



ALIGNING YOUR SPORTS PROGRAM WITH YOUR CAMP'S CULTURE

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INTRODUCTION



Sport at Jewish camp is a complex and dynamic experience for campers. Like artistic, musical, and other Jewish experiential education experiences at camp, there is a wide spectrum of how campers and counselors show up at the sports fields. Because of this, it is difficult to find the right balance of being fun, competitive, educational, and inclusive when designing a sports program in the context of Jewish camp. Supervisors, sports staff, and camp counselors sometimes lack the resources, training, and language required to create an all-encompassing sports program grounded in the camp's values. These gaps lead to volatile competitive environments, which can result in poor behavior from overly-competitive campers and disengagement from other campers. This resource aims to address these issues by exploring how to create a supportive environment for competition. In this guide, competition is defined as, "The intra/interpersonal dynamics of winning and losing." Competition and how it is consumed by children and young adults drives their recreational sport experience. When used correctly, it can be the tool that develops a new passions, relationships, and transformative experiences for a camper at sport. Whether your daily sports program's main goal is to have fun, catalyze skill development, or to replicate organized game/league experiences, the aspect of competition is constant and must be attended to.

This resource accomplishes the following:

- Contextualizes how your sports program should align with the mission of your camp by providing recommendations on how to create a program that is predicated on healthy competition.
- Showcases a 90-minute staff training activity for Camp Athletic Directors and Heads of Sport to prepare their teams ahead of opening day.
- Shares best practices and tips for sports instruction and building a sports program.
- Provides sports-related language and phrases in Hebrew for sport-staff instructors/coaches to use with campers.

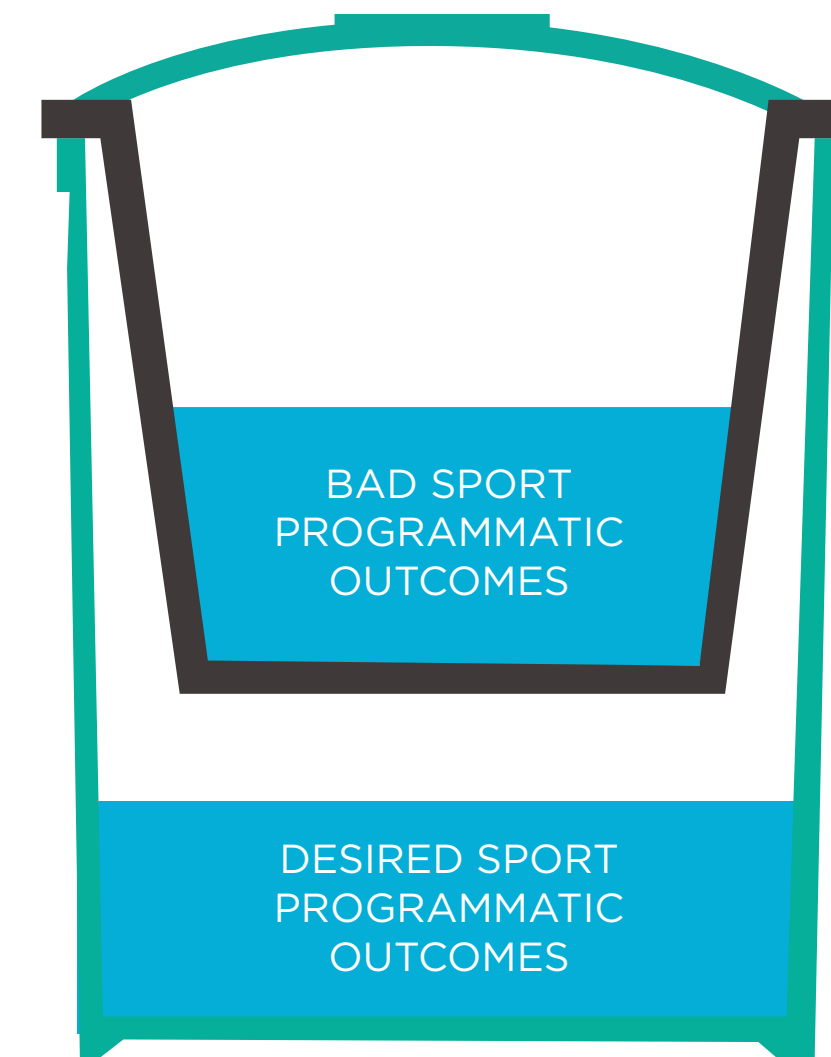
This guide is intended for the use of camp athletic directors/heads of sports programming as they prepare ahead of opening day at camp.

