

Fat Torah: Confronting Fatphobia at Camp

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SUMMARY: Let's talk about bodies! Fatphobia is all around us, but camp can be different. Let's unpack, dig in, and make plans to build spaces where all bodies are welcome and celebrated in the most revolutionary ways this summer.

GOALS: Participants will...

- learn about and engage with teachings which show that Fat is a Jewish value
- understand that body liberation is part of a wider inclusion & access vision for summer camp
- identify ways they can more fully create fat inclusive experiences at camp

AUDIENCE: Counselors of all ages, group size 10-30

TIMING: 75 minutes

MATERIALS: "[The World is Ready](#)" album playing; [Fat Torah text studies](#); Canvas/Paper; Oil Pastels/Crayons/Colored Pencils/Paint; Fatphobia handout

SET-UP: This activity is best done in an intimate & quieter space with tables for folks to sit around in small groups

SESSION TIMELINE

00-10 – Fat Torah Text Study Trickle-In Activity

10-20 – Framing & Intros, What is Fat Torah?

20-35 – Body Mapping Exercise

35-45 – Understanding Body Liberation: Large Group Discussion

45-1:00 – Fatphobia at Camp

1:00-1:10 – Setting our Intentions

1:10-1:15 – Wrap Up

SESSION OUTLINE

00-10 – Fat Torah Text Study Trickle-In Activity

Various Fat Torah texts are on big chart papers around the room. As participants walk in they are invited to read the texts and respond to the questions provided on chart paper.

PLAY the World Is Ready while folks are entering

10-20 – Framing and Intros, What is Fat Torah?

Facilitator introduces themselves, invites people to introduce themselves (if small group, whip around the room to share names, pronouns; if large group, invite folks to introduce to two people around them)

What is Fat Torah?

Facilitator shares: Fat Torah is an organization founded by Dr. Rabbi Minna Bromberg and led by Rachel Figurasmith & Rabbi Bromberg, which provides training and resources that focus on the intersection of body liberation and Jewish community. Fat Torah believes that fat is a Jewish value, that confronting fatphobia is part of the spectrum of Jewish liberation, and that we can work together to destigmatize fat in our community.

What questions do you have? What makes you uncomfortable or excited about this?

20-35 – Body Mapping

Facilitator introduces the concept of body mapping and distributes supplies.

Participants are invited to choose a body part whose story you want to illustrate. You will then trace that physical part of your body onto paper/canvas (just one but can be any!). You can either trace the body part yourself or have a partner trace it for you (i.e. you might want to trace your right hand but that's tough if you are right-handed, or you might want to trace your belly/torso and need some help to do that.)

You'll have about 10 minutes to illustrate the story of that body part—you can write, draw, use symbols, whatever you'd like.

PLAY the Bathing Suit Song while folks are making art

Towards the end of this time, the facilitator invites everyone to share their drawing with one partner. You can share as much or little as you choose.

35-45 – Understanding Body Liberation (in 10 minutes!)

Facilitator invites participants to share what they think the following words/terms mean:

Fat / Body Liberation / Fatphobia / Intersectionality

Facilitator shares definitions and some important context:

- Fat is a word to describe a body (or a food, but we're talking about bodies today). It's been reclaimed by fat people (similar to words like "queer") after years of being weaponized and is often the term of choice for fat people. Words like obese are medical terms that have little relevance to lived experiences.
- Body liberation is defined as freedom from social and political oppression that deems some bodies more worthy than others. Fat bodies, disabled bodies, gender non-conforming / trans bodies, bodies of color all have long histories of being identified as less worthy. Fat Torah believes in body liberation for all bodies, and especially fat bodies.
- Fatphobia is a type of weight bias. It refers to the fear of fat bodies – being around fat bodies, but also having a fat body. It drives a lot of disordered & restrictive eating patterns in our society.
- Intersectionality (coined by Kimberle Williams Crenshaw) refers to overlapping and intersecting experiences of oppression experienced by people with multiple oppressed identities. Fat bias impacts women, people of color, trans/GNC, disabled people much more than white men.
- Stigma is a set of negative and often unfair beliefs about a group of people
- BIG TAKE-AWAY: Body Liberation and confronting fatphobia is part of a larger inclusion model that we can develop for our camps!

