

# Disability Tips for Camps and Conferences

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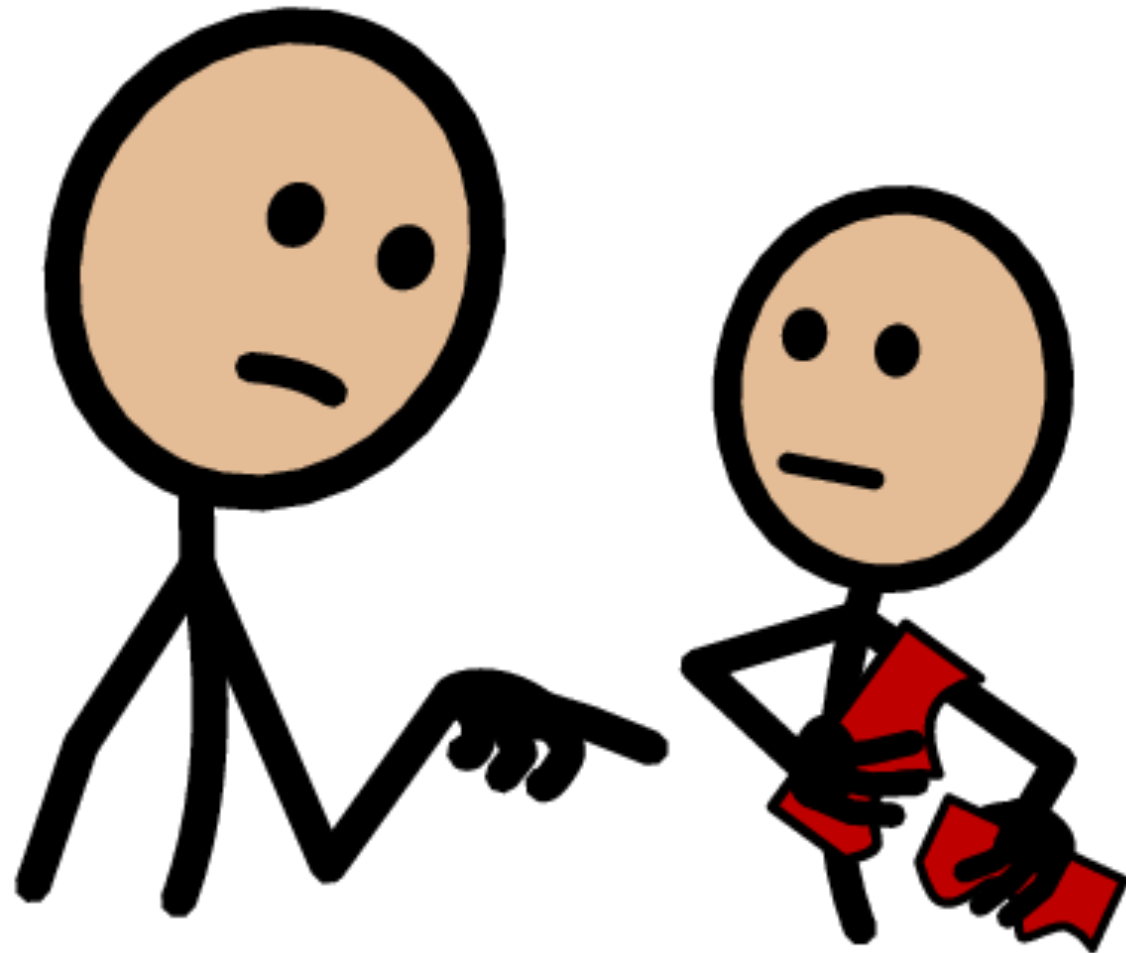
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matan



**“That which is hateful  
to you, do not do to  
others. That is the  
whole Torah. The rest  
is commentary. Now  
go and learn it.”**

Nobody likes being surrounded by people who are trying to fix them



# Camp is not therapy

- Camp is about having positive Jewish experiences, and
- Learning new things, and
- Doing Jewish things worth doing, and
- Developing a personal Jewish identity, and
- Being part of a community.



# Accessibility is not treatment

- Campers and staff stay disabled and their disabilities stay important.
- They do not overcome disability.
- They are Jews with disabilities, and they are equal members of the community.
- Accessibility is about making equality a reality.

