



## CORNERSTONE 2018 RESOURCE

### Real Talk About Relationship Boundaries When Working with Kids

*Elective for Fellows*

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| <b>AUTHOR(S):</b> | Sara Beth Berman   |
| <b>SUMMARY:</b>   | With the explosion of #MeToo and #UsToo and #TimesUp accusations (finally) bringing deeply disturbing sexual abuse to light across ages and work environments, we have come to a time of reckoning. As people who work with youth, there is a blurring of boundaries, and it is up to us to be aware of the sexual, platonic, and power dynamics at play when any people are in any sort of relationship. We wonder and worry - how can we model and teach appropriate boundaries and awareness of power dynamics to our campers? In this session, we will identify a matrix of relationships, and discuss the boundaries that exist, the ones we need to build, and how we create a safe and caring environment for every individual in our communities. This session will include actionable ways for counselors to interact in an appropriate way with both their supervisors and their campers. - <i>Submitted by Sara Beth Berman</i> |
| <b>TOPIC(S):</b>  | Mental Health, Relationship Building, Communications Skills  |

### LEARNING OBJECTIVE:

#### **Broad Subject and Skills**

1. Hook-up culture is real, many teens seek out hook-ups, and healthy, sexual exploration among teenagers, while it can be scary for adults, is normal and should be treated as such.
2. There are inherent power dynamics within a youth group system - board members vs rank and file, staff vs participant - that need to be examined.
3. The development of close relationships, sexual and platonic, have an important place in our intense, immersive programs.
4. Relationships between people of different ages present all parties with potentially challenging interactions.
5. Talking about sexual and platonic relationships removes the silence and mystery that can perpetuate negative interactions, and talking about safe relationships builds a safer space for safe relationships.

#### **Understanding**

1. Teaching about power, hookups, and relationships is a good lesson for learners of all ages.
2. Hooking up is a real thing that happens, but needs to be managed in a way that makes sense for you / your institution.
3. In today's zeitgeist, it is vital to discuss things that are happening, in a constructive manner.
4. There is a tension between people of different ages and power levels.
5. In order to ensure safe relationships, we must educate toward safe relationships.

#### **Essential Questions**

1. How do I make a safe space for all people at a program - whether staff or participant?
2. What do I feel about hook-up culture, and how do those feelings differ from what other people in my program feel about it?
3. What sort of power dynamics exist in my program / organization, and how can I work to acknowledge and neutralize them, when necessary?
4. What are the lines we want to demarcate for relationship development between individuals of all ages in our program / organization?
5. What are the different sorts of relationships that I could engage in at camp / in youth group?
6. What do Jewish texts have to say about safe relationships?
7. What is my relationship to younger people? Older people? People in positions of power?
8. How can I help to build a safer relationship culture in Jewish (youth) spaces?

#### **Knowledge and Skills**

1. Participants will know how to approach creation of safer/brave space.
2. Participants will be able to identify their feelings about hook-up culture and how to manage those feelings in their setting.
3. Participants will be able to respectfully discuss relationship development with participants and staff.
4. Participants will be able to identify the different potential relationships they engage in in different spaces.
5. Participants will be able to broach discussions about safer relationships with young people of all ages.
6. Participants will be able to foster safe and healthy relationships in their camps / schools / synagogues / youth groups.

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| <b>AUDIENCE:</b>         | Camp Staff - college-aged  |
| <b>TIMING:</b>           | 90 Minutes   |
| <b>APPENDICES:</b>       | <p><b>Text Resources for Further Reading</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Game Hands Out Points / Forward - <a href="https://forward.com/news/388645/underground-hookup-game-at-jewish-youth-group-awards-points-for-making-out/">https://forward.com/news/388645/underground-hookup-game-at-jewish-youth-group-awards-points-for-making-out/</a></li> <li>● Not Just the Points System / Jewcy - <a href="http://jewcy.com/jewish-sex-and-love/not-just-point-system">http://jewcy.com/jewish-sex-and-love/not-just-point-system</a> \</li> <li>● Jewish Youth Group Dating Scandal That Isn't / JTA - <a href="https://www.jta.org/2017/12/20/news-opinion/opinion/the-jewish-youth-group-dating-scandal-that-isnt">https://www.jta.org/2017/12/20/news-opinion/opinion/the-jewish-youth-group-dating-scandal-that-isnt</a></li> <li>● Power Dynamics 20 years after the Lewinsky Scandal / Vanity Fair - <a href="https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/02/monica-lewinsky-in-the-age-of-metoo">https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/02/monica-lewinsky-in-the-age-of-metoo</a></li> </ul> |
| <b>MATERIALS NEEDED:</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Scratch paper and pen/cils</li> <li>● Flip Chart / Markers</li> </ul>   |
| <b>SET-UP DETAILS:</b>   | Circle of Chairs or conference table with chairs on the outside of the tables.   |

### SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

With the explosion of #MeToo and #UsToo and #TimesUp accusations (finally) bringing deeply disturbing sexual abuse to light, across ages and work environments, we have come to a time of reckoning. As people who work with youth, there is a blurring of boundaries, and it is up to us to be aware of the sexual, platonic, and power dynamics at play when any people are in any sort of relationship. We wonder and worry - how can we model and teach appropriate boundaries and awareness of power dynamics to our campers? In this session, we will identify a matrix of relationships, and discuss the boundaries that exist, the ones we need to build, and how we create a safe and caring environment for every individual in our communities. This session will include actionable ways for counselors to interact in an appropriate way with both their supervisors and their campers.