45-1:00 – Combatting Fat Stigma Camp!

Facilitator explains: we are now going to think and talk about where fatphobia shows up at camp. We'll get into small groups, write notes on the chart papers of one area of camp at a time, and rotate around the room.

Pre-made chart paper may include (can be different/other):

in the bunk, mealtimes, swim times, big camp activities

Count off to get into 4-5 groups and invite groups to talk and take notes.

Examples might include:

- In the bunk... campers trade clothing with each other, how does that work for kids who don't have common sizes with their peers?
- At mealtimes... campers may talk about eating "unhealthy" foods or "too much"
- Swim times... campers may be self-conscious about wearing a swimsuit. Many people don't think of bathing suits as the revolutionary act it could be.

Facilitator gets group's attention, and shares out highlights

Facilitator explains: Next, we're going to get creative!

The prompt is as follows: go back around to each area of camp and discuss in your groups: how can we flip this space into a positive experience particularly for our fat campers (though not only)?

Examples might include...

- In the bunk... we might provide a bin of clothes that all kids can share with a wide variety of sizes
- At mealtimes... campers can be redirected, and we can frame eating as a mitzvah

1:00-1:10 Participants are invited back to their original seats and asked to find a partner near them. Reflecting on the previous exercise, what is one or two things (only!) that you want to bring to your camp, and how will you do it? Invite participants to write down their plan and share with a partner.

1:10-1:15 Closing and Gratitude

BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP

Use examples of issues you've seen in real time at your camp, and solutions that would be realistic for your camp as well.

1. “...But God was not in the Diet” Rabbi Minna Bromberg

In the practice of spiritual direction, one classic line of inquiry is “where is God in this for you?” I know this now: God was not in the self-hating constraint of any diet, God was not in the whirlwind fantasies of a future thinner me who would have more friends and feel more loveable, God was in the still small voice of the crunch of Cracklin Oat Bran and the simple pleasure of an abundance of milk in the bowl. God was in my every cell’s yearning to play, to live, to eat, and to grow.

I hear my four-year-old daughter’s voice in my head as I type this. “Right, Imma?” she asks me several times a week, “Right, Imma, I’m growing every day?” She doesn’t know it, but my answer to her is also my blessing: “Yes, my sweet love, you are growing every single day.”

What resonates for you personally (if anything)?

2. Nedarim 10a:9

And Rabbi Elazar HaKappar the Distinguished agrees, as it is taught in a *baraita* that Rabbi Elazar HaKappar the Distinguished says: It is written with regard to the priest who sacrificed the offering of a nazirite: “And he shall make atonement for him, for that he sinned against the soul.” Against which soul did the nazirite sin? Rather, his sin is that he caused himself suffering by refraining from wine. Are these matters not inferred *a fortiori*: Just as this nazirite, who causes himself suffering only by refraining from wine, is called a sinner, one who causes himself suffering by refraining from everything is all the more so to be considered a sinner. **From here** it can be derived that **whoever fasts unnecessarily is called a sinner.**

What resonates for you personally (if anything)?

And God said, “Let us make *adam* in our image, after our likeness...”

If we believe that all people are made in the image of God, what are the implications for how we must understand the way all people look?

4. “The Bathing Suit Song” Rabbi Minna Bromberg, *The World is Ready* Album

The world is ready to see my face
and the world is ready to hear my name
It's so easy to be paralyzed
Til we're thinking global but we're just not acting at all
But you can have a little uprising
From wherever you're put down
And so I start my revolution in my bathing suit
And I make my politics very, very personal

What resonates for you personally (if anything)?

5. Fat Girl Rules, Starfish Lisa Fipps
I learned

at five:

No cannonballs.

No splashing.

No making waves.

You don't deserve
to be seen or heard,
to take up room,
to be noticed.

Make yourself small.

What comes up for you in reading this?