



## CORNERSTONE 2021 RESOURCE

### Mental Health and Wellness, *Specialty Track 1*

<b>AUTHOR(S):</b>	Natalie Rothstein
<b>TOPIC (S)</b>	<i>Mental Health, Wellness</i>
<b>SUMMARY</b>	This session focuses on mental health and wellness specifically for staff 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 be able show up for their community and campers.
<b>GOALS:</b>	Participants will 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.
<b>AUDIENCE:</b>	Camp staff, ideal group size around 20 but can be facilitated with a larger group.
<b>TIMING:</b>	75 minutes.
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Radical Acceptance and Distress Tolerance
<b>MATERIALS NEEDED:</b>	Pen and paper Notecards (1 per participants)
<b>SET-UP DETAILS:</b>	Private space where participants can sit in a circle.

### SESSION TIMELINE

Total Session: 75 minutes

**Introduction-** 5 minutes

**Definitions-** 3 minutes

**Your Mental Health Matters-** 20 minutes

**Self Care in Judaism** – 5 minutes

**Self-Care At Camp Conversation-** 20 minutes

**Staff Resilience and Radical Acceptance** – 10 minutes

**The Importance of Self Compassion** – 10 Minutes

**Closing** – 2 minutes

### SESSION OUTLINE:

**Introduction-** 5 minutes

Facilitator welcomes everyone and gives a quick introduction of themselves. Have participants introduce themselves, pronouns, and why they chose to join this session.

Present guidelines and group agreements for the session (ideal to have these written out for everyone to see), 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.

- Ask clarifying questions
- Self regulate and self care (ie it's ok to step away)
- Facilitator is available after
- It's ok to be raggedy
- Be mindful and intentional about what you share
- Privacy
- This is a judgement free space
- Use "I" statements

Frame today's session (and if part of 3 series, give an intro of the sessions) - today's session will be talking about mental health and wellness for staff - that means you!!! We will be talking about the importance of prioritizing your mental health as staff members and ways to navigate taking care of yourself and showing up for your peers at camp. Facilitator to set expectations about the session:

- This is a space to talk about mental health in the context of camp.
- This space is meant to be supportive in thinking about mental health at camp and ways to navigate your own mental health at camp.
- This session is not group therapy.

The next 2 sessions will be about mental health and wellness in the context of camp community and campers.

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1X6P32aKqdrq5jKhPClgOgjqXmH3YgC7-i4\\_j1a4S8-g/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1X6P32aKqdrq5jKhPClgOgjqXmH3YgC7-i4_j1a4S8-g/edit?usp=sharing)

### **Definitions-** 3 minutes

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.

- o **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)
- o **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)
- o **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)

In this session, we will be primarily focusing on mental health and wellness... (thinking about from the lens of empowerment and scope)

### **Your Mental Health Matters-** 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 thoughts (about 5 minutes):

- 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? Also AIR SOURCE - where is the air coming from?

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- 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 during 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 (about 5-7 minutes):

- Do you have any concerns about your mental health at camp this summer? If so, what are your concerns?
- What ways do you feel prepared for in terms of prioritizing your mental health at camp this summer?
- 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?
- What's your barometer of when you can and cannot put your needs aside?

Group discussion to discuss the following (about 5-7 minutes):

- What are some of the challenges of navigating your own needs while also attending to others needs at camp?
- What has been helpful for you and your camp community for staff to find balance in taking care of themselves and others?
- How can your camp culture better promote the importance of taking care of your needs?

### **Self-Care in Judaism-** 7 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 mental health and 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 is a part of community care. which we will talk about more in our next session.

### Notes on self-care:

- 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.



<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/aug/21/self-care-radical-feminist-idea-mass-market>

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 Pirkei 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, mi shebeirach (healing)
- **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

### **Self-care at Camp Discussion** (20 minutes)

This conversation is about mental health and self-care specifically at camp. Share the following quote: “Self-care is not selfish or self-indulgent. We cannot nurture others from a dry well. We need to take care of our own needs first, so that we can give from our surplus, our abundance. When we nurture others from a place of fullness, we feel renewed instead of taken advantage of.” - Jennifer Loudon (self-care expert)

“Work when there is work to do. Rest when you are tired. One thing done in peace will most likely be better than ten things done in panic... I am not a hero if I deny rest; I am only tired.”  
- Susan McHenry

Start by asking the following questions of participants:

- What are your concerns about practicing self care at camp this summer specifically?
- What (that you now of) is your camp doing to prepare to support staff this summer?
- What makes practicing self care at camp challenging?
- When are times that you’re able to practice at self care at camp?
- How do you feel like you can hold yourself accountable to practice self care at camp?

### Self Care at Camp (optional personal activity)

Give each participant a 4 by 6 notecard to write down or have them write down in a note on their phone. Provide examples of how people can practice self-care at camp:

- o Take 5 minutes in the morning to stretch.
- o Take 2-3 minutes before you get out of bed or once you get into bed to express gratitude.
- o Use your free time to take a nap.
- o Use your free time to move your body.
- o Use your free time to do an arts and crafts project.
- o Do yoga during your free time with a group of friends.
- o Take an extra-long shower during free time
- o Sit in a quiet spot and read a book.

Have everyone write down on their own note card 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 and it feels necessary, take an opportunity for group discussion about how to strategize putting self-care into practice at camp.

### **Radical Acceptance and Distress Tolerance-** 10 minutes

This segment discusses the 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 and tolerate that distress. 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 modality to have a group discussion of the following questions:

- What are things you could work on accepting for this summer ahead?
- What ways do you imagine this framework could be helpful at camp?

### **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 your self-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. Compassion to others is also imperative.

- 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 being human.
- 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 paint water into the sink, you trip and spill it all over yourself. You have two choices:
    1. Yell at yourself and tell yourself you're such an idiot and you ruin all of your clothes.
    2. Take a deep breath, allow yourself to feel frustrated and tell yourself, you're human and that the dirty water will wash out of your shirt.
      - Which of the options is more helpful? Which is more kind to yourself?
  - Your 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.
    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.



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- Which of the options is more helpful? Which is more kind to yourself?
- Practicing self-compassion is a more effective way to help you move forward rather than dwelling on 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 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.