#### Opening Activity // Time: 20 minutes

##### 1. Making a Few Points (20 minutes):

1. A safer space: This session contains racy content, to the extent that people hook up with each other is racy or surprising, and I'm not going to go easy on you. I'm also going to ask you to help make this session a brave and safer space. Actually discussing sexual and platonic relationship dynamics, and being able to harness them for the greater communal good - that's why we're here. Please can I get a thumbs up that this is a safer space? If not, what are we missing? Some of this conversation is challenging, so if you feel you need to take a break, a walk outside, or a drink of water, that's OK, too. Thanks.

2. Open to a fresh page in your notebook.
  1. Make a list of your favorite candies, and rank them. Here's mine:
    1. Take 5 is a 10, Snickers is a close 9, Reese cups are a neat 8, Kit Kats remind me of my grandma for 7 points, Gummy candies from the shuk are worth 8 points to me, all other gummy candy is a strong 5, oh and Explosion chocolate is also a 10.
    2. Can I get someone to take a list up here? Write up a list of candies, pulling from participants.
    3. Can I get a 2nd volunteer? Try to assign numbers to the candies on our group list.
    4. How much is our candy worth?
3. So we assigned some point values to candy, but in some of our youth spaces, there are point values assigned to people, specifically in sexual and hook up relationships. We're going to think-pair-share this - think about it, discuss with a partner, and then share with the group:
  1. Why it is healthy and positive to have relationships as teenagers? As college-aged students? As adults?
  2. Why are people hooking up - what are the challenges and problems and joys? (This is uncomfortable - this is why I got your thumbs)
  3. How do you feel about the "gamification" of relationships through things like hookup culture and points systems?
  4. Discussion:
    1. Why is it so easy to write a list about what we love about candy, and so wrong to write a list of people we've loved - or just like rubbed up against?
    2. Why is it so easy to classify something like candy - and so wrong to classify something like people?
    3. How did you assign points, and how did that make you feel with the candy? With the people?

### **Step-by-Step Session Description // Time: 60 minutes**

1. The "Defining the Relationship" Discussion (30 minutes):
  1. We're going to have a DTR about relationships at camp. First, let's identify who will be in these relationships:
    1. Staff
    2. Camper
    3. Leadership Roles
  2. Next, types of relationships:
    1. Platonic
    2. Sexual / dating
  3. Have you ever had a DTR conversation? It's where individuals define their relationships in a serious conversation.
    1. What constitutes a DTR?
    2. Why is a DTR so important in general - and specifically in the fuzzy lines in relationship with peers / supervisors with interesting power dynamics?
    3. If a DTR needs to exist in order to care for people:
      1. **How** do I care for other people?
      2. How can I be trusted when building relationships?
      3. How can I be clear about the relationships I'm entering into with other people?

4. The Matrix (20 minutes)
  1. Speaking of fraught - let's define which relationships are appropriate / which are not. You have two staff/camper boxes and two camper/leadership boxes. Use them for overflow, but know that the matrix format is being used for a reason.

| Staff | Camper | Leadership Role |
|-------|--------|-----------------|
|-------|--------|-----------------|

Staff

Camper

Leadership Role

2. Concrete actions
    1. What concrete actions make these relationships?
    2. What makes the intimate relationships happen and form?
    3. Scenario share - now that we've written all this stuff, everyone write:
      - a. A way that you can enter into a platonic relationship in one of those boxes
      - b. Where the flow of power goes.
  3. These matrix boundaries get fuzzy - where are meant to be made clear?
    1. How does timeline play into this dynamic?
    2. Staff/people need to be aware of what changes the relationship
    3. Specifically the power dynamics - who's responsible for being sure that the power dynamic awareness happens?
    4. Talking specifically about the fuzzy lines - where the ambiguity happens - what's concrete and what's clear?
    5. How do you know that it's a friendship as opposed to something intimate?
  4. Arrows Discussion
    1. Where are the flows of power?
    2. Where are the dynamics most fraught? Why?
2. What's the "points" in this DTR? - Discussion (30 minutes)
    1. There are some youth movements that have a "points" system - where if you "hook up" with someone - generally kissing or more serious sexual activity - you get a certain number of points based on what their position in the organization may be.
    2. Gamification, post-Matrix
      1. What's the value and worth of the connection?
      2. If people are deeply seeking care and connection, what happens when relationships are turned into a game?

3. How am I seeing other people and how is that impacted by gamification?
3. Truth to Power:
  1. Power Dynamics
    1. How are you being realistic about the power dynamics in these relationships?
    2. How are you enabling / preventing healthy / unhealthy behaviors in your camps?
    3. How can you take charge of identifying and managing power dynamics in your different working relationships?
    4. What do boundaries have to do with this?
  2. Hookup culture exists
    1. Since hookup culture exists, what are some of the ways we can approach those relationships with others?
    2. What do you do about come ons with people that have less power in the matrix?
    3. How can you enter into some sort of relationship with someone that IS appropriate?
    4. Allows for hookup culture but defines in terms of valued connection
      1. What about this is developmentally reasonable?
      2. What about this is developmentally troubling?
      3. What are some of the inherent problems / challenges in these dynamics that we listed above?
      4. What about this is safe and / or unsafe for campers?
        1. Why?
        2. How?

### **Bringing it Back to Camp (10 Minutes):**

- What was the piece that was most interesting to you?
- What was the piece that was most troubling to you?
- How will discussing this impact your work with kids going forward? With supervisors?
- How could you adapt this for staff training?
- What's one thing you learned today that will help you be a better staff member - and how will you use that skill?

### **ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:**

Some questions to ponder when trying to execute this matrix program at your camp:

Whom do you want in the room for this discussion? How does this fit into the training you already do about relationships at camp? Who helps facilitate? How do you continue the conversation through the summer?