

CORNERSTONE 2021 RESOURCE

FREE PLAY!

Specialty Track 2

AUTHOR(S):	Chana Rothman
TOPIC (S)	Young Children, Leadership Development
SUMMARY	Children learn and grow through free play: unstructured time and space where they make their own decisions and create their own universes with the support of a trusted adult. This kind of play is very important to children's development.
GOALS:	<p>Participants will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be inspired to create opportunities for free play at their camps and advocate/educate for free play - Experience free play - Acquire tools and language, including Jewish text and framework, for being child-centered in the bunk and other viable spaces at camp <p>Participants will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Articulate the value of child-led play through both secular and Jewish lenses - Connect child-led play to young people's liberation - Name one Jewish text and/or framework that supports child-led play
AUDIENCE:	Fellows - can be tailored to other audiences
TIMING:	75 minutes
APPENDICES:	Slideshow google slide link: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1dW8mOw6-U_c5Xdw7dP4oJKShyW2mAEalM0Vtb7HPH-A/edit#slide=id.gc78ee074fd_0_8)
MATERIALS NEEDED:	This is a flexible session in terms of materials. Since it is being facilitated online, the session leader will be asking people to use what they have around their home.
SET-UP DETAILS:	<p>Ideally, this session takes place in a room near the outdoors.</p> <p>Note if you want to use this program:</p> <p>Because this session is about open-ended free play with adult attention, it can take place indoors or outdoors. If you have an outdoor space that is safe, vetted, and the weather is hospitable, being outside is ideal. If indoors, think about setting up a few "stations" - activity areas where children can focus on one particular activity. For example, a table of Legos, a building block corner, a drawing corner, an area with sticks and rocks. etc.</p>

SESSION TIMELINE

- 0:00-0:10 - Warm-up (includes games, going over Agenda/Goals, check-in)
- 0:10-0:30 - Big idea/framing (includes video, text study, break out rooms)
- 0:30-0:50 - Hands-on activity
- 0:50-0:55 - Debrief
- 0:55-0:60 - Debrief through hands-on activity
- 0:60-0:75 - Wrap up / Bring it back to camp (includes time for questions, processing, adaptations/modifications)

SESSION OUTLINE:

0:00-0:05 - Warm up Zoom games:

Session facilitator starts with some games.

“Throw the Imaginary Ball”

One person calls out the name of another person in the zoom room and throws them an imaginary ball. That person catches the imaginary ball and throws it to the next person. There is opportunity for improvisation and physical comedy when the person throws and catches the ball - they might change it, make it bigger or make it edible, etc. This is also a good way to reinforce names when a group is still getting acquainted.

“Guess The Object”

Participants take turns in this game. When it's your turn, you select an object nearby - can be anything - a pen, notebook, phone, musical instrument - or even more random things you have lying around. You turn off your camera and put your object right close to the camera, so close that no one can tell what the object is. Slowly you “zoom out,” moving the object further and further away from the camera. Other participants are calling out their guesses about what the object is, as you are moving it away. The one who guesses it, wins! Then the next person takes a turn to select an object.

0:05-0:10 - Review goals and agenda, Reflections/questions from last session

Session facilitator shares slides with stated goals and agenda for the day. Session facilitator asks if there are any questions and offers a space for reflection on yesterday's topic of young people's liberation. It's important to take some time on that piece because today's topic is directly related to young people's liberation.

Goals:

(see above “Goals” section in this document)

0:10-0:30 - Big idea/theory about PLAY!

Session leader shares slides that encapsulate the big secular and Jewish ideas behind free play.

Facilitator allows time for questions and reflection in small groups.

Session facilitator shares three big ideas through Jewish and secular text study (texts are available on the google slides linked in this document above under “Appendices”)

BIG IDEA #1

Children need free play. It is their right as young people. Play is a basic human right that is being taken away in many societies around the world.

Supporting texts:

- Paragraph by Chana Rothman
- Text defining “free play” (source: <https://www.pgpedia.com/f/free-play>)
- Text from “Children’s Play Policy Forum”

BIG IDEA #2

There is a framework from Jewish tradition of respecting and recognizing that children learn through play.

Supporting Text:

- Jewish text from Proverbs 22:6: “Educate a child according to their way. When they get old, they will not stray.”

BIG IDEA #3

There are three main types of play:

- Child-led play (Free play)
- Counselor-led play
- Mutually-led play

0:30-0:50 - Hands-on activity: FREE PLAY!