THE COMPETITION FILTER

INTEGRATING YOUR CAMP
CULTURE INTO YOUR
SPORTS PROGRAM



YOUR SPORTS PROGRAM IS LIKE A WATER FILTER



- FILTERING ELEMENT
YOUR SPORTS STAFF
AND PROGRAM DESIGN
- COMPETITION
- YOUR CAMP'S
SPORTS PROGRAM

The Competition Filter depicted above is a metaphor for the role that competition plays in the effectiveness of your sports program. Unfiltered competition is raw and can lead to poor and polarized experiences in sport. However, when filtered and implemented with intention, competition is a catalyst for physical, behavioral, and identity development - growth that your camp's culture enables each summer! Your sports staff and program design are the forces (the filtering element) that bring your camp culture to sport each day. Their ability to integrate your camp's culture into your sports program, and how competition reaches your campers, is a key to success for your sports program.

Through the lens of The Competition Filter, this section will unpack three relevant topics that often arise when assessing the quality of a sports program at Jewish camp. They are:

- 1 - The role(s) of staff at sports
- 2 - Engaging campers who don't like sports
- 3 - Creating a healthy competitive environment where every camper can grow

THE ROLE(S) OF STAFF AT SPORTS

The active presence of your staff members is essential to creating a healthy competitive environment. When coaches and staff are present role models, campers are better prepared to emotionally balance winning and losing. Like other activities at camp, it is key that your staff models the behavior they are seeking from campers, regardless of their level of expertise and interest in the respective sport (just like they would be at any other activity!). Staff at sport should participate in stretching, drills, and game-like settings (if age appropriate) alongside the campers. In addition to encouraging campers to display values like sportsmanship and camaraderie, counselors must take an equally active role as cheerleaders and their campers' biggest fans. Whether or not campers are interested in playing sports, they are more likely to be engaged if they feel supported by their counselors and coaches on the field alongside them. It is important to prevent situations where a staff member's only role is "supervising" or "refing" while sitting on the side of the playing field, which leads to campers joining them on the sidelines. Rather, all supervision and officiating should be viewed as an active-facilitation role in the sports activity, so that campers remain engaged in the game itself. Applying these concepts to sport in real-time is difficult and exhausting. However, they are likely part of the fabric of your camp culture and what makes other activities in camp successful and inclusive. It's easy to get caught up in the heat of the moment when it comes to competition and sports, but for your sports program to be properly aligned with your camp's culture, they should embody the same values and virtues that make other areas of camp so successful.





ENGAGING CAMPERS WHO DON'T LIKE SPORTS

It is important to balance the following tensions regarding campers who may not be interested in participating in sports activity: (1) Do not force a camper to partake in a competitive setting that is unfamiliar or unappealing to them. (2) Camp is a place where we must take advantage of every opportunity to facilitate character development and build community.

A camper could have any reason(s) for being disinterested or unwilling to participate at first in your sports activity. The common denominator is that they do not want to play a given sport in what they perceive as its traditional context. For example, someone who says they don't want to play basketball is likely trying to tell you, "I don't want to play a full court game of 5 on 5 up to 10." Rather than viewing this as a moment where your staff should do whatever it takes to get them to play because "that's what everybody else is doing" or because they should "try something new", this is an opportunity to be experiential and creative. It is appropriate and productive to gauge the interest levels of campers at a given sports period and divide them into multiple groups depending on what type of experience they are seeking. Successful sport-staff teams are flexible and able to run multiple types of competitive activities simultaneously within a given session. In other words, your staff should have "back-pocket mini-games" for each sport or be prepared to facilitate smaller competitions that focus on simpler parts of the sport that are easily playable and accessible for any camper. For campers who aren't as passionate about a particular sport, mini-games and competitions that focus on one skill area offer more accessible settings for campers to learn a specific skill and apply it in a competitive situation. Although it is common to lose oneself in the dynamics of an 11 v 11 or 5 v 5 sport setting, your program should still contain elements of traditional or scrimmaged versions of sports for your campers when there is critical mass of participant interest level. Equipping your staff and program design with tools to provide a wide range of accessible competitive experiences is key to building a successful mission-driven sports program.

