

Mental Health and Wellness (Part 3)

Specialty Track

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SUMMARY:	This session focuses on staff's role in terms of mental health and wellness related to camper care. Staff will learn about ways to support campers and help facilitate opportunities for building resilience. - <i>Submitted by Natalie Rothstein</i>
TOPIC(S):	Mental Health, Camper Care
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	The goal of this session is for participants to leave with clarity about their role in supporting campers related to mental health and wellness.
AUDIENCE:	Camp staff, ideal group size around 20 but can be facilitated with a larger group.
TIMING:	60-90 minutes.
APPENDICES:	Wellness Quotes
MATERIALS NEEDED:	-paper -pens
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:

Total Session Time: 90 minutes
 Introduction- 5 minutes
 Teaching Resilience- 15 minutes
 Appropriate Support Models – 25 minutes
 Creating Warmth – 10 minutes
 Camper Self Care- 10-15 minutes
 Wrap Up- 30 minutes

Introduction- 5 minutes

- Give goals for this session:
 - Discuss camper care and appropriate support models
 - Wrap of specialty track (cornerstone)
- Reminder of the guidelines for a safer space (guidelines and optional activity included in additional notes)

Teaching Resilience- 15 minutes

- Remembering the stories of resilience from session 1 (if this is not a continuation – there are several stories below that outline experiences of resilience in camp communities and how individuals build resilience at camp in a meaningful way). Ask the participants:
 - Remembering those examples, how can you help your campers be resilient in difficult situations at camp? (allow participants to troubleshoot and offer ideas)
 - Offer additional thoughts below:
 - Allow campers to make mistakes.
 - Help them and guide them, don't do for them.
 - Encourage to not sweat the small stuff- "laugh it off"
 - Encourage them to look at the positives and learn from experiences.
- Modeling and teaching the growth mindset.
 - Encourage campers to embrace challenge.
 - Celebrate overcoming challenges- especially the smaller things!
 - Discuss lessons and how they can grow
- Quotes about resilience (give handout with quotes about resilience) – staff can use these by sharing them with campers or posting them in the cabin as reminders. The handout "Wellness quotes" has quotes about resilience and wellness that are great words of encouragement and reminders about wellness.

Appropriate Support Models – 25 minutes

Facilitator will lead a discussion about what appropriate support models look like a camp. What issues are non-mental health professionals equipped to deal with? At what point do you go see a supervisor or utilize a mental health professional? What are you as a staff member an expert at?

- Discussion of Jewish law and getting medical support: According to Jewish law - someone struggling with medical issue (mental health) is required to seek help from a medical expert (therapist, psychologist)
- What is your role? Your role as a staff member is to provide a safe and caring environment for your campers. That can show up in different ways. When issues come up with your campers that are beyond the boundary of a non-mental health professional, that's the time to utilize your camper care team. If there's a doubt, then it's worth connecting to your camper care team.
- Clarify with your camper care team about what their expectations are of you and what boundaries look like in terms of appropriate support.
- Hero mentality- we all want to be helpful and supportive. Sometimes, that means playing the role of hero in a way that you're connecting a camper or staff member to the support that they need. That is an imperative role.
- Negligence- finding a happy medium between providing appropriate support and not neglecting needs is important. Over supporting needs that someone is not equipped to support is also a form of being neglectful.
- Using Camper care team. Look at the camper care team as a partnership to supporting campers.
- Empower yourself in your role as a counselor and all that you can do within your scope.

Creating Warmth – 10 minutes

An environment that is warm is so important to making campers and staff feel comfortable to approach staff about what's going on for them emotional. Through a short activity, participants will see modeling of using language that is empathic and approachable.

- Role play with participants around language that creates warmth (through empathy) from counselors to campers. Have participants make requests or express feelings to the facilitator. Facilitator will respond with harshness and then with warmth. Allow for opportunities for clarifying questions and analysis.