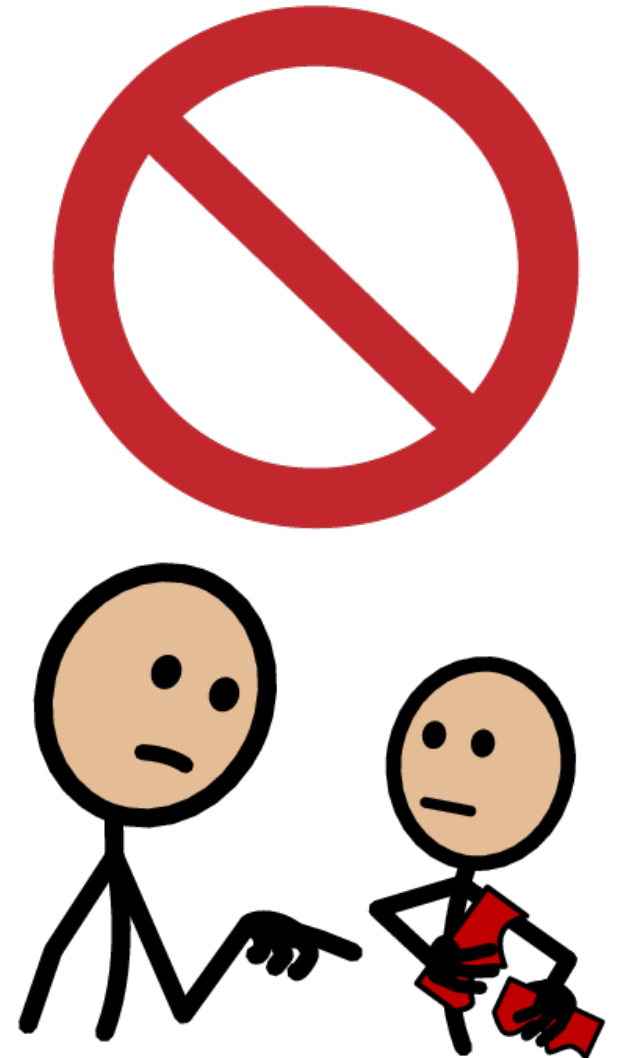


Nobody likes to be  
subjected to arbitrary rules



# Nobody likes to be humiliated for making mistakes

- “You should have thought of that before!”
- “If you wanted that, you should have brought it. No going back to the cabin for it.”
- “I shouldn’t have to tell you this. You’re not a baby.”





# Sometimes rules need to change.

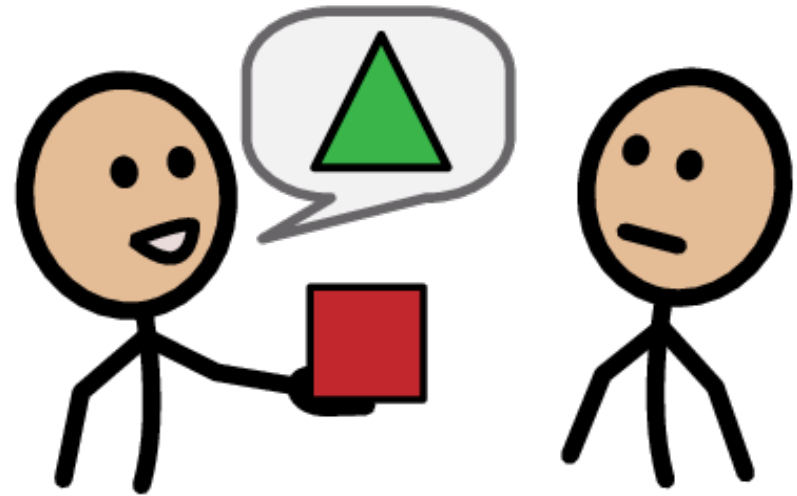


- When rules are leading to a lot of conflict, often the rules are the problem.
- Consider solving the problem in a different way.
- Eg: Camps usually have sufficient staff ratio to make it possible to go back for things.
- Eg: Don't arbitrarily make kids eat pizza they hate when you could just as easily let them have the cereal they want.



