

CORNERSTONE 2019 RESOURCE

The Power Dynamics of Relationships When Working with Kids at Camp

Elective 2

AUTHOR(S):	Sara Beth Berman
SUMMARY:	The inherent power structures in the world and at camp influence all of our interactions. In the hypercharged world that is camp, relationships of all forms (platonic, sexual, supervisory, child / adult, and otherwise) are influenced by these power structures, the boundaries and the blurring of boundaries that happens in camp's close quarters. We have the responsibility of role modeling and inspiring appropriate relationships, boundaries, and healthy space for everybody in our communities. This session will include ways to address, build, and discuss these safe spaces with your campers and other staff members. - <i>Submitted by Sara Beth Berman</i>
TOPIC(S):	Staff Management, Communication Skills, Community Building, Group Dynamics
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	<p>Knowledge and Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will know how to approach creation of safer/brave space. • Participants will be able to identify their feelings about hook-up culture and how to manage those feelings in their setting. • Participants will be able to respectfully discuss relationship development with participants and staff. • Participants will be able to identify the different potential relationships they engage in in different spaces. • Participants will be able to broach discussions about safer relationships with young people of all ages.
AUDIENCE:	Camp Staff, College-aged learners, Oldest campers with modifications.
TIMING:	90 Minutes
APPENDICES:	<p>Text Resources for Further Reading</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Power Dynamics 20 years after the Lewinsky Scandal / Vanity Fair - https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/02/monica-lewinsky-in-the-age-of-metoo • Jewish Camp As An Incubator for Culture Change (Shmira Article) / Ejewishphilanthropy - https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/jewish-camp-as-an-incubator-for-culture-change/ • Making Out Scene from Wet Hot American Summer - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSdIYNSkQL8
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scratch paper and pen/cils • Flip Chart / Markers
SET-UP DETAILS:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tables and chairs for conversation • Projector / AV Setup

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Broad Subject and Skills

- 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.
- There are inherent power dynamics within a youth group system - board members vs rank and file, staff vs participant - that are ripe for examination
- The development of close relationships, sexual and platonic, have an important place in our intense, immersive programs.
- Relationships between people of different ages present all parties with potentially challenging interactions.
- 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.
- In today's world, silence about imbalance in power dynamics (not just sexual assault) should no longer be the norm.

Understanding

- Teaching about power, hookups, and relationships is a good lesson for learners of all ages.
- Hooking up is a real thing that happens, but needs to be managed in a way that makes sense for you / your institution.
- In today's zeitgeist, it is vital to discuss relational power dynamics in a constructive manner.
- Tension can be found between people of different ages and power levels.
- In order to ensure safe relationships, we must educate toward safe relationships.

Essential Questions

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

1. Who's Who (30 minutes):

1. A safer space (10 minutes): This session, by its very nature, can contain 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 brave and safer space?
 1. If not, what are we missing?
 2. 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.
 3. Names and camps - who's in the room?

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2. Identifying Relationships (20 minutes): Open to a fresh page in your notebook.
 1. Please take a few minutes to write out some relationships that you can identify where there's a power differential:
 1. First, an easy one: Please write a few easily identified, easily- or well-managed relationship you have witnessed, like the Queen of England and her subjects, or you and your high school science teacher.
 2. Now, a harder one: Please write a few easily identified, poorly-managed relationships you have witnessed, such as: you and a bully, a time you got pulled over for a silly driving mistake by an angry police officer.
 3. Now, the hardest: Please write a few complicated power relationships you've seen go awry in your own life / at camp. You won't have to share this one, but you're welcome to. An example: I was bullied by a veteran staff member as a new program director at camp. Camps have the classic camper-staff relationship (CSR) example - they have all had to fire staff members for hooking up with campers.\
 2. Share:
 1. Chevruta: Now that we have some listed power dynamics in our notebooks, turn to the person next to you. Share a few examples that you're comfortable digging into. You can go as deep as you want, just confirm with your partner that you're still comfortable.
 2. Large group: From your chevrotot, we'll take a few examples, and then we'll break it all down.
 - a. Examine:
 - i. What issues were raised up in your writing? In your discussions?
 - ii. Where do the power dynamics really pop up at camp?
 1. Around sexual relationships?
 2. Around platonic relationships?
 3. Around supervisory relationships?
3. Let's spend a little time think-pair-sharing around these topics - 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?
 1. As college-aged students?
 2. 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)
 1. (If it comes up: How do you feel about the "gamification" of relationships through things like hookup culture and points systems?)
 3. Discussion:
 1. What is the most challenging part of digging into these personal examples?
 2. Sometimes it's easy to categorize people, and other times, it's quite hard. What makes the difference when it feels icky?
 - a. (Example if needed - "Teen camp 2020!" vs. "All girls in short skirts are all jailbait.")
 3. Why do we care about the power dynamics in relationships at camp specifically?

2. The “Defining the Relationship” Discussion (20 minutes): Now that we’ve spent some time identifying relationships that meant something to us, we’re going to take what we’ve learned and apply it to our camps and youth movements. Let’s DTR!
 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?

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4. Arrows Discussion
 1. Where are the flows of power?
 2. Where are the dynamics most fraught? Why?

3. Why Define the Flow of Power? - Discussion (20 minutes)
 1. Ah Yes, "Old Camp": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VSdIYNSkQL8> (Wet Hot American Summer Makeout Clip)
 1. There are many instances in Wet Hot American Summer where we can't believe people would be this "bad" at camp. Let's make a list of things that are problematic about this video.
 2. Now that we've done that, let's think about today's lens a little more deeply. There are two supplemental pieces for this session - an EJP piece by Jeremy Fingerman, the CEO of FJC, and the [Vanity Fair piece written about Monica Lewinsky](#), 20 years after the trauma of being the center of a scandal involving Bill Clinton.
 1. Power Dynamics 20 years after the Lewinsky Scandal / Vanity Fair - <https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2018/02/monica-lewinsky-in-the-age-of-metoo>
 2. Jewish Camp As An Incubator for Culture Change (Shmira Article) / Ejewishphilanthropy - <https://ejewishphilanthropy.com/jewish-camp-as-an-incubator-for-culture-change/>
 1. How would you process the Monica Lewinsky scandal today?
 2. How can you approach her story with more empathy for her today?
 3. What would've happened with Monica and a camp director if this had happened in 2018 instead of 1998?
 2. Truth to Power:
 1. Power Dynamics
 1. How are we being realistic about the power dynamics in these relationships?
 2. How are we enabling / preventing healthy / unhealthy behaviors in our camps?
 3. How can we take charge of identifying and managing power dynamics in our 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 we do about come ons with people that have less power in the matrix?
 3. How can we 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? Staff?
 1. Why?
 2. How?

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR 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?