

<b>Session Title:</b>	<b>What does it make out of U and ME?: Examining Our Assumptions About Our Campers</b>
<b>Name of Instructor:</b>	<b>Sarra Alpert</b>
<b>Email of Instructor:</b>	alpert.sarra@gmail.com
<b>Texts Utilized:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Midrash Tanhuma, Pinchas #10</li> <li>● Pirkei Avot 3:18</li> </ul>
<b>Materials Needed:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Flip chart paper</li> <li>● Markers</li> <li>● Text handout</li> <li>● “A Different Kind of Get to Know You” handout.</li> </ul>
<b>Location Needs:</b>	Room for participants to sit in a circle (chairs or not); also enough space for participants to all comfortably lie down.
<p><b>Opening Activity</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Time: 15 minutes</b></span></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Start by playing a round of “Who In the Room.” Participants share “I” statements that they think might not be immediately evident about them, and everyone else for whom that statement is true (and who wants to identify with it) steps into the circle. The game can either be played as a simple step-in/step-out game or as more of a “musical chairs” type game, where people switch places in the circle if they agree with the statement (and whoever is left in the middle gives the next statement).</li> <li>- Make 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 make a list of the types of things that our close friends know about us (and that we know about our close friends).</li> <li>- Discuss: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How do those types of more significant topics come up eventually?</li> <li>○ Why are they harder to discover/share?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Step-by-Step Session Description</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>Time: 50 minutes</b></span></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make another list: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What are the assumptions/generalizations that we make about our campers?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>If people need prompting, suggest these categories: likes/dislikes, Jewish background, social feelings, income/class, gender expectations, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ask participants to lie down or sit facing outwards (they can either close their eyes during the</li> </ul>	

reading parts or not – 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 react in writing 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).

- 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 with whom you often find yourself in conflict?
  - 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?
  - 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?
- Direct participants to sit up and make a circle together again. Ask participants to share reactions (not necessarily the personal answers to the questions):
- o What do these categories have in common?
  - o Which questions most surprised you? Why?
  - o Do you think that these topics/questions are important ones for us to understand about our campers' lives? Why or why not?
  - o What are the dangers of approaching these questions?
  - o What are the dangers of not approaching them?
- In the next exercise, focus the discussion specifically on diversity in terms of gender expression and sexual orientation (and identity). The corners of the room will have signs that say either Always, Usually, Sometimes or Never. After reading each of the statements below, instruct participants to stand in corners according to which most fits their opinion. After each statement, ask a few people to share why they chose the corner they did, with time to debate a few of the

more hotly contested choices. After a few of the pre-prepared statements, give the participants a chance to write down their suggestions for similarly-structured statements worth debating (facilitator should choose the ones that seem to be potentially most generative).

- Statements:
  - o I think that the camp “guy activities” like playing sports and that the camp “girl activities” like spa day happen because male and female campers genuinely like different activities.
  - o I think a camper who is struggling with their gender identity or sexuality would feel comfortable at my camp.
  - o I think camp puts an unhealthy pressure on being in a relationship.
  - o I think camp is an ideal place to learn about different types of people.
  - o I think camp is an ideal place to learn more about yourself.
  - o I think my camp provides good training on how to help campers who you see to be struggling with feeling different, particularly in terms of figuring out their gender- and sexual- identity.
  
- Discuss:
  - o What aspects of the camp environment make this a particularly challenging area of diversity to navigate? Which of those elements can't be changed?
  - o Which can be mitigated?

### **Bringing it Back to Camp**

**Time: 25 minutes**

- Frame the two goals of a more inclusive camp environment:
  - Helping each child feel comfortable and valued for who they are (and to feel safe to explore the changes and developments in that identity).
  - 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, each focusing on either 1-1 encounters, bunk/tent activities, or 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. Each list should include at least 2-3 activities/practices/ideas that speak directly to gender and sexuality diversity. 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 the groups so that each new group has members from each of the three planning/brainstorming groups. Share lists (if possible, the lists should be typed and distributed to all participants).

### **Closing Activity**

**Time: 5 minutes**

- Ask four people to read aloud the four texts on the text handout. Discuss concept of *B'tzelem Elohim* (in the image of God)– 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?

# What does it make out of U and ME?

## Text Handout 1

### A Different Kind of “Get to Know You”

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?



# What does it make out of U and ME?

## Text Handout 2

### Thoughts on Difference...

If you see a great gathering of people, recite the blessing *Barukh chakham ha-razim* (Blessed is the Wise One who knows all secrets). 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