



CORNERSTONE 2021 RESOURCE

Mental Health and Wellness, *Specialty Track 3*

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TOPIC (S)	Mental health, wellness
SUMMARY	This session focuses on staff's role in terms of mental health and wellness related to camper care. Staff will learn about ways they can support campers.
GOALS:	The goal of this session is for participants to leave with clarity about their role in supporting campers related to mental health and wellness.
AUDIENCE:	Camp staff, ideal group size around 20 but can be facilitated with a larger group.
TIMING:	75 minutes
APPENDICES:	Mental Health and Wellness quotes
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Pen and paper
SET-UP DETAILS:	Private space where participants can sit in a circle.

SESSION TIMELINE

Total Session Time: 75 minutes

Introduction- 5 minutes

Appropriate Support Models – 25 minutes

Nurturing Resilience- 15 minutes

Camper Self 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

Appropriate Support Models – 25 minutes

Facilitator will lead a discussion about what appropriate support models look like a camp. What issues are non-mental health professionals equipped to deal with? At what point do you go see a supervisor or utilize a mental health professional? What are you as a staff member an expert at?

- Have participants reflect or discuss question:
 - **Reflect: What does your structure at camp look like with camper care teams?**
- Discussion of Jewish law and getting medical support: According to Jewish law - someone struggling with medical issue (mental health) is required to seek help from a medical expert (therapist, psychologist)
- Think, pair, share the following:

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- What is your role? Your role as a staff member is to provide a safe and caring environment for your campers. That can show up in different ways. When issues come up with your campers that are beyond the boundary of a non-mental health professional, that's the time to utilize your camper care team. If there's a doubt, then it's worth connecting to your camper care team.
- Clarify with your camper care team about what their expectations are of you and what boundaries look like in terms of appropriate support.
- Hero mentality- we all want to be helpful and warmly supportive. Sometimes, that means playing the role of hero in a way that you're connecting a camper or staff member to the support that they need. That is an imperative role.
- Negligence- finding a happy medium between providing appropriate support and not neglecting needs is important. Over supporting needs that someone is not equipped to support is also a form of being neglectful.
- Working with your camper care team. Look at the camper care team as a partnership for supporting campers.
 - Open up discussion to talk about positives and challenges of working with your camper care team.
- **Empower yourself in your role as a counselor and all that you can do within your scope.**
- Social anxiety may be higher this summer coming from the previous years - providing empathy and flexibility around supporting campers and helping them ease into group settings will be very important (if there is time, explore different scenarios of how that could be handled).

Nurturing Resilience- 15 minutes

Anticipations of this summer - different experiences and themes for different campers
Remembering the stories of resilience from session 2 (if this is not a continuation – there are several stories below that outline experiences of resilience in camp communities and how individuals build resilience at camp in a meaningful way). Creating a warm, encouraging and nurturing space. Ask the participants:

- Remembering those examples, how can you nurture resilience in your campers during difficult situations at camp? (allow participants to troubleshoot and offer ideas)
- Offer additional thoughts below:
 - Allow campers to make (safe) mistakes.
 - Help them and guide them, don't do it for them.
 - Encourage campers to honor their feelings/emotions and validate their feelings/emotions
 - Identify when it's helpful to let something go- "laugh it off"
 - Encourage them to look at the positives and learn from experiences

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- Things that staff can take away for themselves and for how to approach challenging moments with campers:
 - Celebrate overcoming challenges- especially the smaller things!
 - Being open to feedback because it helps you to grow.
 - Discuss lessons and how they can grow.
- Revisiting empathy - children need to feel empathy and validation. discussion, break participants into groups of 3-4 to discuss the following questions-
 - What roles do you think empathy and compassion play when working with campers?
 - When is an example of empathy from a staff member having a positive impact on a camper?
 - When is an example of camper to camper empathy having a positive impact?
 - How might showing empathy look different based on different ages of campers?
- Regular 1 on 1 check-ins with campers (can be split between each counselor for each camper in the cabin) to see how they're doing, asking what their needs are and how they can be supported.
- Quotes about mental health and wellness (give handouts with quotes related to mental health and wellness) – staff can use these by sharing them with campers or posting them in the cabin as reminders. The handout “Mental Health and Wellness quotes” has quotes about resilience and wellness that are great words of encouragement and reminders about wellness.