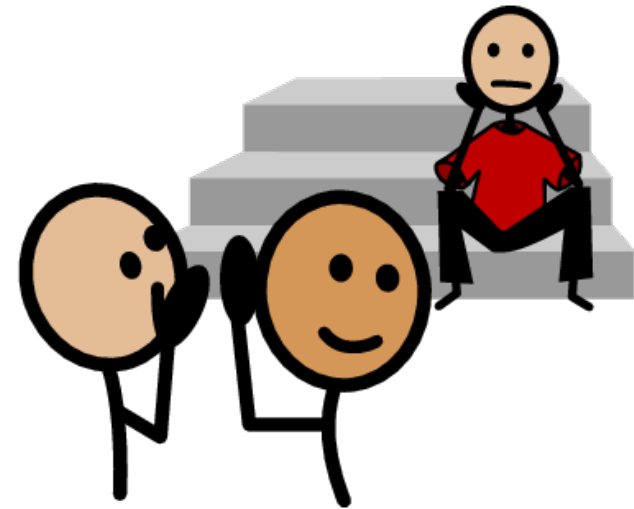
# Nobody likes to have their feelings invalidated

- “It’s easy!”
- “It’s fun!”
- “You’ll like it!”
- “Everyone has fun with this!”
- “This is the best part of camp!”
- “Turn that frown upside down!”



# Keep in mind that disabled people have a hard time in camp.

- Camp was not designed with Jews with disabilities in mind.
- It's very hard to be in an environment that assumes people like you are absent.
- Our good intentions do not fix this.
- Pretending kids and staff are happy will not make them happy.



# No “Have Fun” rules

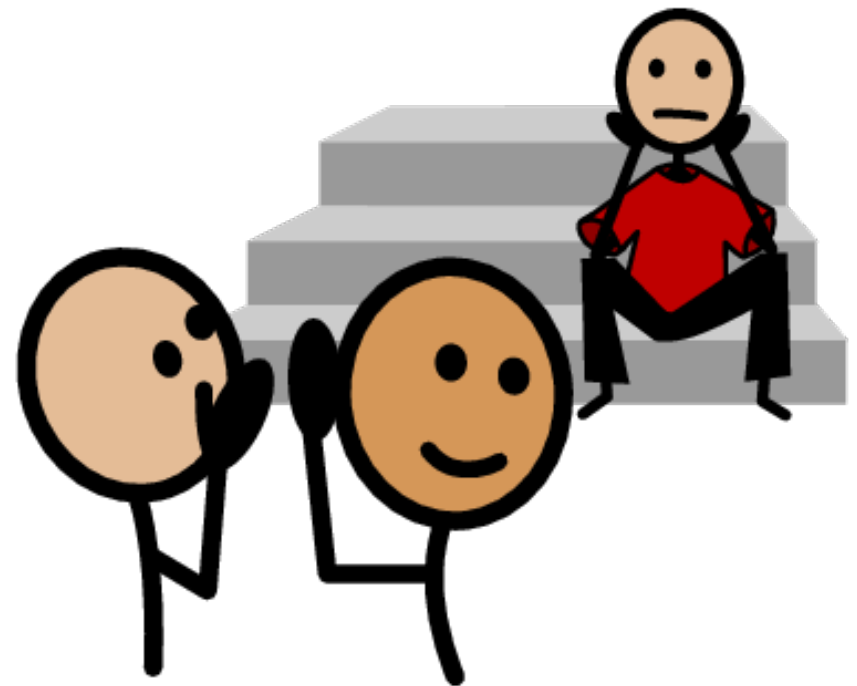
- Rules about having fun are humiliating when you're not having fun.
- So is singing songs about how great camp is.
- People need to be allowed to feel the way they feel.



