

CORNERSTONE 2020 RESOURCE

Mental Health and Wellness, *Specialty Track 2*

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| AUTHOR(S): | Natalie Rothstein |
| SUMMARY: | The session focuses on mental health and wellness for staff members in terms of taking care of their own wellness and supporting other staff members. Staff will learn about ways to make sure they put their air mask on first to then show up for their community and campers. - <i>Submitted by Natalie Rothstein</i> |
| TOPIC(S): | Mental Health, Staff Wellness |
| LEARNING OBJECTIVE: | Participants will hopefully leave this session feeling more prepared to prioritize their wellness at camp and outside of camp to be the best staff members they can be. |
| AUDIENCE: | Camp staff, ideal group size around 20 but can be facilitated with a larger group. |
| TIMING: | 90 minutes. |
| APPENDICES: | Radical Acceptance and Distress Tolerance, Self-Care in Judaism |
| MATERIALS NEEDED: | paper for writing -pens -3x5 notecards (1 per participant) |
| 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. Have questions for text study written out on large paper for everyone to see. |

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Total Session Time: 90 minutes
Introduction- 5 minutes
Self-Care in Judaism – 10 minutes
Put on Your Air Mask First- 20 minutes
Self-Care at Camp Conversation- 25 minutes
Staff Resilience and Radical Acceptance – 15 minutes
The Importance of Self Compassion – 10 Minutes
Closing – 5 minutes

Introduction- 5 minutes

If this is a continuation of a prior session, regroup and reiterate the safer space guidelines and offer an opportunity for any questions that came up after session 1. If this is a first time for the group to be together, go over the safer space guidelines (included at the bottom) and brief introductions with the group.

Resilience Revisited

In the previous session (if looking at all three sessions in sequence), we talked about resilience on a community level. This session is about the staff experience of taking care of yourself and promoting wellness amongst staff. Start off with a self-reflection for participants to answer the following questions about their own resilience specifically at camp (ideally written up and hanging for everyone to see):

- What do you do to be more resilient at camp?
- What do you do to take care of yourself at camp?
- What are signs that you're not taking care of yourself at camp?

Self-Care in Judaism- 10 minutes

This segment is about the importance of self-care and also uses a Jewish lens to model Judaism's self-care.

- **Defining self-care:** Self-care is taking time to take care of yourself by doing things that make you feel good and promote your wellness. What actually qualifies as self-care can truly vary and examples include: taking a shower, taking a nap, getting enough sleep, going for a swim, going for a walk with a friend, meditating, watching a movie and more. Self-care looks different for everyone!
- Self-care has a direct correlation to helping promote resilience. When self-care is made a priority, that can help prevent burn out. Self-care is intentional time put aside for yourself to restore.
- Self-care is so important to help promote resilience, prevent burnt out and maintain your wellness. There are so many great ways to practice self-care at camp that take little tools and short amounts of time. Have participants reflect and write down for themselves answering the following question:
 - What are ways you practice self-care in general?

Present the following ideas that come from a Jewish Lens:

- **Share this quote:** "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?" - Hillel from Pirke Avot
- **Minyan** – being connected to community during hard and difficult times
- **Shabbat-** enforced rest and time for contemplation and to connect to simple pleasures
 - What does that look like at camp?

- What about Shabbat practices at camp feel like self-care?
- **Prayers for self-care** – Modeh Ani, Mourner's Kaddish, Shehecheyanu
- **Hitbodedut**- which translates to solitude and the idea of interior seclusion for prayer and meditation – although Judaism does not generally recommend that one withdraws from the community, this practice can be seen as a time to connect to G-d alone and provide self-care and healing by taking time to: complain, cry, express gratitude – if something going on for you is important to you then it's important to g-d, this process can help turn pain into an act of love and not holding it to yourself, creates closeness and intimacy with g-d. This is not a replacement to therapy but a form of self-care through

Put on Your Air Mask First- 20 minutes

This conversation is imperative to help remind staff that in order to show up as a counselor to the camp community, other staff and campers, it's so important to take care of themselves. Share the following example:

- Most of you have likely been on an airplane. When you're on a plane and going over the safety protocol, the demonstration always mentions, put your air mask first before assisting others. Do you know what I'm talking about? (wait for response from the group). Why do you think that is (give them a moment to think)? Because if you're not able to breathe, how can you help someone else breathe?
- That being said, if you're not taking care of yourself, how can you take care of other people? It is so important as a camp staff member to put your air mask on first so that you can take care of your wellness and then show up for your community. Your patience and ability to be present are much better if you're making space to take care of yourself.
- Barometer of reasoning what the boundaries are and when you need to make the decision to take care of yourself and when you need to focus on showing up for staff and campers. Preventative self-care and making sure you're taking care of yourself on your free time and from the start of the summer are key to preventing burn out and to help reduce putting yourself in a compromising position.
- Have the participants answer the questions below. Ask them 1 question at a time and let them write down their answers. Take some time to reflect independently on these questions and write down:
 - When was a time that you neglected your wellness at camp?
 - What did that feel like before, during and after?
 - How did that impact your ability to do your job and show up for your community?
 - What do you think prevented you from taking care of yourself?
- Group discussion to discuss the following:
 - What's the barometer of when you can and cannot put your needs aside?
 - What are challenges of having needs while also needing to take care of someone else?
 - How can camp culture promote the importance of taking care of your needs?

