

Character Building Activities

Adapted From the Character Building Pocket Guides from the
Foundation for Jewish Camp
by Ella Levi and Eden Ackrich

The intention of these activities is to be used during unstructured down times, cabin activities, cabin rotations, and when the cabin needs a boost of teamwork.

Affirmation Song
Foundation for Jewish Camp
Adapted by Ella Levi and Eden Ackrich

Goals:

- campers get in touch with their positive qualities through affirmation
- campers get comfortable with reciting affirmations

Materials:

- A speaker and a device that can play music
- Pieces of paper and pens

Procedure:

1. Ask campers if they know what an affirmation is and ask them to think of some affirmations
 - a. What is an affirmation?
 - b. What are some affirmations we can say to ourselves?
 - c. Why do we think affirmations are a good practice?
2. Play the affirmation song (found on spotify and apple music, featuring snoop dogg) for the campers
3. Distribute papers and pens and ask campers to write their own personal affirmation song with affirmations that are important to them

*note: this is enough of an activity for young campers (5th grade and below)

4. Campers can share if they want, but these can also be very personal
5. The affirmation song should then be played in the mornings so that they are used to hearing affirmations in the morning

Back-to-Back Drawing

Foundation for Jewish Camp Character Ambassador Initiative

Ella Levi and Eden Ackrich

Goals:

- Campers practice clear communication
- Campers practice their listening skills

Materials:

- A piece of paper per camper and pens

Procedure:

1. Campers get in pairs and sit back to back
2. All the campers facing one way get shown a simple drawing
3. The campers that saw the drawing have to use their words to describe how to draw it to the person sitting behind them
4. The campers who did not see the drawing must replicate the drawing by what their partner tells them
5. Their drawings are then compared to the original drawing

Group reflection

- Why do you think we did this activity?
- What was the hardest part about it?
- What were some things your partner did to help you?

Examples of original drawing to make:

- A simple scene: a sun, ocean, mountains
 - Simple animal: dog/cat made out of circles and other shapes
- Stick figure drawing: stick figures passing a ball, sitting on a chair, watching TV

Blindfolded Noodle Tag

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Goals:

- Campers learn communication skills in the role of the communicator and the receiver
- Campers get out of their comfort zone and try something new and kind of scary
- Campers practice problem solving

Materials:

- Blindfolds
- Pool noodles
- Cones to make a circle

Procedure:

1. Campers get in small groups of at least 3 and find a place around the circle as a group
2. One camper is the blindfolded camper
3. The other campers each assign themselves one word that they can say during the game
4. After 3 swings, the camper has to find a new pool noodle
5. Play until each camper has gone, or each camper that wants to has gone

Rules of the game:

- The campers on the edge of the circle guide the blindfolded camper to pick up a pool noodle and to hit surrounding campers with it
- The campers on the edge of the circle can only say the word assigned to them
- Each pool noodle only gets 3 swings, so after the 3 swings the blindfolded camper has to find a new pool noodle

reflection/discussion

- Why do you think we did this activity?
- Raise your hand if you were in the circle at some point. How did that feel?
- How did it feel to be on the outside of the circle?
- What was the hardest part about this activity?

What were problems that you came across and how did you solve them?

Blindfolded Obstacle Course

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Goals:

- Campers learn and practice communicating with their words
- Campers get to know other campers in their cabin or other cabins
- Camper step out of their comfort zones
- Campers have fun!

Materials:

- Supplies to make a simple obstacle course
 - Example: chairs, rope, tables, tarps, trash cans
- blindfolds

Procedure:

1. Campers are put in pairs
2. One camper is the blindfolded one
3. The other camper has to guide them through the obstacle course without touching them

Reflection/discussion:

- Was it harder to be the person blindfolded or the person talking?
- What was it like to be the blindfolded one?
- What was it like to be the talking one?
- What were some challenges you experienced?

How did you overcome those challenges?