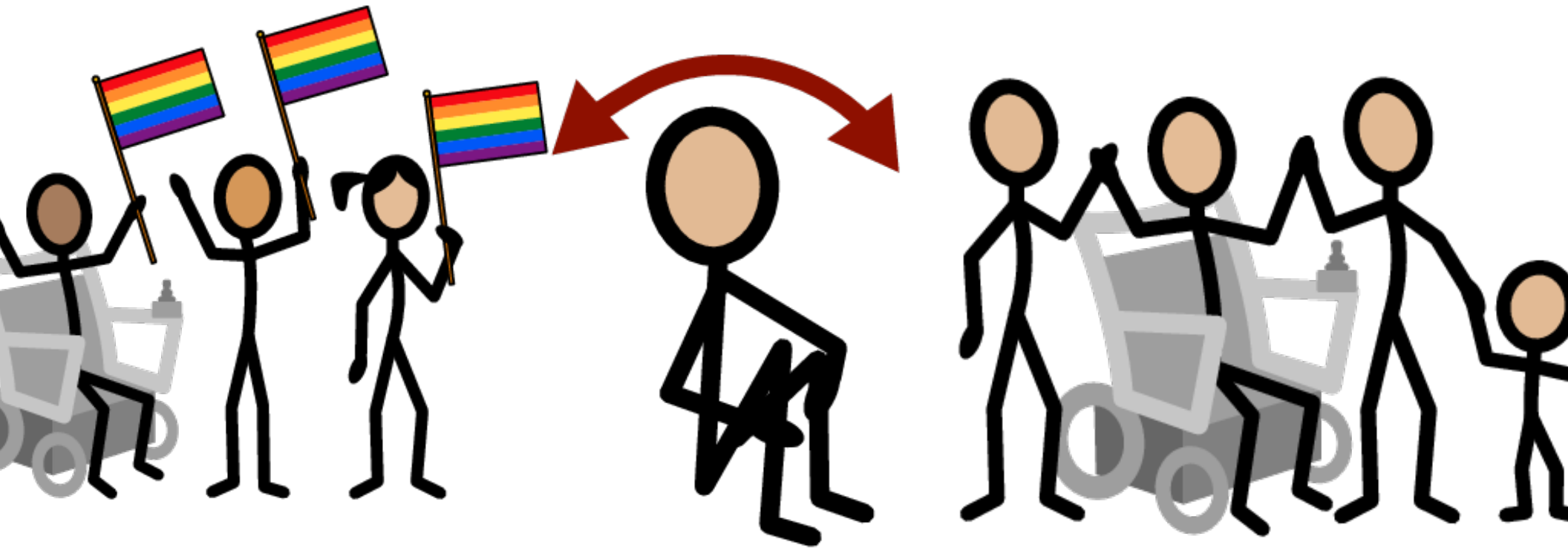
Nobody likes to spend all day  
doing activities they hate.

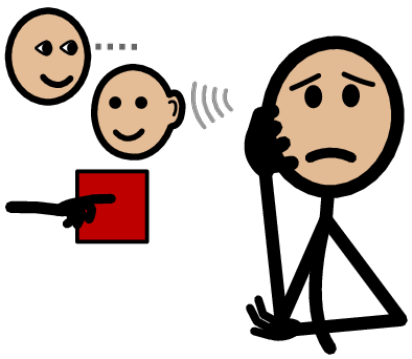


Nobody likes to spend all day failing at things.



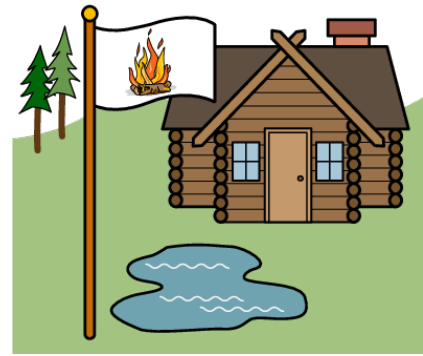
It's ok to be different





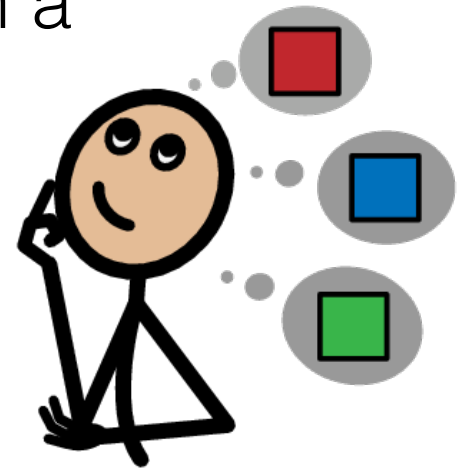
# Beyond an iconic Camp Experience

- People are different, and some kids don't like iconic Camp Things
- It's not ok if kids and staff are miserable.
- It *is* ok if not everyone sings the camp song.
- It *is* ok if some people read books instead of running in a relay race.
- It *is* ok if some people hate the texture of marshmallows and hang out with friends a few feet from the campfire instead of roasting them.



