



CORNERSTONE 2021 RESOURCE

Mental Health and Wellness, *Specialty Track 2*

AUTHOR(S):	Natalie Rothstein
TOPIC (S)	Mental health, wellness
SUMMARY	This session focuses on mental health and wellness on the camp community level. Participants will learn about ways the camp community can take care of one another and how resilience grows at camp.
GOALS:	Participants will hopefully leave this session feeling like they have a better understanding of resilience in the camp community and mental health at camp.
AUDIENCE:	Camp staff, ideal group size around 20 but can be facilitated with a larger group.
TIMING:	75 minutes.
APPENDICES:	Value of Relationships in a Time of Isolation (Rabbi Avi Orlow), Stories of Resilience, Resilience Questions
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Pen and paper
SET-UP DETAILS:	Private space where participants can sit in a circle.

SESSION TIMELINE

Session total: 75 minutes

Introduction - 5 minutes

Resiliency at Camp – 20 minutes

Mental Health and Wellness at Camp- 20 minutes

Value of Relationship Text Study - 10 minutes

Community Care- 15 minutes

Closing – 5 minutes

SESSION OUTLINE:

Introduction- 5 minutes

Facilitator introduces the session topic and leads the group in a round of introductions (name, pronouns, camp).

Facilitator suggests group norms and guidelines and opens an opportunity for input from participants. Guidelines and group agreements for the session, offer opportunity for anyone to add guidelines or to ask clarifying questions.

- 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

How are you feeling coming into this session? What is an intention you have for this specialty track session today?

Mental Health and Wellness at Camp- 20 minutes

Lead the participants in a discussion with the participants about themes around mental health at camp. Write the answers on paper for everyone to see.

Then have the participants split into groups to answer the following questions and share back 1 thing with the group for each question (7 minutes):

- What structures does your camp have to support mental health related issues?

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- What are challenges you've seen around supporting mental health and wellness at camp?
- What are the benefits of working with your camp's mental health support team?
- What are the challenges of working with your camp's mental health support team?

Ask the group as a whole (10 minutes):

- What are themes around mental health and wellness that you see come up at camp?
- What are themes around mental health and wellness you anticipate might come up differently this summer for your camp community?

Notes to mention: Anticipations of this summer - different experiences and themes for different people, this is technically always the case but on a much larger scale this summer (different learning experiences, full remote, on a campus, elearning vs in person, all of the different transitions)

Trauma Informed Approach- 5 minutes

Trauma - An experience that threatens people's sense of safety and stability.

A Trauma Informed Approach is when an organization, system or caretaker has a foundational understanding that trauma has a widespread impact and shows up for people in many different ways. A trauma informed approach takes that understanding into consideration when supporting the self, individuals and the community.

Important aspects of a trauma informed approach:

- Safety
- Trustworthiness & transparency
- Peer support
- Collaboration & mutuality
- Empowerment & choice
- Cultural, historical & gender issues

Source: National Alliance for Mental Illness

Resiliency at Camp- 10 minutes

This activity is to explore how camp is a place where people build and nurture resilience in a setting that can allow for more space for growth, working through difficult moments and a lot of different opportunities. Camp offers so many different experiences where people can fail and succeed in an isolated environment where consequences may be more forgiving. The absence of technology and parents/guardians also puts individuals in a place to be more self-reliant to work through difficult moments. These experiences help individuals build resilience in a powerful way that can then be translated back to other parts of their life. Provide a trigger warning that there are different stories in this gallery walk that touch on grief and loss, suicide and environmental disasters.

Stories of Resilience (10 minutes) Ahead of time, print the “Stories of Resiliency” hand out and cut out each story and have them set up around the room (ideally hung on a wall) for participants to be able to read or on a jamboard for participants to interact with virtually.

- First, share the definition of resilience with the participants (written out on a flip chart or slides- or first page of jamboard):
 - Resilience: Resilience is transforming through an adverse or stressful experience. This can involve addressing the emotional impact of the experience and finding ways to cope. Resilience is nuanced and not linear.
- Ask the participants to spend the next 10 minutes walking around the room and reading the stories independently. During this time, they should also be answering the questions.
- After 8 minutes, give the participants a warning that they have 2 minutes left.
- After the participants finish walking through the room and reading the stories, give them the “Resiliency Discussion Questions” handout. They will be able to answer these questions after they read the stories or after.
- Have the participants share answers if they’re comfortable for a few examples. Then ask the group the following questions (5-7 minutes):
 - What was that experience like for you?
 - How did this resonate with or conflict with your definition of resilience?
 - How did this impact your view about camp being a place for personal growth?
- Talk about the spectrum and different levels of need for resilience and translation of building resilience in smaller things to bigger things.
- You can share the following resource: <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience>

Community Care at Camp and Keeping Community Connected- 15 minutes

What is community care? Community care is when a community emphasizes the importance of relationships, caring for each other and supporting one another. Community care also involves a culture that makes space for the importance of personal wellness as a part of community care.

