

## CORNERSTONE 2019 RESOURCE

### What's Keeping You up at Night?

*Evening Experience*

<b>AUTHOR(S):</b>	Sarra Alpert
<b>SUMMARY:</b>	There's a whole lot going on in the world and in our lives, and none of that goes away when we move into our camp bunks or tents for the summer. In this session, you'll have the opportunity to share what's weighing on your mind and heart - what are you struggling with? What particular aspects of the world's injustices or the challenges in your own life (or both) are at the forefront of your mind? We'll spend time in small groups creating space for each other to be able to safely share some of our answers to those and other questions, and we'll also work together on ideas for how to appropriately bring these struggles into the camp environment. <i>–Submitted by Sarra Alpert</i>
<b>TOPIC(S):</b>	Community Building, Wellness
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVE:</b>	Participants will have gone beyond surface-level sharing to hear from each other about what they might be struggling with or feeling passionately about. Participants will have new tools for how to set up such conversations with care, safety and trust.
<b>AUDIENCE:</b>	Staff or older campers
<b>TIMING:</b>	75 minutes
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Printout for question cards
<b>MATERIALS NEEDED:</b>	None
<b>SET-UP DETAILS:</b>	The most important thing is for the space to feel cozy and comfortable -- as close as possible to how people would feel if they were gathered with a few friends to talk. Consider comfortable seating options, lower lighting, background music, etc. Doing this program at a campfire could be great. There should also be a large enough space that the small groups will be able to sit out of earshot of each other.

### SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

- 1) Community Agreements:
  - a) Before going into any of this session's activities, it's important to emphasize community agreements -- what can everyone in the group expect of each other tonight and beyond?
  - b) Explain: why is this especially important for a session like this one? Because the entire session is about providing people with space to share the issues and experiences that they're feeling most intensely. Part of the idea behind tonight's session is exactly that we don't often create enough spaces for people to share about these kinds of things that are "keeping them up at night" (either literally or metaphorically). One of the reasons we don't do that is because of the difficulties of building trust. One way that you can build that trust is by setting clear boundaries and expectations at the beginning.
  - c) Here are a few recommended ones for a session like this one:
    - i) Spaciousness: give each other time to share at our own pace, making sure there's enough time in each activity for participants to be able to share in some depth without feeling rushed.
    - ii) Full confidentiality: everything that participants share tonight will be kept confidential. In some other sessions, a useful principle is "what's said here stays here; what's learned here leaves here" which means that people can repeat some of what they heard as long as they do so without saying who said what. For a session that focuses on personal sharing, I recommend going beyond that and not repeating anything that anyone else said about their personal stories or opinions. You're certainly welcome to share any of your own insights or any of the ideas that you or others come up with later about how to create activities at camp that build from what people shared.
    - iii) Be there for each other: our primary role with each other tonight (when we're not personally sharing) is to listen. Demonstrate engaged listening in whatever way is most comfortable for you. If you feel comfortable doing so, feel free to offer or ask for a hand-hold while you're sharing. If you want to ask someone follow-up questions, ask first if they're open to that.
    - iv) Follow up: if you want to continue any of tonight's conversations with any of tonight's participants, ask their permission to do so and allow for them to say no.
- 2) Start program with several introductory activities that will help to draw people into relationship with each other and to start some initial small-scale storytelling. Here are a few examples:
  - a) Freeze walk:
    - Put on some music (or have everyone start singing a camp song) and ask everyone to walk around the room/area at a leisurely pace, making as much eye contact as possible.
    - When the music stops (or, if the group is singing, when you call out for them to stop), everyone should get into pairs.
    - Each pair should hold eye contact for 10 more seconds (tell them when time

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is up). Then they should introduce themselves to each other, sharing their names and any one of their favorite things (i.e. food, movie, hobby, book, place, etc).

