

Inclusion and Disabilities: Building a Bayit *Specialty Track 3*

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| AUTHOR(S): | Ariella Rosen |
| SUMMARY: | This session explores different ways of helping each camper feel a sense of belonging. This is done through exploring different ways of communicating as well as noticing and removing barriers to participation. - <i>Submitted by Ariella Rosen</i> |
| TOPIC(S): | Inclusion-Disabilities, Communication Skills |
| LEARNING OBJECTIVE: | Participants will be able to notice and remove (if within their control) barriers to participation for different individuals in the camp community. They will also be able to articulate the ways of amplifying the voices of others without speaking for them. |
| AUDIENCE: | This session as a whole is geared towards older campers (13 and up) and staff, though the individual activities could easily be modified for younger participants as well. The ideal group size is at most 30 participants. |
| TIMING: | 90 minutes |
| APPENDICES: | <i>The Reason I Jump</i> , Michshol!, Obstacle Course Signs, Torah Texts |
| MATERIALS NEEDED: | Flipchart paper markers Sharpies- assorted colors Plastic test tubes or empty lip balm tubes pens plain white paper cut into strips (small enough to fit in tubes) tape |
| SET-UP DETAILS: | Most of this session can take place in any space with enough room to sit in a circle, and to move around a bit. The obstacle course portion requires more space- that can be done outside, moving around camp, or in any large, open space. |

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Timeline:

- 00:00-00:05 Intro
- 00:05-00:30 Behavior is Communication
- 00:30-00:35 Do Not Place a Stumbling Block
- 00:35-01:05 (Non) Obstacle Course
- 01:05-01:15 Mezuzah-Making
- 01:15-01:30 Debrief

Intro (5 min)

We spent the first couple of sessions building a house. (Credit to Cornerstone Educator Caroline Rothstein for the metaphor! <https://www.marieclaire.com/health-fitness/a18730651/body-acceptance-eating-disorder/>)

First, we laid the foundation by accessing our own stories, cultivating empathy, noticing and dismantling ableism, and understanding inclusion as a matter of justice.

Next, we established the walls, and accessible entrances through Universal Design and working to meet as many needs as possible.

Today, we will turn a house into a home. (Bayit, in Hebrew.)

Ask:

- What is the difference between the house and a home?
- What do you need to feel at home? Think of a moment when you felt completely at home somewhere. What contributed to your feeling that way?
- List responses on flipchart paper

Behavior is Communication (25 min)

Ask for two volunteers, one who will narrate and not act, and one who will act and not speak.

Ask the actor to think about that moment of total belonging and to act it out in detail. The narrator will attempt to tell the story of that day based on what the actor is doing.

Do this 2-3 times, each time with different volunteers.

- Ask the narrators: what cues did you look for to know what to say?
- Ask the actors: how accurate was the narrator? What would help them tell your story more accurately?

How can we better pay attention to the cues around us? (Introduce the concept of behavior as a form of communication)

If there is time, consider a few examples:

What might you look for if a camper (regardless of whether or not they use words to communicate):

- Has a stomachache?
- Accidentally left their towel at the pool?
- Doesn't like the chicken fajitas and wants to hit up the pasta table?
- Is having a great day?

Share excerpt from *The Reason I Jump* (see handout)

Invite everyone to stand and notice how their bodies are feeling while listening to the piece. (Make copies available for those who would prefer to follow along visually.)

- What did you notice in your body as you listened?
- What are some of the things that the author is communicating with his behavior?
- What did you relate to? What felt less accessible to you?
- How do we best support someone who communicates differently?
- Discuss the concepts of advocacy and self-advocacy, and the difference between speaking for another person, and amplifying another person's voice.

Next, we are going to consider some additional ways in which we can enable everyone to feel at home.

Do Not Place a Stumbling Block (5 min)

Reveal text on flipchart paper:

Leviticus 19:14 "You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind"

- What are your initial reactions to these words? Rephrase it in your own words.
- Why do you think this mitzvah (commandment) needed to be given?
- What are some examples of (human-made) obstacles that might be a barrier to someone with a disability? (Some examples might include: last-minute schedule changes, a really loud room, announcements given in Hebrew, one mandated way of participating, quick transition time between activities, etc.) Begin to think about how we might remove them.

