

## Gratitude in Time and Space

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**SUMMARY:** In the style of a museum tour, we will move through spaces around the camp to explore why and how to express gratitude personally and communally in everyday life through Jewish tradition.

**GOALS:** To explore the concept of gratitude and show how this can be transferable to both older and younger campers. As participants move through the program they will interact with different parts of the self and community and how they give thanks for each of these things. After this program, fellows/campers will have new tools to express gratitude for what they bring to the world and have in it.

**AUDIENCE:** Adaptable for all ages, ideal group size up to 15

**TIMING:** 45 minutes

**MATERIALS:** notebooks/paper, pens, fruit, rope/yarn

**SET-UP:** Very little set up, just be sure to have the materials outside and sit with fellows/participants in a circle

## SESSION TIMELINE

- 00:00-00:08 – *Introductions, setting group norms*
- 00:08-00:14 – *Stretch*
- 00:14-00:21 – *Food meditation*
- 00:21-00:28 – *Nature wondering*
- 00:28-00:35 – *Feelings journaling*
- 00:35-00:45 - *Sikkum/Debrief*

## SESSION OUTLINE

### 00:00-00:08 - Introductions, setting group norms

Leaders introduce the topic of gratitude and what that entails, where it is felt in the body, how it feels to the soul, and where we see it in Jewish writings. Ask participants for something they are grateful for along with name and camp. Introduce source text:

Tosefta Brachot, Chapter 4, Halakhah

הנהנה מן העולם הזה בלא ברכה מעל עד שיתירו לו כל המצות לא ישתמש אדם בפניו ידיו ורגליו  
אלא לכבוד קונוהו שנאמר (משלי טז) כל פעל ה' למענהו

One who benefits from this world without a blessing has trespassed, until all the mitzvot make it permitted. A person should only use their face, hands and feet to honor the Creator, as it says “All of God’s works are for God.” (Proverbs 16:4)

### 00:08-00:14 - Stretch

Getting into our bodies we will do a short stretch and allow for a physical warmup and paying close attention to where tension gathers and how it is released.

Discuss: When we allow for our bodies to have space in our minds, how does that allow us to show up differently within a physical space?

### 00:14-00:21- Food meditation

Without nourishment we cannot do all the things that we do in life. Continuing with the themes of mindfulness and gratitude, we will move into a very short exercise in paying attention to how we consume food. Say a Bracha/blessing and speak about gratitude as it pertains to feeding ourselves.

Whatever your personal approach is to reciting blessings before food or not, it is an interesting exercise to imagine what it would mean to express pleasure and gratitude for eating a particular item in a particular moment. The next source is an example of such a practice, where contemporary Hebrew poet Tzemah Yoreh writes poetic odes to fruits he especially enjoys in his collection, "By the Sweat of Their Brow: A Humanist Bencher." After you have read the poem below, consider taking a few minutes to write your own blessing for a food you enjoy. Allow participants to share aloud.

## Blueberries

Divine drops of savory blue  
Draw me in  
Like the eyes of my lover

אֹכְמַנְיֹת  
סְפָרוֹת כְּחֹלוֹת  
כּוֹכְבֵי-אֵל מְתוֹקִים  
סְמֻכְנֵי בְחִמְיֻצוֹתֶיהָ  
אֲשֵׁי אֶהְבִּים

### 00:21-00:28 - Nature wondering

Each participant will receive a few feet of rope or yarn. With that they will create a shape on the ground, a shape that covers as much space as possible. Within their notebooks or paper, they are going to write down and be as descriptive as possible about what they're seeing in their shape (grass, plants, rocks, insects, as much as they can). They have 5 full minutes and can also write about how things feel, sound, and smell. This is the first time in the program that they are interacting with something outside themselves. How does it feel to start to look outward?

### 00:28-00:35 - Feelings journaling

Turning inward again, where are the participants in their minds. In the last half hour, we have been thinking about and making space for gratitude in the mind and body. What has that experience been like? Do you feel different in your mind or body? Did God enter the thought process? If so, how? What are ways you can be mindful in everyday life?

### 00:35-00:45 - Sikkum

Bring back the original text and ask discussion questions:

- Do you understand the text differently now?
- Do you understand gratitude differently now?
- What is the value of gratitude in life and in Judaism? Have you ever practiced mindful gratitude like this? Was it uncomfortable in any way or very natural?
- Where might you see any piece of this being useful in camp?

## BRINGING IT TO YOUR CAMP

Back at camp each of these exercises practiced in this activity can be expanded into their own session. The texts can also be used as a short text study.

Additionally, for younger campers, a text study may not be the most developmentally appropriate means to define gratitude. For these campers, spending more time at each "station" may be more beneficial. Extended discussion may also be worthwhile.

If a larger block of time allows for it, travel around the camp for each of these stations. Maybe do the stretching in the athletics area of your camp. Maybe allow the food meditation to happen where snack or meals occur. Nature and feelings can be

## CORNERSTONE RESOURCE



done in similar spaces, but journaling may be especially meaningful in a campfire area or in hammocks.