

### Improv Your Camp Life

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**SUMMARY:** In this session we will use improv games to learn creative communication skills to "yes-and" our way through different camp scenarios.

**GOALS:**

- Participants may feel more empowered in their communication skills and excited to use their imagination
- Participants will use the concepts of "yes-and," teamwork and creative problem-solving to build community and comradery
- Participants will gain confidence to try new things, think outside the box, and have fun together.

**AUDIENCE:** All Fellows, Campers ages 8 and up, 8-20 people.

**TIMING:** 60 minutes

**MATERIALS:** 3-4 chairs

**SET-UP:** Find an open indoor or outdoor flat space where there is enough room to form a circle where everyone can see each other. 3-4 chairs will be needed for some of the games, and it will be helpful to have a few chairs to accommodate folks who are not able to sit on the ground. It will be helpful if the space is not near other loud activities so that everyone can hear each other.

## SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:10 – Introduction and Container Building
- 00:10-00:20 – Icebreakers
- 00:20-00:30 – Improv Games
- 00:30-00:45 – Team Building Exercises
- 00:45-00:55 – Improv Camp Life (Scenarios)
- 00:55-00:60 – Closing

## SESSION OUTLINE

### 00:00-00:10 – Introduction and Container Building

The session leader has the group stand (or sit if needed) in a circle. They introduce the workshop topics, goals, and self by sharing name, pronouns, and something the session leader wants their campers to know about them that they may not already know.

Introduction of program: In this session we will use improv games to learn creative communication skills to "yes-and" our way through different camp scenarios.

The session leader then creates a group *brit* (agreement)/container for participation.

- Beginner's mind – we all have our own skills and experience – approach with curiosity and push self a bit – try to stay in 'productive discomfort' not 'distress'
- Respect self and others – punch up, not down – in comedy this means do not rely on harmful stereotypes or making a mockery of any person or identity but instead play to the top of one's intelligence – make smart moves
- "I" statements – when creating, speak from personal experience (see Respect above)
- Remember, forcing the 'funny' almost always results in non-funny moments
- Intent vs. Impact – sometimes our intentions are misaligned with the impact of our actions – be mindful of misalignments and potential harm and address any misalignments in the moment
- Ask questions that add to the space, not take away from the learning/community
- Have fun!

### 00:10-00:20 – Icebreakers

Participants should still be in a circle. The session leader poses the following question to the group to intentionally invite folks to be as present as possible in the space:

- What's something that's holding you back/in your way/on your mind/heart that you can hold and put on a shelf to be more present here?
- How can you acknowledge all that you're holding (YES) AND tuck it away to stay present?

The session leader sets up the next game called **Pass the Phrace**. Pass the Phrace is a game where we combine a PHRASE and a FACE, hence 'phrace', around the circle. It's kind of like the game 'Telephone' but it's not a secret.

- The first person will turn to their left or right and make a face, a gesture with one or both hands/arms and/or their legs, and make a sound of some sort (example: they may mime taking off a hat and saying 'how do you do' or flapping their arms like wings and making a bird noise).
- The person who they are facing will pay close attention to receive ALL of the sounds and gestures shared.

- They will then turn to the next person and as closely and accurately as possible, pass the PHRASE/FACE/GESTURE to the next person.
- Note: Naturally, some of the sounds/gestures/faces will shift and that's OKAY! That's what's supposed to happen. It's crucial that each person is imitating the person directly next to them and not the initiation.
- Go through the circle once and by the time it gets back to the first person who initiated, the PHRASE should have organically changed. Session leader can then start a new PHRASE or pick someone to start. You can change the direction of the circle, too.

The next exercise is called '**Interview**'.

- Folks will pair up and the session leader will put 30 seconds on the clock (there can be a group of 3 if needed or session leader can participate if there is an odd number).
- Participant 1 will speak uninterrupted for 30 seconds about using a prompt the session leader provides (examples below). Participant 2 will listen and not interrupt at all.
- After 30 seconds, the session leader announces "time" and then asks folks to switch.
- Participant 2 will now speak on the same topic for 30 uninterrupted seconds while Participant 1 listens. After 30 seconds, the session leader announces "time."
- Session leader will now ask for 2-3 volunteers to share what they learned about their partner through uninterrupted listening. They should get consent from their partner **first** before sharing.
  - Session leader can ask the following discussion questions to debrief:
    - What did it feel like to talk uninterrupted for 30 seconds?
    - What did it feel like to listen and not be able to say anything?
    - How did you show you were listening without your words?
    - How could you tell your partner was listening without verbal affirmations?
    - How did it feel to have to share out what you'd been listening to?
    - How did it feel to have what you talked about shared out?
    - Any other observations?
  - Potential talking topics:
    - Talk about your favorite day at camp and why
    - Talk about your favorite camp activity any why
    - Talk about a camp counselor who had a positive impact on you

### 00:20-00:30 – Improv Games

The session leader will now introduce the next game which is called **Red Ball, Yellow Ball**.

