Bullied Truth Seeker”

Discussion Questions:

- *Which of these three tasks was easiest? Hardest?*
- *What’s the point of “the twist”?*
- *How can we apply this idea to our time together at camp?*

5. Lashon HaRa cabin activity (20 mins)

Lay out one large piece of butcher paper on floor.

- Trace the outline of a camper on the paper.
- Campers are each given a marker
- SILENTLY they must write **INSide** the body outline anything HURTFUL that was said about them, whether true or untrue. (Or things that *would be* hurtful to them if someone said it.)
- On the **OUTside** of the body outline, they should write any POSITIVE words or phrases that they said (or heard) about others this session.
- NO NAMES CAN BE WRITTEN ON THE SHEET. ALL IS ANYONYMOUS.

When everyone is finished writing, they should volunteer – one by one – to read one of the things written on the mural. Each time an insult is read, the counselor crumples up a piece of the mural.

After the whole mural is crumpled, facilitator begins to un-crumple one section at a time reading aloud complimentary words on the outside of the body outline.

Discussion Questions:

- *How did this activity make you feel?*
- *Were you surprised what your cabin mates (fellow participants) wrote?*
- *Were you nervous or self-conscious about what you were writing? Why or why not?*
- *What is the effect of crumpling then un-crumpling the paper?*
(no matter how many compliments or kind words we use, if we have already harmed someone with our words, it leaves an emotional scar that can't be completely erased)

6. Bringing it Back to Camp (10 mins.)

Group brainstorms how we might use Magnetic Poetry, Lashon Hara mural, or any other tools/activities for bringing these themes to their camps.

Distribute "L'chol Ish Yesh Shem/Everyone Has A Name" - Zelda
[Appendix #3]

Facilitator concludes:

"How we name something..."

- indicates how we think of it
- ascribes and/or reinforces certain qualities that may or may not be accurate
- tells us a lot about *ourselves*

So, let us be increasingly mindful of the words that escape our lips, and the words that are passed between campers, or between staff members, this summer. It can make all the difference in the world.



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ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

If sticky wall/refrigerator magnets are used in the cabin, the following may be created as a cabin ritual:

Everyone in cabin writes their name on a piece of paper and puts it in bag.
Then each day we pull out someone else's name out of the bag.

Write a 6-word (or less) compliment of that person and post it publicly on our cabin's magnetic board.

Every day of the session, each member of the cabin will get a different person's name (camper or counselor) and write a 6-word compliment. (must be closely monitored by staff)