

<b>Name of Session:</b>	<b>The Snowflake Principle: Embracing Difference Within Our Camp Communities</b>
<b>Name of Instructor:</b>	Sarra Alpert
<b>Session Type:</b> (Pillar, L'shma, Subcommittee)	Building and Maintaining Healthy Relationships within the Camp Community
<b>Website Description— Skills, Knowledge and Experience to be acquired:</b> (Who, What, Why?)	What do we really know about each of our campers? What are the questions we do and don't ask? There is more diversity in our camp communities than we often think, and one of the challenges of any camp community is finding a way to explore and encourage these expressions of difference while maintaining a cohesive, bonded group. In this session, we'll look at how to create programs and rituals (Jewish and otherwise) that take on this intriguing and potentially generative tension within camp life, and how to teach/encourage this kind of thinking.
<b>Program Type:</b> Is this a Staff Training or Jewish Program?	Staff Training
<b>Staff Training Outcomes:</b> What counseling moments can Fellows utilize to highlight their leadership skills?	Create a bunk environment which allows for and even encourages a diversity of needs and personalities, with new programming and direct counselor-to-camper approaches.
<b>Age Group:</b> What age group was this originally designed for?	Session is designed for staff; material/ideas can be applied to any age group.
<b>Jewish Texts and/or Contexts:</b>	B'tzelem Elokim
<b>Materials Needed:</b>	Flip chart paper, markers, text handout, "A Different Kind of Get to Know You" handout.
<b>Space Needs:</b>	Room for participants to sit in a circle (chairs or not); also enough space for participants to all comfortably lie down.
<b>Maximum Number of Participants:</b>	No set maximum (but would need to be adjusted for larger groups).

### Opening Activity

**Time: 10 minutes**

Start by making a list together (on flip-chart paper) of the types of questions that come up in standard get-to-know-you games (i.e. number of siblings, hobbies, etc).

Then, go around the room for introductions. Each person should share their name, their camp and one thing about them that they consider significant but that doesn't usually come up in get-to-know-you games. (If the group is too large to do this quickly, split into smaller groups for this.)

### Step-by-Step Session Description

1. Make a second list (post next to first list): what are the types of things that our close friends know about us and that we know about our close friends? Discuss: how do these types of topics come up eventually? Why are they harder to discover/share? (5 min)

2. Make another list: what are the assumptions/generalizations that we make about our campers? If people need prompting, suggest these categories: likes/dislikes, Jewish background, social feelings, income/class, gender expectations, etc. (5 min)

3. Ask participants to lie down or sit facing outwards (they can either close their eyes during the reading parts or not – the point is just that this activity works best if no one is making eye contact with anyone else, and it's particularly important that no one be able to read each other's paper). Read the following groups of questions, pausing after each question. The participants should answer the questions for themselves, silently. After each group of questions, give the participants a few minutes to sit up and respond in writing about their reactions to that group of questions – which ones most surprised them or made them uncomfortable or struck them as important, etc (they'll have the questions on a handout with space to write after each group). (15 min total)

- Is there anything you're really good at that you don't get a chance to do at camp? If you could design your day at camp (regardless of what activities are actually offered at your camp), what would it look like? What parts of the camp day are most challenging for you? Are there peers at camp who you have a fraught relationship with – who make you uncomfortable or who intimidate you or who you often have conflict with?
- What things are particularly difficult for you to do? Do most people know that these things are hard for you? Are there times that you need different things (or more help, etc) than others seem to need? Have you asked for what you need at those times?
- Which of the gender-based bunk/tent activities is fun for you? Which would you prefer to avoid? Do you feel ready for a romantic or sexual relationship? Have you ever questioned your sexual identity? Do you pretend to identify as heterosexual even if you're not sure if you are or know that you're not? Do you (or did you ever) pretend to have crushes because it seems like that's what everyone talks about? Do you imagine that your answers to these questions are similar to or different from the majority of people at your camp?
- Who in your family is Jewish? Which Jewish rituals are a part of your life at home? Have you ever had an experience where you felt "not Jewish enough"? Have you ever felt that way at camp? Are there other important cultural or religious traditions that inform your identity? Do you imagine that your answers to these questions are similar to or different from the majority of people at your camp?
- Where do you live (for example, in your own house, a rented house, an apartment, a trailer, a shelter)? How much private, personal space do you have where you live? Where do you get most of your clothes? Where does your family usually get food? How often do you think about these aspects of your life? When do you tend to notice them? Do you imagine that your answers to these questions are similar to or different from the majority of people at your camp?

3. Everyone sit up and make a circle together again. Share some of the reactions (not necessarily the personal answers to the questions): Which questions most surprised you? Why? Do you think that these

topics/questions are important ones for us to understand about our campers' lives? Why or why not? What are the dangers of approaching these questions? What are the dangers of not approaching them? Ask people to share some examples of when a camper surprised them in some way – a situation where you thought you had the camper all figured out but then they did something that forced you to reevaluate your sense of them.

