

Name of Session:	Square Pegs, Round Holes: When "Troublemakers" Aren't Trying to Cause Trouble
Name of Instructor:	Sarra Alpert
Session Type: (Pillar, L'shma, Subcommittee)	Leading Through Role Modeling and Ruach
Website Description— Skills, Knowledge and Experience to be acquired: (Who, What, Why?)	Each summer, our camps have to consider how to work with campers who have a range of social and cognitive differences. As we learn more, we are better able to identify the ways that the highly-structured camp environment can leave mainstreamed campers with special needs (for example: campers with ADD/ADHD, learning differences, or who are on the high-functioning autistic spectrum) out of the loop... and therefore often acting out. In this session, we will explore various avenues, including Jewish sources, role-plays, and child development perspectives, to increase your skills in identifying potential problem situations before they start, defusing and addressing them when they do, and most importantly, setting all of our campers up for a successful summer.
Program Type: Is this a Staff Training or Jewish Program?	Staff Training
Staff Training Outcomes: What counseling moments can Fellows utilize to highlight their leadership skills?	Identify potential problem situations before they start; better handle discipline-related situations once they occur; create a bunk environment which allows for a diversity of needs and personalities.
Age Group: What age group was this originally designed for?	This is a staff training session (principles can be applied to work with any group of campers).
Jewish Texts and/or Contexts:	Pesikta De-Rab Kahana, two sections (see handout)
Materials Needed:	Flip chart paper, markers, Piska text, Malaguzzi poem, "procedure" text.
Space Needs:	No specific space needs.
Maximum Number of Participants:	This works best for a small to medium sized group of staff (10-30 staff).
<u>Opening Activity</u> (10 min)	
*Note: "Takeaways" are ideas/perspectives to be communicated to the group at each point in the activities. Ideally, this should emerge from the participants through discussion. But if that's not happening, the facilitator should help make the meaning/information in each section clear.	

1. Read beginning of Piska 12 selection together (#1 in attached text). Ask participants to interpret/paraphrase the text. *Takeaway: That our life experiences are shared and yet varied. The text highlights the value of honoring each person's personal relationship to God, and by extension, to the world around them.*
2. Instruct participants to turn to the person next to them: each person should share one thing that motivates them and helps them gain the most from their experiences.
3. Instruct participants to turn to the person on the other side of them: each person should share one thing that holds them back and keeps them from getting the most from their experiences.

Step-by-step session description

4. Ask participants to close their eyes and picture the following scenarios:
 - Think of a time when you found yourself frustrated by someone else's difficulty.
 - Think of a time when you labeled a camper "stupid" or "slow", even if only in your head. How did it affect the way you felt about and interacted with this camper?
 - Think about a difficulty you have – when have you felt comfortable being honest about what you need? When have you felt a need to hide this difficulty?
 (5 min)
5. Discuss: When do these types of situations arise at camp? Make list of general scenarios where this arises most often. Be sure that cognitive differences that can come up within a mainstreamed group of campers end up on the list – i.e. ADD/ADHD, oppositional issues, OCD, Asperger's, etc. (**Note: If there is someone in camp who has some training/background in working with campers with these types of cognitive differences, it would be a very good idea to bring them in to contribute to this part of the session and the next part – ask them to help clarify misunderstandings, contribute helpful information, etc. However, it is important to keep in mind that the point of this session is not about diagnosis/labels – it's about getting to really understand the needs of a specific camper and how to best work with those needs. But keep in mind that people who aren't qualified to comment on actual psychological/medical needs shouldn't attempt to cover that material.*)
(10 min)
6. What's this like? (10 min)
Hand out the attached page that begins "The procedure is actually quite simple." Ask someone to read the page out loud. Then ask the group: what is the procedure described in this paragraph? Some people may figure it out (the answer is: doing laundry), but most likely will not. Discuss: what made it difficult to understand this paragraph? What are the parallels between the experience of reading this paragraph and the various experiences of someone whose cognitive/social processes might differ from the majority of the group around them?
Takeaway: A crucial aspect of the special needs approach is to always assume the following: there is a reason for a person's behavior, there is a way to adjust the situation to help the person succeed, the person has to trust that you have their best interests at heart if they're going to work to understand your "world," gaining that trust requires a genuine attempt to understand how their "world" works.
7. Unpacking specific needs (25 min total – should be 10-15 min for big group example and 10-15 min for small groups):
 - Ask someone to share an experience which fell into this general category of a camper genuinely struggling with an aspect of camp structure/norms (can be social or learning-oriented or physical/schedule-oriented) that they didn't easily understand and/or identify with (and which led to problematic situations).
 - Now just use the literal situation as a jumping-off point for a hypothetical situation – all group members can participate from here on out, because it's not about the literal situation described, but about how a similar situation might go. List the characteristics of this hypothetical camper. For example, how does s/he act around other kids, how does s/he interact with counselors, how does s/he talk, etc. Consider what adjectives describe this camper.
 - Role-play the situation that was described. The story-sharer should not play the counselor in this

situation. *(Important note to the person role-playing the camper in this scenario: be careful not to mock the camper. The point of this is to assume that this is a child who is genuinely struggling and has become sad or frustrated or angry because they don't know how to work through that struggle.)*

- Discuss together what the role-play illuminated – what can you come to understand about this camper? What approaches (consider tone, language, solutions) would alienate this camper? What approaches would work best for them? What are concrete strategies for working with this camper in ways that could avoid/preempt problems, or strategies for dealing with those problems when they come up? Remember that the point is not necessarily to never apply discipline techniques – there are boundaries that need to be maintained (the camper shouldn't be allowed to speak hostilely to you, etc). How can you figure out when a situation warrants a discipline approach or not? How can you discipline a particular behavior while also adjusting the environment to help the child succeed?

