

CORNERSTONE 2018 RESOURCE

Bringing Our Full Selves: Teen Programming *Specialty Track 3*

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SUMMARY:	Camp can be an incredibly rich environment for exploring our own developing identities, learning from the journeys of those around us, and taking on big topics together. In particular, we can bring great joy to making space for older campers to enjoy and value their own evolving works-in-progress-ness. In these sessions, we'll build programming that helps teen campers ask better questions of ourselves and each other, learn together, and celebrate all that we each bring to our community.
TOPIC(S):	Identity, Teen Programming
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will have a new range of teen-appropriate activities on identity, relationship-building, communication, and creating community.
AUDIENCE:	Teen campers
TIMING:	Each activity can range from 15-60 minutes and activities can be combined in many different ways.
APPENDICES:	Handouts - What Are Community Agreements, What I Am, These and These, Dreamscapes, Witness, Judgments Into Questions
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Lots of paper for journaling, pens, assorted art supplies, magazines to cut up, scissors, index cards, handouts
SET-UP DETAILS:	Most of these activities can be done in any quiet space with enough room for all participants to sit in a circle

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

The three sessions of this track will each relate to key growth ideas for teens:

- Bring in your full self: Share who you are, explore your various identities, and celebrate them.
- Reach out to each other: Get to know one another in honest ways, get past our assumptions, and build better ways to trust each other.
- Don't be afraid to dig in: Talk about the hard stuff. Learn from and with each other.

The camp environment can be an amazingly joyful, generative, creative, exciting place for teens to learn to better embrace their own identities, lean on each other and explore the scary topics together.

Camp can be a great place for teens to discuss and learn about challenging topics together. Here are two approaches for how to dig in together:

- Judgments Into Questions
- Bringing History to Life

Judgments into Questions:

- 1) Pick a topic that feels fraught, but important (for example: gun violence, Israel/Palestine, political engagement).
- 2) Start by splitting into pairs to discuss: why do you care about this issue? Or if you haven't felt like you care about it before, why not?
- 3) Hand out slips of paper with controversial statements/opinions on whatever topic you're trying to address. Each person who received a statement should read their statement aloud (regardless of whether it is a statement they personally agree with). Everyone else should sit and listen to the statements, paying attention to their own reactions. Which statements make you feel angry? Anxious? Relieved? Happy? Indifferent? What do you notice in your reactions throughout hearing these?
- 4) As everyone to take a few minutes to journal about their reactions.
- 5) Get into pairs. Describe an example you've experienced of a genuine exchange of ideas (the example does not have to have anything to do with the specific example being discussed today). What were the circumstances that made that possible? How did the conversation come about? How did the participants in it treat each other? Were there moments that became heated? If so, how did the participants work through those to understand each other better?
- 6) Have the pairs combine into small groups for the "These and These" text study (see the text study appendix). If you're short on time, just study the first text. If you have more time available, study and discuss the linked set on the second side as well. For both texts, ask everyone to start their conversations with "I like...", "I wonder..." and "I struggle with."
- 7) Come back together. Ask people to call out responses to the question: what troubles you about this issue (the core issue you've chosen to focus the session on)? What do you imagine troubles other people about this issue (even/especially if those are people you disagree with)?
- 8) Share the "Judgments into Questions" worksheet (appendix). Ask one pair to come up in front of the room and for each person to go through the questions on the worksheet (with one person posing the questions and the other responding) on an example of their choice related to a core belief they struggle with or disagree with on the core issue. Then split into pairs so that everyone can go through the exercise. Come back together to share: What was difficult about that? What became clearer to you? How might this overall approach/perspective help you in the future?

- 9) Another possible approach: Have a fishbowl conversation where a few people sit and have an honest conversation about their struggles with this topic. The facilitator can take an active role, pausing the conversation to note tools that could be useful (for example: "I haven't heard anyone ask another person a question for a while") or the observers can offer those kinds of suggestions as well.
- 10) Close by asking everyone to close their eyes, picture someone who holds beliefs on this topic different from their own (it can be someone they know personally or not), and imagine how it would feel to be able to talk openly with that person and find shared values.

Bringing History to Life:

- 1) Study and discuss the texts on the Witness handout.
- 2) Read the following together:
 - <https://wagingnonviolence.org/feature/taking-action-responsibility-new-yorkers/>
 - Information about Bryan Stevenson's "Lynching in America" project:

Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, has been spearheading a project to mark the sites of lynchings in the United States (<http://www.eji.org/lynchinginamerica> or you can read [this article](#) about the project). Part of his inspiration for this is the range of memorials that have been installed all over Germany to mourn the Holocaust: "...We need to engage with this in a very different way. You can't go to Germany, to Berlin, and walk 100 meters without seeing a marker or a stone or a monument to mark the places where Jewish families were abducted from their homes and taken to the concentration camps. Germans want you to go to the *concentration camps and reflect soberly on the legacy of the Holocaust. We do the opposite here. We don't want anybody talking about slavery, we don't want anybody talking about lynching, we don't want anybody talking about segregation. You say the word "race" and people immediately get nervous. You say the words "racial justice" and they're looking for the exits. If we're going to change the attitudes of the judges who are making sentencing decisions, and police officers who are unfairly suspecting young men of color, and employers and educators who are suspending and expelling kids of color at disproportionately high rates, if we're going to make a difference in overcoming the implicit bias that we all have, we're going to have to deal honestly with this history and have to consciously work on freeing ourselves from this history.*" (from [The Marshall Project's interview "Bryan Stevenson on Charleston and Our Real Problem with Race"](#))

Discuss:

- Have any of you been to Germany or other parts of Eastern Europe? How did you feel when you saw the various memorials?
- How do you think American society would be different if we actively memorialized lynchings and slavery and other acts of our own racism and oppression?
- How do you see change happen when we actively protest oppressive systems or practices in our society and communities?
- What do you think sometimes stops us from doing either of those things?
- Jewish tradition has many ways that we mark both personal mourning (e.g., the customs of shiva) and moments of historical tragedy (e.g., Tisha B'Av). What ideas do you have for how you could use Jewish mourning practices to both mourn the Black lives lost to racist violence and to protest the racism itself? (If you have A/V setup, you can watch clips from <http://www.fargesn.com/> for examples of this.)



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3) Plan a ritual or design a memorial for your camp space this summer in a way that keep this mourning and conversation going can effectively and authentically, rather than letting these events fade into the background of what's happening in the "outside world."

4) Make sure each group either draws a picture or writes a "headline" for what this ritual space or practice would be. Put them up around the room as a museum. End the session with time for everyone to look at all of these and possibly even to end by practicing one of the new rituals.