# Making room for difference

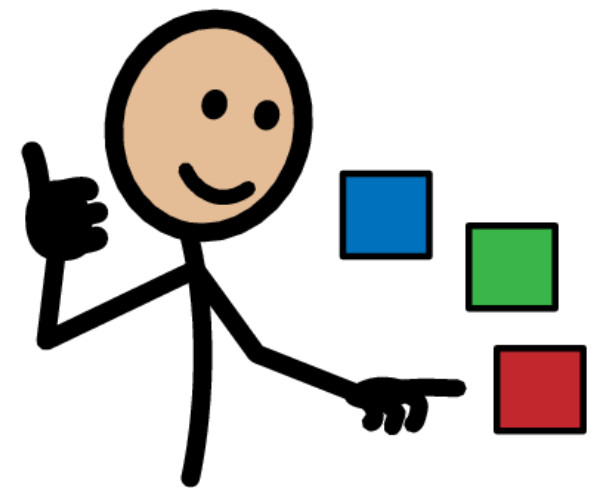
- Camps and conferences were designed with a narrow range of people in mind.
- In order to be fully inclusive, camps and conferences need to change.
- It's not just a matter of finding the right supports.
- Camps and conferences need to be places where everyone is expected and planned for.





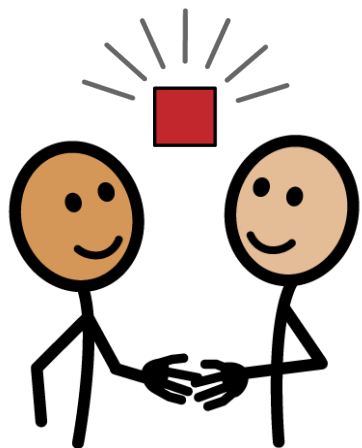
# Choices

- Offering a range of choices makes camp better — for everyone.
- It allows people to spend more time doing things they like.
- And less time failing and being excluded.
- Chugim - longer and medium term
- Choices in bunk and group activities
- Daily ongoing choice periods.

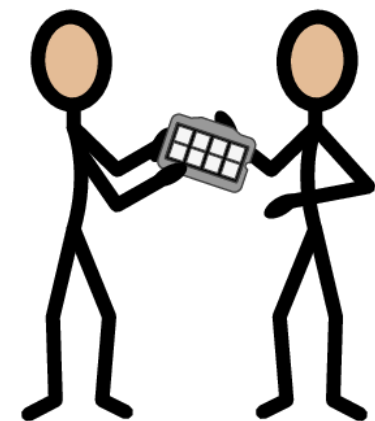


People have better experiences when they do things they care about.





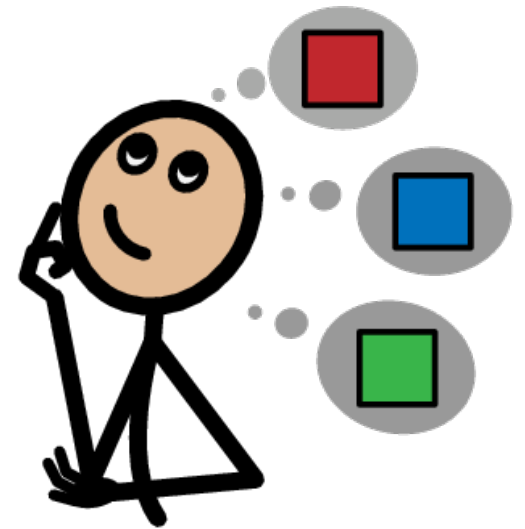
# Shared interests facilitate social inclusion



- Inclusive ideology doesn't make friendships. Shared experiences and interests do.
- When kids resent an activity, they tend to take it out on kids who are failing at it.
- When kids are doing something they want to be doing, inclusion happens much more readily.
- Choices can make a dramatic difference even without doing anything special.