Ask for 5-8 people who have had experiences which fell into this general category of a camper genuinely struggling with an aspect of camp structure/norms (these can be social or learning-oriented or physical/schedule-oriented) that they didn't easily understand and/or identify with (and which led to problematic situations). Those people will then lead small groups of 4-5 people through the same process we just went through as a full group. Make sure that the instructions are either posted where all of the groups can see or that you've given a copy to each group.

Step One: Leader should share their example with their group-mates.

Step Two: Now just use the literal situation as a jumping-off point for a hypothetical situation, and list the characteristics of this child. For example, how does s/he act around other kids, how does s/he interact with counselors, how does s/he talk, etc. Consider what adjectives describe this child.

Step Three: Role-play the situation the group leader described. The group leader should not play the counselor in this situation. *(Important note to the person role-playing the camper in this scenario: be careful not to mock the camper. The point of this is to assume that this is a child who is genuinely struggling and has become sad or frustrated or angry because they don't know how to work through that struggle.)*

Step Four: Discuss together what the role-play illuminated – what can you come to understand about this camper? What approaches (consider tone, language, solutions) would alienate this camper? What approaches would work best for them? What are concrete strategies for working with this camper in ways that could avoid/preempt problems, or strategies for dealing with those problems when they come up? Remember that the point is not necessarily to never apply discipline techniques – there are boundaries that need to be maintained (the camper shouldn't be allowed to speak hostilely to you, etc). How can you figure out when a situation warrants a discipline approach or not? How can you discipline a particular behavior while also adjusting the environment to help the child succeed?

Planning for camp

8. Still in small groups, transition to considering your role as a model to other counselors: hypothesizing that your junior counselor wasn't handling a particular kid's difficulties/differences well, come up with two ideas for helping this counselor learn how to better handle the situation – one idea for an activity that could be done at a staff meeting, and one idea for something you could do in the bunk to model a healthier approach. (10 min)

Closing activity

9. Wrapping Up (5 min)
 - a. Read Malaguzzi poem. How do we think differently if we're trying to make our bunks/camps places where "the hundred is there"?
 - b. Read end of Piska text. Takeaway: We are actually linked by the diversity of our experience. If God can not only allow for our many differences but encourage them, how

much more so should we be able to do that for ourselves and each other? But in addition to valuing difference, this text emphasizes that our worlds are “one and the same” – so we have to figure out how to allow for those many powers and capacities to coexist and share this space.

Recommended Follow-Up: post session

Each fellow should lead a similar exercise with their unit and/or bunk staff. The main goals at this session would be to help people think differently about how mis-met needs lead to unnecessary discipline situations, and to give people time to brainstorm with each other about specific camper needs, trouble spots and solutions.

Square Pegs, Round Holes Text Handout 1

The procedure is actually quite simple. First you arrange items into different groups. Of course one pile may be sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities that is the next step; otherwise, you are pretty well set. It is important not to overdo things. That is, it is better to do too few things at once than too many. In the short run this may not seem important but complications can easily arise. A mistake can be expensive as well. At first, the whole procedure will seem complicated. Soon, however, it will become just another fact of life. It is difficult to foresee any end to the necessity for this task in the immediate future, but then one never can tell. After the procedure is completed one arranges the materials into different groups again. Then they can be put into their appropriate places. Eventually they will be used once more and the whole cycle will then have to be repeated. However, that is part of life.

Bransford & Johnson, 1972, p 722

Square Pegs, Round Holes Text Handout 2

1. Rabbi Levi said: “God appeared to them like a statue with faces on every side, so that though a thousand people might be looking at the statue, they would be led to believe that it was looking at each one of them. So, too, when God spoke, each and every person in Israel could say, ‘The Divine Word is addressing me.’...”

Moreover, said R. Jose bar R. Hanina, God spoke with each and every person according to each person’s particular power. Nor need you marvel at this. The manna tasted differently to each: to the children, to the young, and to the old, according to their power (capacity). Infants according to their capacity: like the taste of milk from a mother’s breast... The young according to their capacity, for of the manna they ate it is said, “My bread also which I gave you, bread and oil and honey” ... and the old according to their capacity, as is said of the manna they ate, “the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.”

2. Now if each and every person was enabled to taste the manna according to his particular capacity, how much more was each and every person enabled to hear according to his capacity. Thus David said, ‘The voice of the Lord is in its strength (Ps 29:4) – not “The voice of the Lord in His strength” but “its strength” – that is, in its strength to make itself heard and understood according to the capacity of each and every person who listens. Therefore God said: Do not be misled because you hear many voices. Know that I am God who is one and the same.”

Pesikta De-Rab Kahana, Piska 12

Square Pegs, Round Holes

Text Handout 3

“The Child” By Loris Malaguzzi

The child
is made of one hundred
The child has
a hundred languages
a hundred hands
a hundred thoughts
a hundred ways of thinking
of playing, of speaking
A hundred always a hundred
ways of listening
of marveling of loving
a hundred joys
for singing and understanding
a hundred worlds
to discover
a hundred worlds
to invent
a hundred worlds
to dream.
The child has
a hundred languages
(and a hundred hundred hundred more)
but they steal ninety-nine.
The school and the culture
separate the head from the body.
They tell the child:
to think without hands
to do without head
to listen and not to speak
to understand without joy
to love and to marvel
only at Easter and Christmas.

They tell the child:
to discover the world already there
and of the hundred
they steal ninety-nine.
They tell the child
that work and play
reality and fantasy
science and imagination
sky and earth
reason and dream
are things
that do not belong together

And thus they tell the child
that the hundred is not there.
The child says:
No way. The hundred is there.