



CHARACTER AT CAMP POCKET GUIDE

INTRODUCTION TO CHARACTER & ACTIVITIES TO BUILD STRENGTHS

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Character strengths are positive qualities in our thoughts, feelings, and actions that support our moral integrity, personal growth, and overall well-being. These core virtues help us navigate life, build strong relationships, and contribute to society. Developing character also involves taking time to reflect on ourselves, our actions, and how we've grown.

COMMON CHARACTER STRENGTHS ARE:

Courage	Perseverance/Grit
Curiosity	Respect
Creativity	Responsibility
Forgiveness	Resilience
Fairness	Social intelligence
Honesty	Relationship skills
Integrity	Teamwork
Hope	Trust
Gratitude	Perspective
Leadership	Open-mindedness
Kindness	Enthusiasm

In the Pocket Guides, programs are listed with their: **TITLE**, Author, **Character Strengths**, **Social-emotional learning skills (SEL)**, and *Materials*.

AS STAFF YOU HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP CHARACTER IN CAMPERS:

ROLE MODEL

Growing your awareness and demonstrating character. It's your responsibility to be the best version of yourself every day. The campers see you doing it!

ATTITUDE

Bringing your enthusiasm, positivity, generosity, and flexibility to your role.

BEHAVIORS

Narrating your thoughts as you employ problem solving and positivity. Saying it out loud and naming the strengths you and your group are using throughout the day.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THESE CHARACTER-BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAMPERS EVERY DAY?

COMMUNITY—inclusion, belonging and friendship.

AUTONOMY—choice and voice;
give campers chances to problem-solve.

MASTERY—appropriate challenges and practice.

PURPOSE—being a part of something bigger, serving others.

CHARACTER STRENGTH INTERVIEWS

TRUST, HONESTY

Self-awareness, self-management

To better understand your campers and help them feel seen and valued, share the list of strengths above with them and interview each camper. Asking them how they prefer to be supported at the start of the summer will help you build trust, get to know each camper individually, and provide the right kind of support throughout the season. You can share your responses to these questions as well. Or you can have campers interview each other.

- Tell me about someone important to you, which strengths do they have?
- Which strengths do you possess a lot of? Which ones are your superpowers?
- What strength do you want to grow in the most this summer? Why?
- How do you like to be treated when you are sad? When you are mad?

Group reflection:

- *How do your strengths relate to our camp's core Jewish values?*

“WHO AM I” MOLECULES

By Grace Hack & Naomi Laver, Camp Havaya

TRUST, GRATITUDE

Self-awareness, social awareness

Materials: *pipe cleaners and construction paper.*

- Instruct campers to answer the following questions each with a character strength:
 - Strength your family gave you
 - Strength your friends know you by
 - Strength you are building for yourself
- Attach all three strengths (written on circles) with pipe cleaners, to create a personalized ‘molecule’ of character for each camper.

Group reflection:

- How can you use your strengths to make our camp community kinder and stronger?

A LETTER TO ME

By Noa Young and Frank Silverman, Camp Barney Medintz

GOAL-SETTING, SELF-AWARENESS

Self-awareness, self-management

Materials: *paper, envelopes & pens/pencils.*

- Campers write letters to themselves to be opened at the end of the session. Emphasize that this is a personal activity, and only they will read their letters. Highlight how much they can grow during camp and how this exercise helps track that progress.
- Pass out materials and have campers find a quiet spot to reflect and write. Encourage them to write about how they are feeling, their goals, challenges, excitements, nerves, and the character strengths they'd like to develop.
- Collect the letters, seal them with the camper's name, and store them safely. At the end of the session, return the letters with reflective questions to prompt discussion. Consider allowing campers to share their experience of both writing and reading their letters.

Group reflection:

- What goals did you set for yourself at the beginning of the session? Do you feel like you achieved them?
- What challenges did you face during the session, and how did you overcome them?
- What are you most proud of accomplishing this summer?
- How have you changed since you wrote your letter?