(15 min)

**Planning for Camp**

**Time: 20 minutes**

Frame the two goals of a more inclusive camp environment:

- On the one hand, this is about making each child feel comfortable and valued for who they are.
- On the other hand, this is also about creating an environment where diversity is a genuine value – where the differences between us are interesting and allow us all to learn, grow and expand our understanding of the world around us.

Split into three groups: 1-1 encounters, bunk/tent activities, unit/*edah* activities. In each group, make a list of ideas for opportunities to help campers feel encouraged to express a range of personality types, activity preferences, general diversity and everyone-can-shine atmosphere. Keep the goals in mind. At the end of each list, include 2-3 diversity activities to avoid – ways that a well-intentioned counselor could conceivably go beyond creating an inclusive environment and end up forcing campers to share more than they're comfortable with (*this is the danger of work like this – and in teaching other staff how to approach this type of programming, it's important to pre-empt this issue*).

Reshuffle groups so that each new group has members from each of the three planning/brainstorming groups. Share lists (if possible, the lists will be typed to be copied and distributed before the end of the conference).

**Closing Activity**

**Time: 5 minutes**

Ask four people to read out loud the four texts on the text handout. Discuss concept of “B'tzelem elokim” – what does it really mean to consider ourselves as created in God's image (or, for those who don't connect to the idea of God, what does it mean to consider the individual as holy)? How can we create a sense of community that doesn't dissolve difference?

**Recommended Follow-Up:**  
(By Liaison or Faculty)

Fellows should lead a training on these issues with other staff members – even (perhaps most powerful) just with their own co-counselors. Fellows should also incorporate at least one of the ideas from the “new programs” list into their programming this summer.

# The Snowflake Principle: Embracing Difference Within Our Camp Communities

## Getting to Know You – Resource Sheet 1

*After each group of questions, respond in writing about your reactions to that group of questions: Which ones most surprised you? Which made you uncomfortable? Which struck you as important? Why?*

Is there anything you're really good at that you don't get a chance to do at camp? If you could design your day at camp (regardless of what activities are actually offered at your camp), what would it look like? What parts of the camp day are most challenging for you? Are there peers at camp who you have a fraught relationship with – who make you uncomfortable or who intimidate you or who you often have conflict with?

What things are particularly difficult for you to do? Do most people know that these things are hard for you? Are there times that you need different things (or more help, etc) than others seem to need? Have you asked for what you need at those times?

Which of the gender-based bunk/tent activities are fun for you? Which would you prefer to avoid? Do you feel ready for a romantic or sexual relationship? Have you ever questioned your sexual identity? Do you pretend to identify as heterosexual even if you're not sure if you are or know that you're not? Do you (or did you ever) pretend to have crushes because it seems like that's what everyone talks about? Do you imagine that your answers to these questions are similar to or different from the majority of people at your camp?  
(Turn page over for more space)

Who in your family is Jewish? What Jewish rituals are part of your life at home? Have you ever had an experience where you felt "not Jewish enough"? Have you ever felt that way at camp? Are there other important cultural or religious traditions that inform your identity? Do you imagine that your answers to these questions are similar to or different from the majority of people at your camp?

Where do you live (for example, in your own house, a rented house, an apartment, a trailer, a shelter)? How much private, personal space do you have where you live? Where do you get most of your clothes? Where does your family usually get food? How often do you think about these aspects of your life? When do you tend to notice them? Do you imagine that your answers to these questions are similar to or different from the majority of people at your camp?

## The Snowflake Principle: Embracing Difference Within Our Camp Communities Thoughts on Difference... – Resource Sheet #2

If you see a great gathering of people, recite the blessing “Blessed is the Wise One who knows all secrets” (*Baruhk hacham ha-razim*). For just as their faces are different from one another’s, so are their minds unlike one another’s. In fact, each person has a distinctive and individual mind.

You can see that this is so from the request that Moses made at the time that his death was drawing near. He said to God: Master of the Universe! The mind of every single person is known by You, and you know that no two people are exactly alike. When I leave them, I plead with You – should you appoint a new leader, please appoint someone who will accept each and every person according to that person’s individuality. How do we know that Moses made this request? From the way he addressed God as Adonai Elohei ha-ruchot l’kol basar (Adonai, God of the various kinds of human spirit).

- MIDRASH TANHUMA, PINCHAS #10 (Torah commentary, Numbers)

While I know myself as a creation of God, I am also obligated to realize and remember that everyone else and everything else are also God’s creation.

- MAYA ANGELOU (African-American writer, 1928 - )

Everything has beauty, but not everyone sees it.

- CONFUCIUS (Chinese philosopher, 551 BC - 479 BC)

Beloved is the human being who was created in God’s image. It is indicative of a greater love still that it was made known to human beings that they were created in God’s image.

- PIRKEI AVOT (ETHICS OF THE FATHERS) 3:18 (Talmud)