Self-care at Camp Discussion (25 minutes)

This conversation is about self-care specifically at camp. Start by asking the following questions:

- What makes practicing self-care at camp challenging?
- What are times that you're able to practice self-care at camp?
- How do you feel like you can hold yourself accountable to practice self-care at camp?
- Refer back to the self-care and Jewish texts as ideas of what to do for self-care at camp.
- Give each participant a 4 by 6 notecard to write down
- Provide examples of how people can practice self-care at camp:
 - Take 5 minutes in the morning to stretch.
 - Take 2-3 minutes before you get out of bed or once you get into bed to express gratitude.
 - Use your free time to take a nap.

- Use your free time to exercise.
- Use your free time to do an arts and crafts project.
- Do yoga during your free time with a group of friends.
- Take an extra-long shower during free time
- Sit in a quiet spot and read a book.
- Give everyone a notecard and have them write down 5-10 things they can do for self-care at camp. This is something they can keep for the summer as a reference when they're feeling a need for self-care. Another step would be for participants to reference specific times in their days that they could practice self-care.
- If there's time, take an opportunity for group discussion on trouble shooting how to put self-care into practice at camp.

Radical Acceptance and Distress Tolerance- 15 minutes

This segment discusses the widely discuss idea of Radical Acceptance and Distress Tolerance. At camp, there are so many amazing things happening and staff are planning so many different programs and balancing different responsibilities. In that, there are different dynamics and so many variables – many of which can sometimes be out of staff member's control and that can create a lot of stress. We put a lot of pressure on ourselves for things to be perfect and often that is not realistic and creates more distress than good. Radical acceptance is accepting the things we can't control and focusing on what we can't control. Distress tolerance, is using coping skills to manage that stress. The Radical Acceptance and Distress Tolerance handout should be given to participants and then unpack that to apply this to camp by discussing different scenarios in staff member's past that they could have applied this and it could have been helpful. Use the think, pair, share model to have a group discussion.

The Importance of Self Compassion- 10 minutes

Share the following ideas with the participants: Self compassion is an important tool connected to self-worth. As staff members, it's important to reach for your potential to be the best YOU that you can be. Expectations and goals help you to get there. However, when you don't give yourself room to not be perfect, that can lead to being hard on yourself and impacts yourself worth. We need to give ourselves room to make mistakes by practicing self-compassion. Self-compassion is directly connected to improve our self-worth. When our self-worth is strong, our resilience and our ability to value our own wellness increases in a meaningful way.

- What is self-compassion? Self-compassion is being kind to yourself and having compassion towards yourself rather than the alternative of beating yourself up about something you've done.
- Self-compassion is taking ownership while also being compassionate towards yourself.
- Self-compassion helps you not to isolate yourself from others.
- Self-compassion is recognizing that you're human and you make mistakes and that it is impossible to be perfect.
- Examples of self-compassion:
 - You're leading an arts and crafts activity making watercolors to hang up throughout the bunk. As you walk to pour the cup of dirty water paint water into the sink, you trip and spill it all over yourself. You have two choices:
 1. Yell and yourself and tell yourself you're such an idiot and you ruin all of your clothes.
 2. Take a deep breath and tell yourself, you're human and that the dirty water will wash out of your shirt.
 - Which of the options is more productive? Which is more kind to yourself?
 - You co-counselor at swimming asked you to cover their activity period and you forgot to go down to the swim area. 10 minutes into the activity period, someone found you frantically to get you down to the swim area. You have two choices:
 1. Beat yourself up over this. You are always so forgetful, and you let down your co-counselor and all of the campers. You're a terrible counselor.

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2. Remind yourself that you can be forgetful and you're working on it but at the end of the day, you're human and this isn't a reflection that you don't care. You can talk to your Unit Head about strategies to help you remember things more.
 - Which of the options is more productive? Which is more kind to yourself?
- Practicing self-compassion is a more productive way to help you move forward rather than stewing in a mistake. This can be more complicated depending on the gravity of the situation.
- When you beat yourself up about something, campers see that. How can you model self-compassion for campers?

Closing- 2-5 minutes

Go around in the circle and have each group member share one word that represents what they are feeling at the end of this session.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

Safer Space Guidelines Activity

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
 - 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

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 Idea- 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.

Articles: <https://www.heyalma.com/jews-practiced-self-care-before-it-was-a-hashtag/>