- In this game the session leader will start by saying "I have a red ball in my hand" and then mime a small ball. Pay close attention – does this ball need to be held by all five fingers, two hands, or is it small enough to be held by a thumb and pointer finger? Whatever size the session leader determines is the size for that color ball.
- The session leader will then get the attention of someone in the circle either by saying their name or by making eye contact and will then throw the red ball to that person while simultaneously saying 'Red ball'.
- The person will let the thrower know they've caught the ball by saying 'Thank you, Red ball' and miming catching it.
- They will then find someone else to throw the ball to and the pattern continues.
- After a few moments, the session leader can introduce a new ball of a different size and color and will start passing that around.
- Note: It's crucial that the size is different so folks can differentiate between what's being thrown. Once the game has gone on for a while with multiple balls introduced, ask participants to stop and have them say what balls they're holding. Hopefully all of the balls started will be accounted for and only one of each!

Potential debrief questions:

- What did it feel like to complete a pass correctly from eye contact, passing, and having your partner for the moment receive the ball?
- Why was eye contact important?
- Why was saying 'Thank you, x Ball' important?

For the next game, called **Yes-And/Ken-Vav Circle**, the goal of this game is to tell a story in one go around in the circle. The session leader will give a prompt to get the story started and every sentence after the first sentence must start with 'yes-and' or 'ken-vav' building on what was just said. Aim to finish the story with a coherent beginning, middle, and end. It is crucial that everyone is paying attention so the sentences that are added make sense and add to the story.

- Example of the flow: Session leader begins with "At Camp Firewood, the nature cabin has always been haunted." Then the next person would say "Yes, and there have been reports of noises there at night even when it's empty."
- Participants should be paying attention to the arc of the story to ensure by the time they get to the end of the circle, they're at a spot to end the story!

### 00:30-00:45 – Team Building Exercises

For this next game, **Woosh Wow**, the goal of this circle game is to explore how group think and rules of games can evolve if everyone agrees on them.

- Have everyone get in a circle and one at a time, everyone will pass the word and hand motion "whoosh" clockwise in a circle (almost like the 'wave' at a sporting event, but your hands move across your midsection instead of above your head).
- After a few quick times around the circle, add that someone can put their hands up and say "Wow" to change the direction of the movement. If campers get stuck between just a few people going back and forth, encourage them to try to get the "Woosh" all the way around the circle.
- Eventually, the session leader can add another noise like "blip!" to skip the "whoosh" across the circle or redirect it to someone not next to them. Notice if the campers pick up on the new rule and 'agree' to use it. Do the campers make up any more rules?

New Game: **BaDaDa** – With the campers still in a circle, ask what the word "BaDaDa" means. After waiting a second, explain that – surprise! – it doesn't mean anything, except what we connect to it! There are all different ways to connect and make associations, and they don't always make sense!

- After explaining the game, ask the campers to keep a slow steady beat with their hands on their hips or thighs (clapping is too loud but snapping is a suitable replacement as well).
- Ask the camper who is first to think of any word or sound. The person on their left will respond with ANY word or sound that comes to them (on the beat/in rhythm is best, once they get the hang of the pattern!) – don't hesitate and don't judge!
- Then everyone in the circle repeats those two words followed by "BaDaDa"
- Then the person who just responded will start again with a totally different word for the next person to respond, as in the example below. Do this pattern game clockwise in a circle (i.e., person 1 is next to person 2) until you get back to person 1. You can go around the circle as many times as you'd like.
  - Example:
    - Person 1: "Night" (beat)
    - Person 2: "Day" (beat)
    - Everyone: "Night Day BaDaDa" (beat)
    - Person 2: "Cheese" (beat)
    - Person 3: "Head" (beat)
    - Everyone: "Cheese Head BaDaDa" (beat)
    - ...etc.
  - Suggestions:
    - Once campers are comfortable with this game you can do a 'challenge round' where the words must rhyme.