(Non) Obstacle Course (30 min)

Explain that we are now going to go on a "tour" of camp. [Unless the camp space is small enough, this will be a symbolic tour, composed of labels of camp activities around the space (see handout).] The first time around, we are going to create an "obstacle course" (but we will call it a "michshol course.") by labeling those places or activities that might pose a barrier to participation. The second time around, we will make it a non-obstacle course (or "non-michshol course"), by figuring out a solution to each michshol and removing the label. We are going to do this in teams.

Part 1: Michshol Course

Give each participant a michshol label (print in three different colors) so the group is divided into 3 teams based on color. Explain that every michshol label must be put down somewhere in the camp day, with a note explaining the specific obstacle that exists there. More than one michshol can be placed on a part of the camp schedule, as long as a different obstacle is being described.

Part 2: Non-Michshol Course

We'll do this relay style. There are three different jobs you can have: Runner, Advisor, or Reporter. The Runners will approach each michshol (one person and one michshol at a time) and report back the problem to the advisors.

The Advisors will discuss together how to remove that michshol.

The Reporter will tell the facilitator the solution. If the facilitator approves, the michshol can be removed.

The Runner can then remove that michshol and bring it to the Reporter. Once the Reporter has that michshol in hand, the next Runner can go.

Michsholim (plural of michshol) must be solved one at a time. Once all of the michsholim have been removed, you will win a prize (jellybeans, stickers, etc.). (Remember not to give out the prize until all teams have completed the task.)

Part 3: Debrief

- Notice the structure of this activity. What did “winning” involve? What did you do to try to help your team win? (Note that no one could win without everyone’s participation)
- Did it occur to you to help the other team so that the entire group could win? Why or why not?
- Which michsholim (plural of michshol) felt easier to remove? Which felt harder? Why?
- Was any michshol surprising to you? Why or why not?
- What barriers were there in the structure of this game itself? What changes might you make?
- When these michsholim are removed, what impact does it have on a camper’s experience? How can it help a camper feel more at home?
- Who will be your partner(s) in making your camp a non-obstacle course?

Mezuzah-Making (10 min)

Explain: Our work today has put a roof on the house and furnished it. By helping every person feel heard and able to advocate their needs, we are creating a space that feels safe. When we note the potential barriers to full participation and remove them, that house becomes possible to dwell in. The last step is to make this home official, to dedicate it.

Share the words of Deuteronomy 6:9 (see handout). We place some of the most important words of Jewish tradition (from the Torah) on our doorposts as a constant reminder of them. We can do the same with other message that we want to be reminded of.

When a mezuzah is put up in a new home, it’s done in a ceremony called a *chanukat bayit*, a dedication of the home. That’s because creating a home takes dedication.

Invite participants to write on their slip of paper their own dedication or commitment to making their cabin feel like a true home for everyone. They can choose one specific intention or idea they have, or list a few.

Once participants have written their “dedication,” roll up the slip of paper and place in the mezuzah case. Invite them to use permanent markers to decorate the outside of the mezuzah case.

Explain: You can hang this on your cabin door alongside the “official” mezuzah (if there is one). Consider having a *chanukat bayit* with your cabin in which you decide together on how you will dedicate yourselves to making your cabin feel like a home, and place a new slip of paper inside to hang on the doorpost. You can also carry this mezuzah in your pocket as a reminder that your job is to bring a sense of “home” wherever you go.

Debrief (15 min)

Participants can continue decorating their mezuzah cases during the debrief.

- Remind participants of the various activities done over the course of the 3 sessions. Which might you implement at camp this summer?
- Review key concepts as well: Behavior is communication, Universal Design (and its limits), winning when each individual succeeds, masks or costumes, celebrating true accomplishment, etc.
- How can you use these concepts/activities to work for inclusion for other marginalized groups at camp?

- What do you want to notice more at camp? How will you do that?
- What questions do you still have about inclusion?
- Conclude (if time) with going around the circle and asking each person to share one word or phrase they are taking with them. (Pass or pass for now are acceptable.)

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

The Michshol Course activity can be done as a staff training exercise. It can also be reframed to address other marginalized groups and identities (such as around race, gender, etc.). It could also be modified to be a tool to teach (younger) campers their daily schedule/their way around camp, etc. Instead of naming obstacles, they could name what activities happen in a space.

The Actor/Narrator game is a fun back-pocket game to use whenever you have time to fill.

The opening conversation about turning a house into a home (including the Actor/Narrator game), followed by Mezuzah-making can be done as a first day of camp cabin activity.