The concept of competition is of the most impactful tools that will keep your campers engaged during a sports period, not just the sport itself. One of the reasons color war, yom sport, and Maccabiah work so well is that they are facilitated with a great deal of intention and are designed to be accessible and relatable with everyone in the community in mind. They are competitions that allow space for community building and individual achievement. Your daily sports program should be built with the same intention, with competition being the vehicle that brings your community together.

CREATING A HEALTHY COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT WHERE EVERY CAMPER CAN GROW

Competitive environments tend to provoke a wide range of emotions and reactions from young children and young adults. Because of this, it is staff's responsibility to create a safe environment that produces positive coping mechanisms, win, or lose. For example, how does your sports activity promote the virtues of sportsmanship or work ethic? Or how does your sports activity intentionally encourage campers to respect their staff (teachers and coaches) and their opposition? These points of emphasis should be applied at an equal level across all campers, regardless of how skilled, competitive, or interested a camper is in said sport. The result of a win or loss should not be the focal point of activities and overshadow all the growth opportunities that exist in your program. Encourage your staff to emphasize the positives that come from campers playing a game with each other and to highlight the opportunities for learning that arise during the process of winning and losing. This can be supported by organizing teams and miniature communities within each sport period. Some of the most impactful values that stem from competition are community building, teamwork, grace, and resilience. Teams are meant to encourage, learn, and persevere with one another. Applaud sportsmanship, highlight "the little things", and create an environment where campers are incentivized to support each other emotionally and physically through their play. Creating safe environments that allow campers to grow from their mistakes and take pride in their accomplishments is at the heart of Jewish Camp; sport is an excellent place for that development to happen.



PREPARING YOUR SPORTS STAFF FOR OPENING DAY

BACKYARD SPORTS

SUMMARY: In this training activity, your sports staff will practice elements of session design and sports instruction through fun, creativity, and competition. This activity includes a team reflection about what they learned during the activity, as well as a brief discussion about your camp's mission statement and values.

GOALS:

- 1 - Sports Staff will practice creating inclusive and competitive sport experiences designed for their campers.
- 2 - Sports Staff will practice general skills needed for sports instruction at camp, such as:
 - a. Verbal and physical communication
 - b. Improvisation
 - c. Acting as a role model
- 3 - Sports Staff will gain perspective and draw connections between the camp's mission/values and the sports program.
- 4 - Sports Staff will bond with each other and grow as a team.



AUDIENCE: This session is meant for coaches and sports staff but can be modified for campers too.

TIMING: 90 minutes total. 50 minutes of play, 10 minute break, 30 minutes of discussion

MATERIALS: **A large assortment of sport materials** and objects that are conducive to throwing, catching/carrying and running through or around. There should be an equal amount of the same material for each group (for example, if one group has 2 pool noodles and there are 5 groups, there should be a total of 10 pool noodles, so that each group has 2). There is no specific set of materials that are required to run this program, other than that there must be variety and enough of each object for each group to create their original mini-games and competitions.

A poster of your camp's mission statement and/or values

SET-UP: Outdoors on a grassy field with ample space to run around or indoors on a rubber/soft surface with ample space to run around. After playing, transition to a nearby location in camp (ideally where your sports staff typically meets) for a brief discussion with your staff.

SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:05 - *Welcome and introduction to activity*
- 00:05-00:25 - *Game-planning time*
- 00:25-00:50 - *Play!*
- 00:50-00:60 - *Break and transition time*
- 01:00-01:30 - *Discussion*

SESSION OUTLINE:

00:00-00:05 – Athletic Director (AD) creates a welcoming environment as staff enters the space and informs the group of the goals of the activity. AD then outlines the agenda and gives directions for the session:

- AD divides staff into groups of 3-4 people*
- Each group has an identical assortment of sports equipment in front of them*
- Each group has 20 minutes to design their own short game or relay*
- Each group is responsible for teaching the game they created and facilitating the experience for their staff peers. Everyone plays every game!*

00:05-00:25 – Each group uses this time to plan and test their game on their own.