- Repeat this several more times (or if you have time, you can do it as many times as there are people, so that everyone has a chance to meet everyone else this way. By later in the game, people will be consciously seeking out those people they haven't partnered with).
- With the last pairing, give everyone a little more time to share whatever favorite thing they choose -- in this case, they should not only name something but tell a little bit about why they love it. Tell people that for this one, they should share a favorite that they're comfortable with the full room knowing about; also tell people that they should make sure to remember what their partner shares with them.
- Come back together for full-group intros. Each person can share their own name, with their most recent partner then sharing what that person's "favorite" was.
- Discuss: What felt uncomfortable about the initial activity? How did you push through that discomfort to stay present in the moment? How did you see differently than you might have otherwise? How did you feel differently after your encounter than you might have felt otherwise?

### b) Where I'm From...

- Stand in a circle. One participant should stand in the middle and finish the sentence "Where I'm from..." For this first round, the sentences should all focus on physical descriptions (i.e. Where I'm from, I never need a warm coat; Where I'm from, there's extensive public transportation; Where I'm from, there are beautiful sunsets).
- When you're describing this, clarify that "where I'm from" can refer to wherever they want - where they were born, where they've lived the longest, where they live now, etc.
- After someone shares a "Where I'm from..." statement, anyone else to whom that statement also applies should switch places with each other in the circle, leaving one new person standing in the middle. That person then shares the next "where I'm from."
- After several of these (can do as many as you want, depending on your time frame), tell everyone that from here on out, the "Where I'm from..." statements should describe something about how it feels emotionally and/or something that's more subjectively descriptive or opinion-based (i.e. Where I'm from, people help each other out; Where I'm from, we say "I love you" a lot; Where I'm from, there's a lot of prejudice). For these "Where I'm from..." statements, participants can feel free to expand their "where" to go beyond physical places - for example, they might be referencing their family unit, communities they're a part of, or identity groups that they're part of.
- The activity then continues the same way as with the earlier statements.
- After as many as you want, split into pairs or trios to share more details about one of the statements you personally said or responded to and which feels especially meaningful to you.

- 3) Diving Deeper:
  - a) For the bulk of tonight's session, we'll have the opportunity to dive deeper into what's "keeping us up at night." We'll spread out around the room so that we can be comfortable and not be listening in on each other's conversations.
  - b) There is a set of question cards for people to use as jumping-off points.
  - c) There are three options for how to spend this time:
    - i) Participants who are most interested in doing this work entirely in conversation with others can split straight into small groups and spend the entire time in those groups.
    - ii) Participants who want to share out loud but need to do some individual work before they feel ready to share can start with time for writing and/or art (in response to the question cards) before going into small groups. *\*Note: this method will require some steps along the way from the facilitator. Ideally, give the participants in this category a time frame for how long they'll spend on their own before you gather them into small groups.*
    - iii) Participants who prefer to do this work entirely on their own can spend the entire time writing or using art supplies to respond to the question cards.
- 4) Bring everyone back together. Lead the group in a short meditation to focus in on the ways that sharing about such important (and potentially hard or fraught) things can impact us physically. Use the meditative moment to help people let go of some of the tension that may have built up in their bodies.
- 5) Make a list together of what the key questions, parameters and appropriate boundaries are to consider in figuring out whether or how to bring the key things that are "keeping us up at night" into your teaching or programming or other aspects of your camp work.
- 6) Get back into small groups. For those who were sharing in small groups before, they should re-group with the same people. For those who were writing or art-making individually before, they should get into small groups with each other.
  - a) In their small groups, they should go around and each person should identify one key element of what's in this "keeping me up at night" category. They should brainstorm with their group-mates about how they might be able to address that in their teaching, programming or other camp work this summer (keeping in mind the key questions, parameters and boundaries identified in the large-group conversation).
- 7) Come back together to end. A few people should share the ideas they're excited to bring back to camp this summer.



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

This could be an excellent program to run for older campers as well as for staff. If running it for older campers, it would be great to have already designated a way for campers to be able to lead things for each other in the days or weeks following this program so that they can build from what they shared. For example, this program could be followed by several days of having campers leading pre-bedtime rituals that include readings or questions related to the issues they raised in the conversations, or sharing such readings or questions as part of morning or evening services, etc.