Facilitator strongly encourages participants to go outside for this free play time.

“We are going to take time to experience free play ourselves. I encourage you to find a buddy and go together to an area or activity. Feel free to try something you always wanted to try and ask your buddy to come along and support you. We are modeling supportive presence during free play. You can then be a buddy and supportive presence as your partner or partners try something.

There are outdoor areas and a few activity areas. These activity areas set up for you to play freely. You are also invited to interact with the others who have gravitated to that area. We will gather again in about 10 minutes. ”

Facilitator defines this type of free play as “Child-led play.” Define the play we just did as *child-directed*, *child-centered* or *child-led* play. **Notice the term ‘child’ comes before the rest - that is the main focus.**

Reinforce the concept of young people’s oppression and young people’s liberation.

Facilitator visits each group, observing and documenting with photos and taking notes, checking with each individual for permission to take photos.

Here are some possible materials for each activity area:

- Pile of sticks, leaves, rocks
- Paper and markers
- Building blocks
- Pipe cleaners
- Nature area - going into the woods
- Basket of scarves
- Mud pit with bucket of water and sticks

0:50-0:55 - Group Discussion

Group discussion questions:

- How was this experience for you? Did it feel like free play?
- When does free play happen in your life?
- What are the benefits of free play?
- When and how often does free play happen at your camp?
- SELF-REFLECT: What is your role as a counselor in facilitating free play?
- How is free play connected to young people’s liberation?

0:55-0:65 - Break into chevrotah for play-based learning (text study).

Instead of sitting and talking, each chevrotah pair can choose an area to play and interpret the texts in their own way.

Some options:

- Building Blocks and other building materials
- Art: paper, paint, paintbrushes, water, scissors
- Costumes
- Option to go outside
- Cozy sitting area with pillows and sheets (possible to build a fort)
- music for free dance

Text 1:

Mishlei/Proverbs 22:6 “Educate a child according to his/her/their way; even when s/he grows old, s/he will not turn away from it.”

Text 2:

“30 Reasons why Free Play Benefits Child Development”

In play-based, creative chevrutah, explore the following questions:

- What is the difference between *child-led or free play, counselor-led play* and *mutually-led play*?
- What is the difference between *free play* and running around wild, driving your camp director crazy?
- What is the role of the adult/counselor in following the campers’ lead?
- What would it look like to be more child-centered in your bunk?
- What would you need in order to make that happen?
- What questions do you have about free play at camp? About the text from Proverbs?
- What is Jewish about free play?

0:65-0:75- Wrap up - large group discussion

Session facilitator asks what came up in the text study. What was it like to do text study in a hands-on way?

Session facilitator asks for input towards Session 3. Session 3 will be about synthesizing the concepts of young people’s liberation and child-led play, and looking at them through the lens of Jewish camp.

Bringing it back to camp

- Different age groups (youngest campers, older and oldest campers, teenagers, young adults/counselors, senior staff and directors)
- The continuum of *child-led, adult-led, and mutually-led play*. Where can you give the children more voice?
- Where can you advocate for your campers and yourself to your supervisors? (reference text study and UN Declaration)
- Outdoor free play - how can we make this more part of camp? When does this happen at camp?
- How can we make free time more meaningful and engaging?

1. On Jamboard, list the play continuum (*child-led, mutually-led, counselor-led*) and offer participants opportunity to draw or write ideas for where this child-led and mutually-led play happens or could happen at camp.

2. Young people’s commitment: “I solemnly promise that, from this moment on, I will never again treat any young person, including myself, with anything less than complete respect. This means that...”

3 Minutes for notes

Facilitator: *Take 3 minutes to reflect and write down 1 take-away from this session for your own life, and 1 take-away for you at camp this summer.*

Facilitator brings the group outside.

Ask the group to form a circle.

Ask each participant to share something they are taking from this session together: a memory, an idea, a question, an inspiration.

Thank each participant for coming, for being a teammate to their campers and all the campers and contributing to young people's liberation. What an exciting project!

BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP & SHIFTING TO IN PERSON:

Many of these can be adapted for in person or online.

In person, there can be stations set up around the room.

Example:

In order to best adapt this program for in camp use I would suggest:

- Finding a place with large walls to hang up the texts
- Planting some counselors amongst the texts to observe camper's reactions
- Bringing everyone into a circle for the discussion where everyone can see everyone else