SUNNY SIDE UP

By Jim Cain & Bob Ditter

TEAMWORK, GRIT/PERSEVERANCE

Social-awareness, relationship skills,
responsible decision-making

Materials: *a tarp, 1-2 tennis balls.*

- Have campers stand in a circle around the tarp and take hold of a side to keep the tarp in the air (at chest height). Place a tennis ball on top of the tarp. The goal is to toss the ball into the air, flip over the tarp, and catch the ball on the tarp before it hits the ground.
- To encourage team planning, withhold the ball when you first set this up & give instructions, and give the ball to the group of campers when they have thought of a strategy that they feel 50% confident about.
- If the group is successful, find more ways to increase the challenge and foster teamwork, such as adding a second tennis ball and/or a one-handed hold on the tarp.

Group reflection:

- What strategies did your team use that were successful?
- How did communication impact your success?
- What challenges did you face as a team, and how did your team work through them together?
- What was a frustrating part of the game, and how did you push through that frustration?
- How did your team react when a strategy didn't work?
- What role did encouragement and positive attitude play in your team's success?

GRATITUDE JAR

GRATITUDE

Self-awareness, self-management

Materials: Jar or sealed container of some kind with a slit on top, slips of paper and writing utensils.

- Set up the Gratitude Jar in a shared space, where campers can easily access it. You can let the group decorate it. Place slips of paper and a writing tool nearby so campers can add notes anytime.
- Start by having everyone write one slip to kick off the jar. Campers can write about something they're grateful for, a memory, or something they appreciate about camp. Notes can be anonymous.

At the end of the session, empty the jar and reflect together. You may want to look over the contents in advance to screen for anything you may not want the group to see. Each camper can pull a slip and read it to the group, and you may let them claim slips to elaborate or share additional thoughts.

BIRD CALLS

By Maya Tipiere & Henry Weltman, Foundation for Jewish Camp

SOCIAL AWARENESS, OPEN-MINDEDNESS

Social-awareness, relationship skills,
responsible decision-making

- Building listening skills helps campers become kinder, more empathetic, and better friends. Ask: How can we be better listeners? Why is listening important for friendships? What does good listening look, sound, and feel like?
- Each camper creates a unique "bird call." One by one, they share their call, and the group repeats it, paying attention to who each call belongs to.
- Campers stand in a circle with eyes closed. The counselor taps one camper at a time, who then makes their bird call. The group repeats the call and then opens their eyes and guesses whose bird call it was.

Group reflection:

- What is the balance between listening to what others say and thinking about what you want to say?
- What are strategies you use to try to listen and pay attention?
- What interferes with your ability to listen?

ABC'S OF KINDNESS

By Ezra Rader, URJ 6 Points Sports Academy

KINDNESS, COMPASSION

Self-awareness, relationship skills

Materials: 26 index cards each labeled with a different letter of the alphabet.

- Explain that the goal of the activity is to show how small actions can make the world better, and everyone has the power to make a difference.
- Give each camper an index card with a different letter. Ask them to think of a word or phrase starting with their letter that represents a positive action or value (e.g., "C" for "Compassion" or "Community Service").
- Have campers write or draw on their cards and afterwards share what they came up with and why.
- *Facilitate a reflection and action plan:* Which actions can we do at camp this week? Encourage campers to make a plan.
- Consider displaying the alphabet somewhere at camp or making a poster out of the cards.

According to Judaism, **humans have souls and are made in the image of G-d.** This means **every person, regardless of who they are or where they come from, has a spiritual purpose and an ability to do great things in the world.**