Character Strength Interviews

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Goals:

- Kickstart buddy system to be utilized throughout the session
- Allows campers to dive deeper in their strengths and motivators
- Builds communication skills, self motivation, self awareness and self management

Materials

- Paper
- Pencils

Procedure:

1. Campers are split into pairs
 - a. Pairs should be campers that have not yet connected
2. Campers are given interview question to ask each other
3. Allow enough time for campers to get to know each other and veer away from the interview questions
4. Each camper writes down their goal and gives them to the counselor
 - a. Throughout the session, counselors can work on helping the campers accomplish their goals

Question (print copies and hand out to campers)

1. Tell me about someone important to you. Which strengths do they have?
2. Which strengths do you possess a lot of? Which ones are your superpowers?
3. What strength do you want to grow the most this summer? Why?
4. How can I help accomplish your goal?

Strength examples:

- Compassionate
- Empathetic
- Sensitive
- Determined
- Courage
- Curiosity
- Creativity
- Forgiving
- Fair
- Hopeful
- Kind
- Respectful
- Responsible
- Resilient

- Intelligent
- A good team worker
- Trustworthy
- Enthusiastic
- Open minded

Group reflection:

1. Which of your strengths or your partner's strengths reflect the camp values?
2. Did you learn anything new about your partner or yourself?
3. How can you use your strengths at camp? In your friendships?

5. Tell me about someone important to you. Which strengths do they have?
6. Which strengths do you possess a lot of? Which ones are your superpowers?
7. What strength do you want to grow the most this summer? Why?
8. How can I help accomplish your goal?

9. Tell me about someone important to you. Which strengths do they have?
10. Which strengths do you possess a lot of? Which ones are your superpowers?
11. What strength do you want to grow the most this summer? Why?
12. How can I help accomplish your goal?

13. Tell me about someone important to you. Which strengths do they have?
14. Which strengths do you possess a lot of? Which ones are your superpowers?
15. What strength do you want to grow the most this summer? Why?
16. How can I help accomplish your goal?

17. Tell me about someone important to you. Which strengths do they have?
18. Which strengths do you possess a lot of? Which ones are your superpowers?
19. What strength do you want to grow the most this summer? Why?
20. How can I help accomplish your goal?

21. Tell me about someone important to you. Which strengths do they have?
22. Which strengths do you possess a lot of? Which ones are your superpowers?
23. What strength do you want to grow the most this summer? Why?
24. How can I help accomplish your goal?

25. Tell me about someone important to you. Which strengths do they have?
26. Which strengths do you possess a lot of? Which ones are your superpowers?
27. What strength do you want to grow the most this summer? Why?
28. How can I help accomplish your goal?

29. Tell me about someone important to you. Which strengths do they have?
30. Which strengths do you possess a lot of? Which ones are your superpowers?
31. What strength do you want to grow the most this summer? Why?
32. How can I help accomplish your goal?

33. Tell me about someone important to you. Which strengths do they have?
34. Which strengths do you possess a lot of? Which ones are your superpowers?
35. What strength do you want to grow the most this summer? Why?
36. How can I help accomplish your goal?

Emotional Charades

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Goals

- Help promote empathy and emotional intelligence.
- Campers learn to identify how people express emotions differently.

Procedure (Premise of basic charades)

1. Campers pick one person to act out an emotion.
2. Counselors will give the “actor” a random emotion.
3. Camper will then act out that emotion while their peers guess
 - a. They can use body language/facial expression etc
4. Another way this could be run is by having 2 campers act out a scenario where one is experiencing the emotion.

Group reflection

- How did you identify what emotion was being acted out?
- What are 2 similar emotions? And how can you tell them apart?
- How would you interact with someone experiencing sadness or anger versus someone who is experiencing happiness?

Emotion examples

- Joy
- Fear
- Sadness
- Anger
- Excitement
- Surprise
- Disgust
- Happiness

Flip Tarp

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Goals:

- Promote teamworking skills and cabin bonding
- Allow kids to problem solve and create a structured plan where everyone has a role

Materials

- Tarp

Procedure:

1. Have kids all stand on a tarp
2. Their goal is to flip the tarp without anyone stepping off of it. (have them create a plan before trying to flip it)
3. If one of them steps off, they have to start over.