Camper Self-Care- 10 minutes

Teaching campers about self-care is so important. Talk through with the participants about ways staff can teach campers about self-care and also lead self-care activities. Having routine around self-care practices can be a great way to model the value for campers.

Below are suggestions:

- Importance of sleep
- Reading
- Writing a letter home
- Importance of hygiene as a self care practice
- Lavender pouch making – relaxing scent for bedtime
- End of day reflection and rituals
- Leading the cabin through breathing exercises (you can lead participants through these):
 - **4 by 4 by 4 breathing:** When a camper is showing signs of anxiety, breathing exercises can help slow down their heart rate and therefore help them better manage anxiety levels. If you do this with them, that helps as well! Breathing in for 4 seconds, pause for 4 seconds, breathe out for 4 seconds. You can count with your hand if you join them in the exercise.

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- **Belly breathing:** This is also a great way to slow down breathing. Have the camper put one hand on their stomach and take slow deep breaths. They'll know they're taking deep enough breaths as they look and watch their hand rise and fall with each breath.
- Taking a nature walk with a counselor
- Lanyard making
- Watercolor painting about how you're feeling

Closing – 5 minutes

Have participants write down - what is one thing they feel confident about supporting campers this summer? What is one thing they want to work on when supporting campers this summer?

Specialty Track Wrap Up for Cornerstone/Sequence- 20 minutes

During this time, offer for an opportunity for reflection and discussion after the completion of the specialty track. Some potential questions:

- How will you apply what you learned through this track at camp?
- What are some of the most significant takeaways for you?
- How will you take care of yourself differently next summer at camp?
- How do you plan to be a mental health promoter at camp?
- What ways do you want to continue learning about this topic?

BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP & SHIFTING TO IN PERSON:

Self-Care Activity- Lavender Pouch Making

Lavender Pouch Making

Materials

- 1 pouch
- 1/8 cup (2 tablespoons) of lavender
- ¼ 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 calming and wonderful self-care! These pouches can also be used as a Havdalah Spice Bag.

Stories of Resilience

1. After years of being in the camp play, I finally got a solo section to sing. It was my time to shine! Just a stanza, a simple phrase - but it was all mine. Lights down, curtains up. My cue came and I stood up and then... I froze. I couldn't remember the words and I didn't know what to do and I only had a split second to figure it out! And so, I repeated the stanza of the person before me. It made no sense and I tried to hide it and my bunkmates were supportive. After the show my counselors saw me beating myself up over it, but they had bought a bouquet of flowers and a cookie cake for our cabin to share in celebration. That sense of normalcy even when I thought my world, what I'd worked so hard for all summer, was crashing down - it didn't leave me time to let my sadness fester. The fun must go on!

2. When I was in the oldest age group at my summer camp, I failed the advanced lifesaving class. Which I had completely planned on having as part of my summer and totally through me for a loop on a ton of levels including, I'm a failure! I eventually found my way. I survived, more than survived. I found my way to do other activities that summer that I hadn't planned on, including a lot of candy from the candy box.

3. I believe in 7th grade, our cabin went on our day trip which leads into an overnight. And we had been biking for a long time. It was supposed to be 3-5 miles and it had really been a long time and we finally asked, you know, "we're all very tired" and "how much longer?" and it turned out that we had biked 11 miles in the wrong direction. Our cabin ended up knocking on this woman's door and asked if she had some snacks so she gave us these 2 really large bags of Lay's potato chips and turned on the garden hose so we could have some water. It was a very frustrating experience as a kid being like oh my gosh, are we going to make it back to camp? Years later, we would laugh about this and I actually really enjoy bike riding and being in the woods now and it's been funny to look back on that and realize that even though it was not great in the moment, it's a really funny story.

4. I really feel like a lot of my emotional abilities and resiliency as a human being comes from my cabin and our growing up together at camp. Throughout the 7 years total that we were there, a lot of people's parents got divorce, several of us had really severe eating disorders or problems with self-harm or other types of trauma go on. Some serious grief and loss experiences, even after camp. The way that we learned to support one another as a collective from ages 9 through 15 and beyond is part of the infrastructure of how I'm able to take care of myself, feel taken care of and reach out for support and help. I think the fact that we were able to create a language for emotional support at such a young age and continue growing up together at camp and had counselors that looked out for us and let us learn together how to have some kind of community care.