Camper Self-Care- 10 minutes

Teaching campers about self-care is so important. Talk through with the participants about ways staff can teach campers about self-care and also lead self-care activities. Below are suggestions:

- Importance of sleep
- Reading
- Writing a letter home
- Importance of hygiene as a self care practice
- Lavender pouch making – relaxing scent for bed time
- Leading the cabin through breathing exercises (you can lead participants through these):
 - **4 by 4 by 4 breathing:** When a camper is showing signs of anxiety, breathing exercises can help slow down their heart rate and therefore help them better manage anxiety levels. If you do this with them, that helps as well! Breathing in for 4 seconds, pause for 4 seconds, breathe out for 4 seconds. You can count with your hand if you join them in the exercise.
 - **Belly breathing:** This is also a great way to slow down breathing. Have the camper put one hand on their stomach and take slow deep breaths. They'll know they're taking deep enough breaths as they look and watch their hand rise and fall with each breath.
- Taking a nature walk with a counselor
- Lanyard making
- Water color painting

Closing (Specialty Track Wrap Up for Cornerstone) and Take Away – 20 minutes – During this time offer for an opportunity for reflection and discussion after the completion of the specialty track. Some potential questions:

- How will you apply what you learned through this track at camp?
- What are some of the most significant takeaways for you?
- How will you take care of yourself differently next summer at camp?
- How do you plan to be a mental health promoter at camp?
- What ways do you want to continue learning about this topic?

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

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.

- 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

Self-Care Activity- Lavender Pouch Making

Lavender Pouch Making

Materials

- 1 pouch
- 1/8 cup (2 tablespoons) of lavender
- 1/4 cup (4 tablespoons) of rice
- 1-2 drops essential oil (optional)

First write with a permanent marker on your pouch whatever you would like. In a small bowl, mix the dried lavender with the rice. If you'd like a stronger lavender scent, stir in a few drops of lavender essential oil. Using a small spoon, carefully add the lavender mixture into your sachet. Tie the pouch closes with a double knot to keep it from opening. Enjoy for calming and wonderful self-care! These pouches can also be used as a Havdalah Spice Bag.

Stories of Resilience

1. After years of being in the camp play, I finally got a solo section to sing. It was my time to shine! Just a stanza, a simple phrase - but it was all mine. Lights down, curtains up. My cue came and I stood up and then... I froze. I couldn't remember the words and I didn't know what to do and I only had a split second to figure it out! And so, I repeated the stanza of the person before me. It made no sense and I tried to hide it and my bunkmates were supportive. After the show my counselors saw me beating myself up over it, but they had bought a bouquet of flowers and a cookie cake for our cabin to share in celebration. That sense of normalcy even when I thought my world, what I'd worked so hard for all summer, was crashing down - it didn't leave me time to let my sadness fester. The fun must go on!
2. When I was in oldest age group at my summer camp, I failed the advanced lifesaving class. Which I had completely planned on having as part of my summer and totally through me for a loop on a ton of levels including, I'm a failure! I eventually found my way. I survived, more than survived. I found my way to do other activities that summer that I hadn't planned on, including a lot of candy from the candy box.
3. I believe in 7th grade, our cabin went on our day trip which leads into an overnight. And we had been biking for a long time. It was supposed to be 3-5 miles and it had really been a long time and we finally asked, you know, "we're all very tired" and "how much longer?" and it turned out that we had biked 11 miles in the wrong direction. Our cabin ended up knocking on this woman's door and asked if she had some snacks so she gave us these 2 really large bags of Lay's potato chips and turned on the garden hose so we could have some water. It was a very frustrating experience as a kid being like oh my gosh, are we going to make it back to camp? Years later, we would laugh about this and I actually really enjoy bike riding and being in the woods now and it's been funny to look back on that and realize that even though it was not great in the moment, it's a really funny story.
4. I really feel like a lot of my emotional abilities and resiliency as a human being comes from my cabin and our growing up together at camp. Throughout the 7 years total that we were there, a lot of people's parents got divorce, several of us had really severe eating disorders or problems with self-harm or other types of trauma go on. Some serious grief and loss experiences, even after camp. The way that we learned to support one another as a collective from ages 9 through 15 and beyond is part of the infrastructure of how I'm able to take care of myself, feel taken care of and reach out for support and help. I think the fact that we were able to create a language for emotional support at such a young age and continue growing up together at camp and had counselors that looked out for us and let us learn together how to have some kind of community care.