For a pandemic summer, here are questions to explore ways to help the community stay connected with different safety structures in place. (10 minutes)

- Lead a group discussion on the following questions in the think/pair/share model:
 - What is the community going to look like at your camp this summer?
 - How has your camp community stayed connected throughout the pandemic?
 - How is community a part of your camp culture?
 - What do you think of the concept of community care?
 - What ways do you feel like your camp already models community care?
 - What are ways you think that your camp could improve with community care?

Empathy in the camp community- (5 minutes)

- Define empathy in very simple terms: “The ability to understand the feelings of another person” - (source: American Psychological Association) Share with participants that empathy is always important. It’s a helpful tool of relating to other people, understanding and supporting them. This summer more than ever empathy will be so essential. People will be coming from so many different experiences over the pandemic and the transition to being in the camp community could look drastically different and also very similar. Most people are very excited to be at camp and grateful and with that can also come fear, anxiety, discomfort, sadness and more. The experience of living through the pandemic has impacted people in different ways and going to camp could be a first time away from home for many people in over a year and a half. Approaching people in the camp community with empathy will be really important to helping connect community members, meet each other where you’re at and create space for different emotional experiences. Boundaries and empathy are not mutually exclusive.

Dependent on time - share this article with participants to read about ways to practice empathy.

<https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-develop-empathy-in-relationships-1717547>

Mi Sheberach for Mental Health from the Blue Dove Foundation

<https://thebluedovefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/mi-sheberach-mental-health.pdf>

To share with participants - ideas for keeping the community connected this summer when there may be restrictions and protocol that mean the entire camp isn't able to be physically together in the way that they've been able to be in past summers. If there is time, open up for sharing of ideas from participants. (5 minutes)

- gratitude tree/wall - have a space in camp where people can write things they are grateful for, people will be able to write them down and see notes from people from the entire camp community
- A scavenger hunt- different "pods" or "units" can design and send other "pods" or "units" on scavenger hunts
- Leaving notes for people in special spots - almost like pen pals

Value of Relationships in a Time of Isolation - 10 minutes

Explore text in "Value of Relationship in a Time of Isolation" by Rabbi Avi Orlov. Have participants take 5 minutes to read texts on their own. Break participants into groups of 3-4 and then have them select 1 text to discuss with their group.

- Going to camp is coming from an experience of many people feeling very isolated over the last summer. How does this resonate?
- People can feel isolated in a large community - what are ways you can bridge that?
- How does this text connect to the importance of community for them at camp?

Ask the closing question (think/pair/share)- 5 minutes-

What are ways you feel like you can help impact your camp's culture around community care?

What are ways you can strengthen community care this summer in particular?

Highs and lows – 5 minutes

Facilitator will give each participant an opportunity to share their high and low of today's session with the group or to share one word that describes how they feel after the session

BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP & SHIFTING TO IN PERSON:

Additional activities for camp community to explore:

Blue Dove Foundation- Turn The Tables Dinner Guide: QuieteningTheSilence on Shame and Stigma
<https://thebluedovefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/turn-the-tables-qts-guide.pdf>

This dinner guide could be a valuable practice to have your camp community do or staff do together.

Jewish Mental Health Values (Blue Dove Foundation)- <https://thebluedovefoundation.org/jewish-mental-health-values/>

Optional activity to add:

Emotional Expression in Jewish Tradition- 10 minutes

- Break participants into groups of 3-4. Pose the following question to participants (written out on a large piece of paper to reference): **What are some Jewish traditions, prayers, texts and rituals that you associate with general and/or specific emotions?**
 - o Give the participants 5 minutes to discuss the question and share their different examples
 - o Bring the participants back together for an entire group discussion to share their responses and coming up with group themes about how we recognize emotions/mental health in Jewish tradition (facilitator can write themes out on flipchart paper to hang in the room). The discussion goals are to help the group come to an understanding of views of mental health through Jewish religion and tradition. – 5 minutes