

CORNERSTONE 2018 RESOURCE

Mental Health and Camper Care, *Specialty Track 1*

AUTHOR(S):	Natalie Rothstein
SUMMARY:	This session introduces mental health and the relationship between mental health and Judaism. The session offers opportunities for discussion and personal exploration about your relationship to and understanding of mental health through a Jewish lens. - <i>Submitted by Natalie Rothstein</i>
TOPIC(S):	Mental health, Jewish views of mental health
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	In this session, participants will have meaningful and informative conversations and between mental health and Judaism.
AUDIENCE:	Age range for this session would be for 18 year olds and up, target group size would from 10 to 30 participants.
TIMING:	90 minutes
APPENDICES:	Shema Source Sheet
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Flip chart – 1 -Flip chart stand – 1 -Permanent marker (for flip chart) -Construction paper -Glue sticks – 1 for every 2 pp -Scissors – 1 for every 2 pp -Markers -Loose leaf lined paper -Clip boards – 1 pp -Pens – 1 per participant

SET-UP DETAILS:

This session should be held in a closed room. There should be a chair for each participant, set up in a circle. Ideally, the room will have table space where participants can move their chairs to at one point during the session or hard floor space for participants to work on.

Chairs set up in a circle with a space for a flip chart for the facilitator. There should be a table with materials set up for the “Safer Space” activity. The table should have: glue sticks, poster boards, scissors, stacks of different construction paper colors, and markers.

Facilitator will have handouts for the text discussion and lined paper for the writing activity.

Flip chart should have pages pre-written out with the definitions for mental health, mental illness, depression, and anxiety. Should also include pre-written discussion questions for text activity.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Timeline

- Specialty Track Introduction – 5 minutes
- Setting guidelines for a safer space - 15 minutes
- Ice breakers - 15 minutes
- Mental health and Judaism - text break out and discussion - 25 minutes
- Stigmas of mental health in Judaism Discussion - 15 minutes
- Exploring Relationships to mental health (private writing activity) - 15 minutes
- Highs and lows - 5 minutes
- Preview of upcoming sessions - less than 5 minutes

Step-by-step Breakdown

- **Session (if cornerstone: Specialty Track) Introduction** – 5 minutes - presented verbally by facilitator (5 minutes) – During this time, the facilitator will introduce the session and talk about the goals and objective of this session and contextualize how mental health will be discussed during this session. Important points to be discussed:
 - Goals of this session:
 - talk about mental health (the focus of the entire track of Cornerstone is more about Mental Health and wellness rather than mental illness – although both pillars are integrally connected and both will be discussed – for accessibility we will talk about mental illness more through the lens of depression and anxiety)
 - talk about mental health and the relationship to Judaism
 - talk about the stigma of mental health and Judaism
 - explore our own relationships to Mental Health
 - determine that this space is not group therapy
- **Setting guidelines for the space** – 15 minutes
 - This will be an opportunity to do an activity with the group. Participants will each be able to make a poster outlining the guidelines for a safe(r) space. During this activity, the group will come up with guidelines for creating a safe space and all create their own poster with all of the guidelines listed. Participants will have a poster board (or piece of flip chart paper), construction paper, and markers to make their posters colorful and decorative.

CORNERSTONE 2018 RESOURCE

They will be able to keep their posters and use this as a tool to hang in camp cabins or camp spaces. The facilitator should ask the participants to offer ideas for guidelines creating a safe space and write those on the flip chart.

Facilitator should add the following if participants do not include organically: *Using "I" Statements, Confidentiality, Ask clarifying questions, self-regulate self-care (i.e., it is ok to step outside, facilitator is available after)*. Note: facilitator can pre-make one as an example if they would like. Once all of the guidelines have been set, give participants 10 minutes to work on creating their posters.

- **Ice breakers** – take 15 minutes for icebreakers to help the group become more acquainted with one another.
 - Name intro activity – go around in circle and each participant gives their name, what camp they're from, one thing they're grateful for – 5 minutes
 - Break participants into groups of 4, they will have to come up with 5 facts that they all have in common and write them down – 5 minutes
 - Take 5 minutes with the whole group after the ice breakers for processing posing the following questions:
 - What does that bring up for you emotionally?
 - How can icebreakers feel uncomfortable and intimidating?
 - What does that look like at camp?
 - How can we help create more comfort around icebreaker activities for campers and staff?