AFFIRMATION SONGS

CONFIDENCE, RESILIENCE

Self-awareness, social-awareness, relationship skills

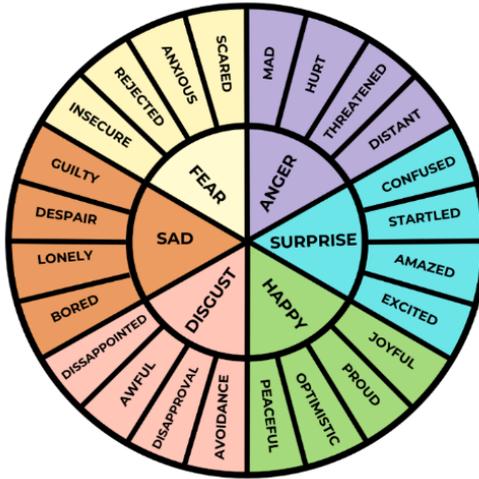
- Play on a speaker: Affirmation Song (feat. Snoop Dogg).
- Each camper writes an affirmation. Then, put campers in groups of 4-6 people. Campers get 15 minutes to write a song with their group's affirmations (can be to the tune of any existing song).
- Alternatively, you may collect each person's affirmations into a hat and then each group selects a few at random to work with and write a song with.
- Sing-off/share songs.

EMOTION CHARADES

RESILIENCE, SELF-REGULATION

Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness

Emotions Wheel



- Close your eyes and have your finger land somewhere on the emotion wheel and have the campers act out the emotion it lands on without speaking. The rest of the group will guess what emotion is being portrayed. This helps kids practice identifying and expressing emotions through body language and facial expressions.
- Or assign a scenario for two campers to roleplay a scene based on the emotion it lands on.

Group reflection: Hold a discussion on the difference between two close emotions. Discuss constructive ways you can manage difficult emotions. This teaches campers how to handle various emotions in real-life situations and gives them tools to regulate their feelings.

PDK- PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF KINDNESS

KINDNESS, COMMUNITY

Social-awareness, responsible decision-making

Materials: *art supplies, poster paper, or wood/sign supplies.*

- Displaying words or reminders of kindness around camp will promote awareness. Use prompts with campers to think about kindness and kindness at camp. What does kindness mean to you? What does kindness at camp look like? What does it take to be a kind person?
- Alternatively, print out quotes about kindness for inspiration. For example:
 - *With regard to the Torah, its beginning is an act of kindness, and its end is an act of kindness (Talmud)*
 - *Acts of kindness never die. They linger in the memory, giving life to other acts in return.
(Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks)*
 - *The world is based on three things - on the Torah, on the service of God, and upon acts of loving-kindness. (Pirkei Avot 1:2)*
- Have campers create artwork about kindness to display around camp. These can be hung in the dining hall, posted around camp, or for campers to bring back home.

REFLECTION

You can use the questions below to prompt your campers during group reflections, help campers reflect during one-on-one conversations, or as inspiration in planning and creating moments of character-building.

Self-Awareness & Identity

- What is something you're proud of yourself for this week?
- When did you feel most like *yourself* today?
- What's one strength you've noticed about yourself since coming to camp?

Emotional Awareness

- What emotion did you feel most today? What do you think caused it?
- When something didn't go your way today, how did you handle it?
- Can you remember a time today when you had a strong feeling? What did you do with it?
- How do you know when you're feeling overwhelmed or excited?

Conflict & Empathy

- Was there a time today when you disagreed with someone? How did you handle it?
- What's something you could do tomorrow to help make camp feel better for someone else?
- How do you show kindness even when you're not in the best mood?

Social Skills & Friendship

- What's something you did today to help someone else?
- How did you include someone who might've been left out?
- What does being a good friend look like at camp?
- When was a time today that you worked together with someone really well?

Responsibility & Integrity

- Did you make a hard choice today? What helped you make your decision?
- What does it mean to you to be someone others can count on?
- What's one thing you took responsibility for today?
- Have you had a moment today where you stood up for what's right?

Growth & Reflection

- What's something you've learned about yourself this week?
- Is there a mistake you made today that you can grow from?
- What's a goal you want to set for yourself for tomorrow?
- If you could do one thing differently today, what would it be?

SHAPE THIS CHARACTER GUIDE:

- Which activities have you tried with your campers?
- Which activities were successful with your campers?
- Which activities were challenging and what changes can you make to improve them?
- What new activities would you add to this guide?
- What are other ways you would change this guide for camp?