00:25-00:50 – AD brings the staff back together and asks a group to volunteer to teach their game! AD gives each group the opportunity to teach and facilitate their game for everyone to play.

00:50-01:00 – Break and transition



01:00-01:30 - AD facilitates a group dialogue using the following prompts and reading the room, with a poster of the camp mission or values (whichever feels more suitable for the activity) visible for everyone:

*What aspects of your game worked, and which aspects failed to meet expectations?
Reflect on your planning process, how you taught the game, and what happened when everyone participated in it.*

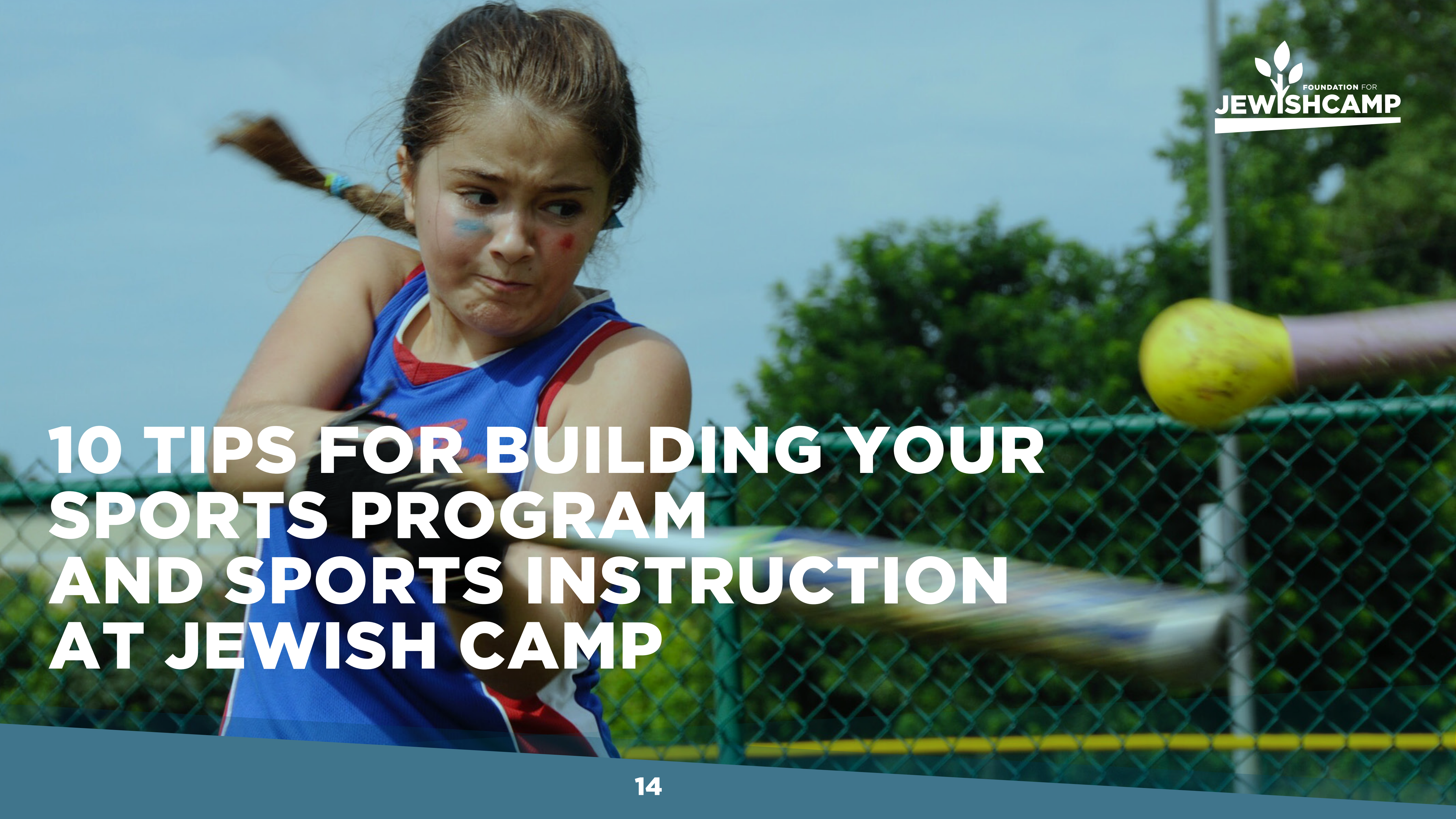
- What similarities and differences did you notice across each of the games?*
- What were all the skills that participants worked on in these games?*
- What skills did you work on as a coach/teacher in this game?*
- Why else do you think we asked you to do this activity?*

(TIP): Let the discussion breathe and allow your staff to respond to each other. Highlight comments and direct the conversation towards the ideas that feel most relatable to daily sports instruction at camp.