- **Mental health and Judaism- 25 minutes**
 - Show definitions for (these should be pre-written on the flip chart) 5 minutes:
 - **Mental health:** Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. (source – mentalhealth.gov)
 - **Mental illness:** A mental illness is a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling or mood. Such conditions may affect someone's ability to relate to others and function each day. Each person will have different experiences, even people with the same diagnosis. (Source: National Alliance for Mental Illness)
 - **Depression:** Depression is more than just sadness. People with depression may experience a lack of interest and pleasure in daily activities, significant weight loss or gain, insomnia or excessive sleeping, lack of energy, inability to concentrate, feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide. Depression is the most common mental disorder. Fortunately, depression is treatable. A combination of therapy and antidepressant medication can help ensure recovery. (Source: American Psychological Association)
 - **Anxiety:** Anxiety is an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes like increased blood pressure. People with anxiety disorders usually have recurring intrusive thoughts or concerns. They may avoid certain situations out of worry. They may also have physical symptoms such as sweating, trembling, dizziness or a rapid heartbeat. (Source: American Psychological Association)

CORNERSTONE 2018 RESOURCE

- Text break out and discussion
 - Break participants into groups of 3
 - Each participant will get Shema handout – which will feature discussion questions and the text for the Shema and V’ahavta – concepts discussed by Rabbi Eitan Levy
 - Facilitator should preview the questions that are pre-written on the flip chart:
 - How do the Shema and V’ahavta talk about emotions?
 - What are ways this text promotes the idea of mental health?
 - What does this text bring up for you?
 - How can we use this prayer to find emotional strength?
 - Give the students 10 minutes to read the text and discuss the questions
 - Bring the participants back together for entire group discussion to share their responses and coming up with group themes (facilitator should write themes out on flipchart paper to hang in the room) – 10 minutes
 - *Notes about take away from the Shema:*
 - *The prayer provides instruction on how to love g-d with all your heart*
 - *Mentions the importance of keeping these words close on your heart*
 - *The ancient world assumed heart to be where consciousness lived*
 - *By keeping this commandment in mind, one will feel love for g-d by reminding oneself and doing things for g-d- therefore they imitate the actions that go with love*
 - *This concept imitates a form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy which is a common form of therapy for depression because individuals work to redirect thought patterns by prescribing specific actions*
 - *Torah is helpful for one to work to feel what they want to feel and individual gets full credit as long as they follow the actions, even if the faking has its own value, sometimes serving g-d with intention is enough*
- **Stigmas of mental health in Judaism** – 15 minute activity
 - Start with a discussion - facilitator should ask participants to share stigmas about “Jewish people and mental health” and then stigmas about “mental health in Jewish culture” write them down in a bulleted list on the flip chart
 - After listing stigmas, the group should have a discussion about thoughts and feelings about these stigmas.
 - Facilitator also should share the history of mental health and Judaism (source myjewishlearning.com).
 - Sigmund Freud who is one of the most influential theorists in psychology was Jewish and there have been many Jewish contributors to developing and improving the field of psychology.
 - Theorists have offered ideas for why there is such a prominent presence of Jewish people in early psychology, some of those are the Jewish penchant for expressing emotions verbally and a higher willingness among Jewish people to approach professionals for personal issues.
 - There is a stigma that more psychiatrists and therapists are Jewish than other religions, which is not statistically supported.
 - There is also a stigma that Jewish people are more neurotic and anxious, which also has not scientific data to support that idea.
 - The stigma towards Mental Health is not limited to Jewish people but is a widespread challenge that is trying to be shifted.
 - Elijah’s Journey is a national Jewish nonprofit that focuses on suicide prevention.

CORNERSTONE 2018 RESOURCE

- **Exploring our own relationships to mental health** (private writing activity) – 15 minutes
 - Each participant will get lined paper for a free writing activity about their relationship to mental health – facilitator should provide the context for the session and offer a few prompts (written out on flip chart) as guidelines but not strict parameters
 - What is your relationship to mental health?
 - What role does mental health and mental illness play in your life?
 - How has mental health impacted your camp experience?
- **After writing time is finished – mention** how that it's helpful in a camp setting to understand your relationship to mental health so you can be a promoter of mental wellness
- **Highs and lows** – 5 minutes
 - Facilitator will give each participant an opportunity to share their high and low of today's session with the group
- **Preview of upcoming sessions**
 - Next session will talk about mental health at camp and appropriate support models
 - Last session will talk about self-care/resilience and promoting mental wellness

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

Safer Space Guidelines Activity

The creating a safe space arts and crafts activity can be done on its own during staff training to hang for camper's arrival or during the first few days of camp to help campers connect and create a sense of emotional/physical safety in their cabins.

Participants will each be able to make a poster outlining the guidelines for a safer space. During this activity, the group will come up with guidelines for creating a safe space and all create their own poster with all of the guidelines listed. Participants will have a poster board, construction paper, and markers to make their posters colorful and decorative. They will be able to keep their posters and use as a tool to hang in camp cabins or camp spaces. Note: facilitator can pre-make one as an example if they would like.