- The goal of this game is not to judge or hesitate! If someone laughs or says “um” as a response, then that becomes the word that is repeated!
- If you have a group of bilingual speakers, you can create the word pattern with English/Hebrew (or Spanish, etc.) combinations, like:
  - Person 1: “Rosh” (beat)
  - Person 2: “Head” (beat)
  - Everyone: “Rosh Head BaDAda” (beat)
  - If you play with a bilingual pattern, make sure everyone in the circle has access to both languages.

### 00:45-00:55 – Improv Camp Life (Scenarios)

For the next game, **MA & AWE**, the goal is to get everyone to line up single file in order of the given prompts without speaking. You can play this game once or several times with different prompts each time. For the first prompt, the session leader will explain that everyone needs to line up in order of HEIGHT (make sure to indicate where for shortest on this side, tallest on that side, etc.) as quickly as possible without speaking. It is suggested to do this with at least 2 or 3 different prompts. If there are 12 or more people in the group, you can split into two teams and see which team can line up first!

- Potential Prompts:
  - Line up by Height
  - Line up by Birthday (Month and Day, not Year - ex. Jan 3, April 17, etc.)
  - Each person chooses an animal (don't say it out loud!). Act out the animal and get in line by order of size of that animal
  - Line up by who lives closest and furthest from camp
  - You can also invent your own!
- Potential Debrief Questions:
  - **Ask MA? What? What** other forms of communication did you use to find your place in line?
  - What happened when you couldn't get your teammates to understand what you were trying to say?
  - How did it feel when you were able to complete the line together? Was it **AWESOME**?

The next game also uses non-verbal communication. The goal of the game, **S'MORE SPACE**, is for campers to explore the space around them in relation to each other.

- The session leader begins by asking campers to walk slowly around the space, on their own.
- Then invite them to start making eye contact with each other and maybe nodding or waving, but don't slow down.
- Then, ask each camper to choose one other person in the room to keep an eye on. This is their “campfire” – which means they don't want to get too close, but they also need to keep an eye on the person at all times – but don't make it obvious!
- After a moment, instruct each camper to choose a second person to keep an eye on. This person is the “marshmallow.” Now, tell each camper that **THEY** are the roasting stick, and they can't let their marshmallow fall into the campfire, so they need to stay between the first person they chose (campfire) and the second (marshmallow) at all times! Remind them to always keep moving around the room, and not to be obvious about who each of their campfires and marshmallows are.
- Eventually, tell them it's time to make **S'MORES**, and to do that they will need to find a stopping place in the room where everyone is still, but still between each of their ‘campfires’ and ‘marshmallows.’
- If and when everyone is still, ask everyone to point to their campfire (person 1) and then their marshmallows (person 2). Did everyone manage to keep their marshmallow from falling into the fire?!

**00:55-00:60 – Closing**

The session leader will gather the group into a final circle and ask the participants to **PASS THE GRATITUDE** around the circle. This game can be used as a warm-up or a cool down.

- One at a time, each person in the circle will turn to their neighbor and use eye contact to 'agree' when to clap at the same time, without speaking.
- The first person and second person will clap together, then the second person will turn and clap at the same time as the third person, and so on, until the "clap" (a.k.a. gratitude) goes all the way around the circle. You can do this multiple times around the circle and speed up.
- The game ends when the session leader decides to 'catch' the clap and end the game (instead of passing it on), and-using eye contact and body language) invites everyone to clap together one final time.

The session leader can end the circle time with **One Word Gratitude Circle**. Each person will go around the circle and share one word they are feeling or thinking about the session (ex. "energized" "overwhelmed" "fun!" "goofy"). Announce that they can also say "pass." After everyone has shared a word into the circle, the circle is closed, and the session is over. Great job, everyone!

Potential debrief questions (if there is time):

- What is one game you can teach to the rest of your bunk?
- Where else can you play these games during camp? What about during the school year?
- What is one thing that surprised you while playing these games?

**BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP**

- Encourage campers to add new "rules" or components to the games (for example, what can be discovered by "yes-anding" additional sounds or movements in **Pass the Phrace**, or adding different kinds of "balls" to **Red Ball, Yellow Ball**).
- Games can be modified for participants to stand or sit as needed.
- Most games above can also be played one at a time in smaller groups – encourage campers to play these games during free time with their friends in other bunks or age groups.
- Have fun discovering how you can adapt the games to be played in your bunks – especially **Red Ball, Yellow Ball** or **One Word Story**