AD then directs everyone's attention to the poster of the camp mission/values. AD asks a volunteer to read the poster aloud, and continues facilitating the discussion with the following prompts:

- What does this statement/values mean to you?*
- What are some specific examples of how we live by our mission/values at camp?*
- Where did this statement/values show up in the game we just played?*
- How can sports at camp, in general, deliver on our camp's mission and values?*

AD concludes the activity by asking staff to fill out the prompt on a post-it, "This summer at camp I will bring our mission/values by..." After all staff members have filled out the prompt, collect the post-its and hang them on the poster to be visible throughout the rest of the summer.



**10 TIPS FOR BUILDING YOUR
SPORTS PROGRAM
AND SPORTS INSTRUCTION
AT JEWISH CAMP**



10 TIPS FOR BUILDING YOUR SPORTS PROGRAM AND SPORTS INSTRUCTION AT JEWISH CAMP

- 1.** Give your sports staff a sense of ownership in designing activities
- 2.** No sarcasm allowed at sports
- 3.** Establish goals before the summer with your staff for how your sports program should look
- 4.** Ensure that every block of sports programming allows for flexibility and creativity dependent on which campers show up that day
- 5.** Be specific during instruction and skill development
- 6.** Incorporate rituals and routine into your program
- 7.** Your coaches and staff should know and be aware of what else is happening at camp
- 8.** Staff should be playing as hard as the campers are
- 9.** Provide opportunities for younger staff and campers to lead and inspire
- 10.** There should always be two lead instructors or coaches at any given sports period, supported by another relatable counselor/role model

ENGLISH-HEBREW SPORTS GLOSSARY

ball (kadoor) = כדור

Ball (kadur) = כדור

Player (sachkan/it) = שחקן / נית

Half (of a game) (machatzit) = מחצית

Sports (sport) = ספורט

Competition (tacharut) = תחרות

Game (mischak) = משחק

Team (kvutza) = קבוצה

Goal (sha'ar) = שער

Basketball (m) (kadur sal) = כדור סל

To score (l'hav'kiya) = להבקיע

Soccer (kadoor regel) = כדור רגל

Stadium (itstadiyon) = איצטדיון

Point (ne'kuda) = נקודה

Draw, tie (teyku) = תיקו

Racket, Bat (machbet) = מחבט

Medal (medal'yat) = מדליית

Champion (aluf/a) = אלוף/פה

Hat trick (shloscha'ar) = שלושער

Championship (alifut) = אליפות

Coach (me'amen/et) = מאמן/נת

Volleyball (kadur'af) = כדור עף

Court, pitch (migrash) = מגרש

Step (tza'ad) = צעד

To support (li'ehod) = לאהוד

To kick (liv'ot) = לבעוט

Fan, supporter (ohed/et) = אוהד/ת

Attack, offense (hatkafa) = התקפה

Defence (hagana) = הגנה

Referee (shofet/et) = שופט/ת

Midfielder (kashar) = קשר

League (liga) = ליגה

Position (emda) = עמדה

Goalkeeper (sho'er) = שוער/ת

Striker, forward (chalutz/ah) = חלוץ/ה

To swim (li'schot) = לשחות

Tennis (tenis) = טניס

Serve (he-gashta) = הגשת

To pass (le'haaveer) = להעביר

To shoot (liz'rok) = לזרוק

To hit (l'hakot) = להכות

Glove (k'fafah) = כפפה

Basket (sal) = סל

Base (basees) = בסיס

Net (reshet) = רשת

To run (la-rootz) = לרוץ

Jump (lik'potz) = לקפוץ

Cup, trophy (gavia) = גביע

Overtime, extra time (ha'arakha) = הארכה

Olympics (m) (olimpiad) = אולימפיאד



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