Reflection Questions

1. Why do you think we did this activity?
2. What was the most difficult part of this activity? How did your group overcome these issues?
3. What was something your group did well on? What is something you could do next time to improve?

Inside Outside

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Goals:

- Campers get in touch with their qualities, strengths, and insecurity

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Materials:

- Papers
- pens

Procedure:

1. Give each camper a paper and pen. Have them draw a self portrait, what other people see when they look at them
2. Then have kids flip the page and draw what they look like on the inside. This should be more reflective, the things that people don't see immediately when looking at them.
3. Have the kids share what they drew with the rest of the cabin.

Reflection:

- Why do you think we did this activity?
- What were some things that you put on the outside self portrait?
- What were some things you put on the inside self portrait?
- Was anything the same on both sides? What were some things that were different?
- Did you learn anything new about yourself?

Strength/Reflection Bracelet

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Goals:

- Familiarize campers with their strengths and let them be proud of their accomplishments
- Have campers recognize the goals that they accomplished
- Campers get to proudly wear their strengths

Materials:

- Beads (color organized in separate boxes)
- String
- Scissors

Procedure:

1. Each bead color is associated with a strength (for strength bracelets) or a goal that campers accomplished (for reflection bracelets)
2. Campers make bracelets based on the strengths or accomplishments that resonate with them

Examples of strengths (select a few):

- Compassionate
- Empathetic
- Sensitive
- Determined
- Courage
- Curiosity
- Creativity
- Forgiving
- Fair
- Hopeful
- Kind
- Respectful
- Responsible
- Resilient
- Intelligent
- A good team worker
- Trustworthy
- Enthusiastic
- Open minded

Prompts for beads:

- What's a strength you're proud of?
- What's a strength you get from your friends?
- What's a strength you get from camp?

- What's the strength you use most at camp?
- What's a strength that makes you a good friend?
- What's a strength that is important to you in friendship?
- What's a strength you want to work on this summer?

Discussion questions:

- How do you use your strengths at camp?
- How can you work on the strengths you want to build while at camp?

Examples of accomplishments:

- Made new friends
- Tried something new
- Failed but tried again
- Learned a new skill
- Found a new connection to Judaism
- Learned a Hebrew word

Sunny side up

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Goal

- Campers learn teamwork and communication skills

Materials

- A tarp
- 1-2 tennis balls

Procedure

1. Campers all stand in a circle holding a tarp with a tennis ball on it.
2. Campers have to work together to flip the tarp without the ball falling off. (Have campers create a plan before they start flipping the tarp.)
3. If the ball falls off, they have to start over.
4. Add more balls if they successfully complete the activity with just one.

Group reflection

- What went well with the activity?
- What was something that was hard about this? How did your group overcome it?
- How did your group react when a strategy didn't work?

Who Am I Chain

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Goals

- Help campers identify their strengths.
- Recognize that everyone has different strengths, learn how that can be important in cabin dynamics

Material

- Strips of paper
- Pens

Procedure

1. Each camper gets three strips of paper.
2. In one word they will write a strength their family gave them, a strength their friends gave them and a strength they are building for themselves.
 - a. They should have three pieces of paper, each with a word on it
 - b. younger kids: draw something that makes you feel strong, draw someone that makes you feel strong, draw a place that makes you feel strong
3. Counselors will help each camper tape these papers together to make a paper chain with everyone's strengths on it.

Strength examples:

- Compassionate
- Empathetic
- Sensitive
- Determined
- Courage
- Curiosity
- Creativity
- Forgiving
- Fair
- Hopeful
- Kind
- Respectful
- Responsible
- Resilient
- Intelligent
- A good team worker
- Trustworthy
- Enthusiastic

- Open minded

Group reflection

- What were the strengths you put on your papers and why?