

Mental Health and Wellness, *Specialty Track 1*

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SUMMARY:	This session will discuss themes around Mental Health and Wellness in connection to the larger camp community. Camp is a place where people and communities grow and can truly take care of one another.- <i>Submitted by Natalie Rothstein</i>
TOPIC(S):	Mental Health, Community Care, Wellness
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	This session will be successful if participants leave feeling they have a better understanding of themes around wellness and how camp is an environment to promote wellness and to find ways to support mental health.
AUDIENCE:	Camp staff, ideal group size around 20 but can be facilitated with a larger group.
TIMING:	90 minutes
APPENDICES:	Stories of Resilience, Resilience Questions Handout
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -paper -pens -large size paper (flip chart post it paper is a great option) -construction paper for back of resilience stories (if desired) -tape to hang resilience stories
SET-UP DETAILS:	The setting for this session should be private and there should be chairs set up in a circle with a flip chart situated between 2 chairs for facilitator note taking.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Session total: 90 minutes
 Introduction- 20 minutes
 Resiliency at Camp – 25 minutes
 Emotional Expression in Jewish Tradition- 10 minutes
 Community Care- 10
 Mental Health and Wellness at Camp- 20 minutes
 Closing – 5 minutes

Introduction- 20 minutes

Facilitator introduce themselves to the group and then have the group introduce themselves in a circle. If the group self elected to come to the session, have them identify in 1 sentence why they chose to join this session (you can use a different prompt if participants were required to attend). (10 minutes)

- Go over guidelines for the room, creating a safer space (hung up on the wall), offer opportunity for anyone to add guidelines or to ask clarifying questions. This is a great concept for staff to use in their camp communities. In the additional suggestions is an activity that can be done to present these guidelines. (5 minutes)
 - This is a judgement free space
 - Using "I" Statements
 - Privacy
 - Ask clarifying questions
 - Self-regulate and self care ((i.e. it's ok to step outside)
 - Facilitator is available after
 - It's ok to be raggedy
- Definitions- provide the following definitions to the participants. These should be written out on large paper hanging so that they can write them down. The purpose of providing these definitions is to offer a framework for conversations through the session and related sessions. Be sure to offer the opportunity for participants to ask any questions. (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)
 - **Wellness:** Wellness is considered a conscious, self-directed and evolving process of achieving full potential. Wellness is multidimensional and holistic, encompassing lifestyle, mental and spiritual well-being, and the environment. Wellness is positive and affirming. (Source: National Institute of Health)

Resiliency at Camp- 25 minutes

This activity is to explore how camp is a place where people have an opportunity build resilience in a unique setting. Camp offers so many different experiences where people can fail and succeed in an isolated environment where consequences may be more forgiving. The absence of technology and parents/guardians also puts individuals in a place to be more self-reliant to work through difficult moments. These experiences help individuals build resilience in a powerful way that can then be translated back to other parts of their life.

Ahead of time, print the "Stories of Resiliency" hand out and cut out each story and have them set up around the room (ideally hung on a wall) for participants to be able to read.

- Start off by giving the participants a "Resiliency Discussion Questions" handout. They will be able to answer these questions while they read the stories or after. Share the definition of resilience with the participants (written out on a flip chart):
 - **Resilience:** Resilience is an individual's ability to bounce back and recover from an adverse or stressful experience. This involves addressing the emotional impact of the experience and moving forward in a healthy and accepting way.
- Ask the participants to spend the next 10-13 minutes walking around the room and reading the stories independently. During this time, they should also be answering the questions.
- After 10 minutes, give the participants a warning that they have a 3 minutes left.

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- Once that time period has ended, bring the group back together for a debrief and discussion. Ask participants to share answers if they're comfortable for a few examples. Then ask the group the following questions (10 minutes):
 - What was that experience like for you?
 - How did this impact your view about camp being a place for personal growth?

Emotional Expression in Jewish Tradition- 10 minutes

- Break participants into groups of 3-4. Pose the following question to participants (written out on a large piece of paper to reference): **What are some Jewish traditions, prayers, texts and rituals that you associate with general and/or specific emotions?**
 - Give the participants 5 minutes to discuss the question and share their different examples
 - Bring the participants back together for entire group discussion to share their responses and coming up with group themes about how we recognize emotions/mental health in Jewish tradition (facilitator can write themes out on flipchart paper to hang in the room). The discussion goals are to help the group come to an understanding of views of mental health through Jewish religion and tradition. – 5 minutes

Community Care at Camp- 10 minutes

- What is community care? Community care is creating a community that's culture creates room for others to take care of each other and support each other. This also involves having a culture that emphasizes the importance of individual wellness.
- Lead a group discussion on the following questions:
 - How is community a part of your camp culture?
 - Why do you think the concept of community care is important?
 - What ways do you feel like your camp already models community care?
 - What are ways you think that your camp could improve with community care?
 - What are ways you feel like you can help impact your camp's culture around community care?

Mental Health and Wellness at Camp- 20 minutes

Lead the participants in a discussion with the participants about themes around mental health at camp.

- Have participants break into groups of 3-4 to answer the following questions (10 minutes):
 - What are themes around mental health that you see come up at camp?
 - What structures does your camp have to support mental health related issues?
 - What are benefits and challenges of working with your camps mental health support team?
 - What are challenges you've seen around supporting wellness at camp?
- Bring participants back to discuss the mental wellness promoter (10 minutes):
 - **Being a Wellness Promoter** - Facilitator defines mental wellness promoter (A mental wellness promoter is someone who promotes the importance of mental health and working towards your wellness both on your own and by finding supports.) – write definition out on a flip chart – discussion with the group about what that looks like and how they can imagine that existing at camp, advocate for mental wellness, non professionals are not mental health experts, include a clause about the appropriate times for self-disclosure (self-disclosure is appropriate when it feels like it will benefit the recipient and not damage the relationship boundary between staff member and camper or staff member and staff member).

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 or to share one word that describes how they feel after the session

Preview of upcoming sessions (if completing Cornerstone series) –

- Next session will talk about staff wellness at camp
- Last session will talk about camper care

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

Safer Space Guidelines Activity

The creating a safe space discussion can be done as an arts and crafts activity can be done on it's 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.

- Safer Space Guidelines
 - This is a judgement free space
 - Using "I" Statements
 - Confidentiality
 - Ask clarifying questions
 - Self-regulate and self care ((i.e. it's ok to step outside)
 - Facilitator is available after
 - It's ok to be raggedy

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'd like