# Planning makes an even bigger difference.

- Think about the campers you have and expect to have when deciding what activities to offer.
- What are they interested in?
- What can they do? What can't they do?
- What is fun? What is frustrating?
- Are a range of activities offered that are likely to work for the range of kids you have?
- This doesn't require higher staff ratio, just thoughtful planning.



# Think about accessibility when you decide which choices to offer

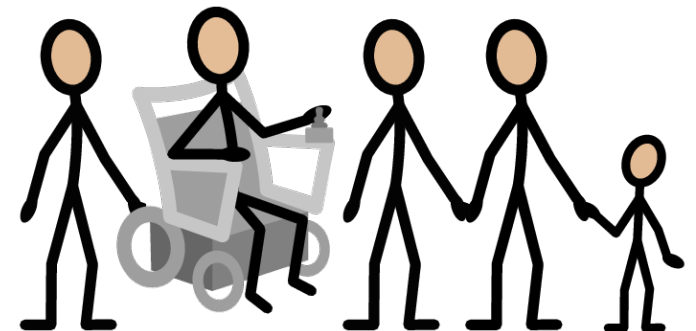
- Is there an indoor option for heat sensitive people?
- Are there highly social activities and activities with low or no social demands?

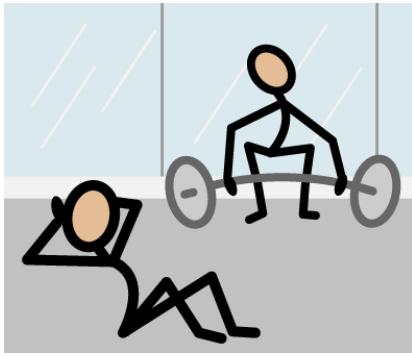
- What will work for kids with limited motor skills?



- What will work for kids who are and aren't academically inclined?

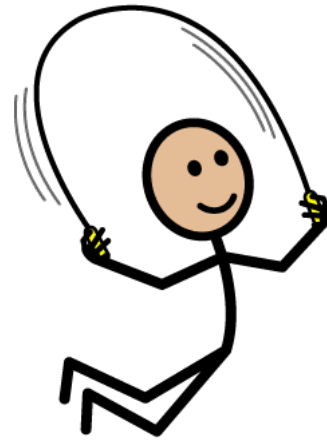
- Are there noisy and quiet activities?





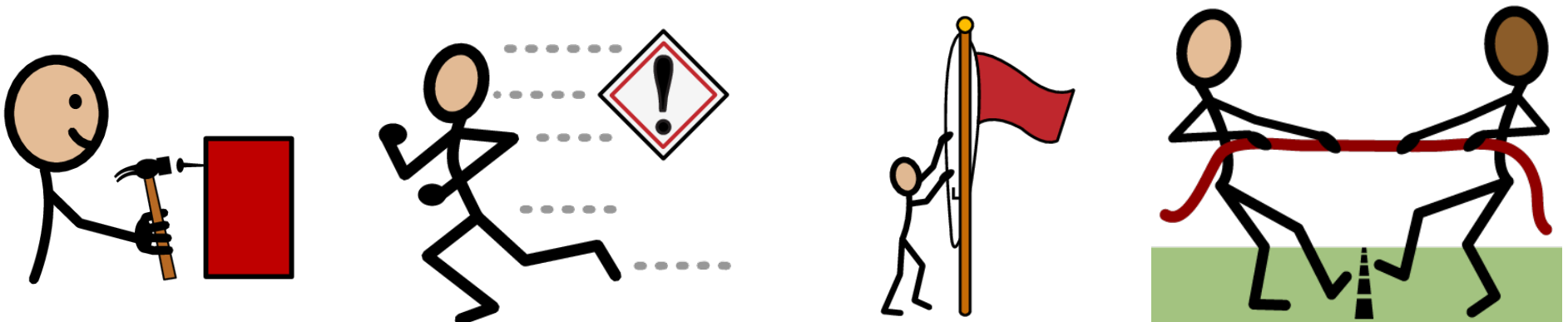
# Sport options

- Indoor and outdoor
- Team and not team
- “Easy” is not easy.
- Things that work for kids with a range of motor skills.
- Jump rope
- Karate

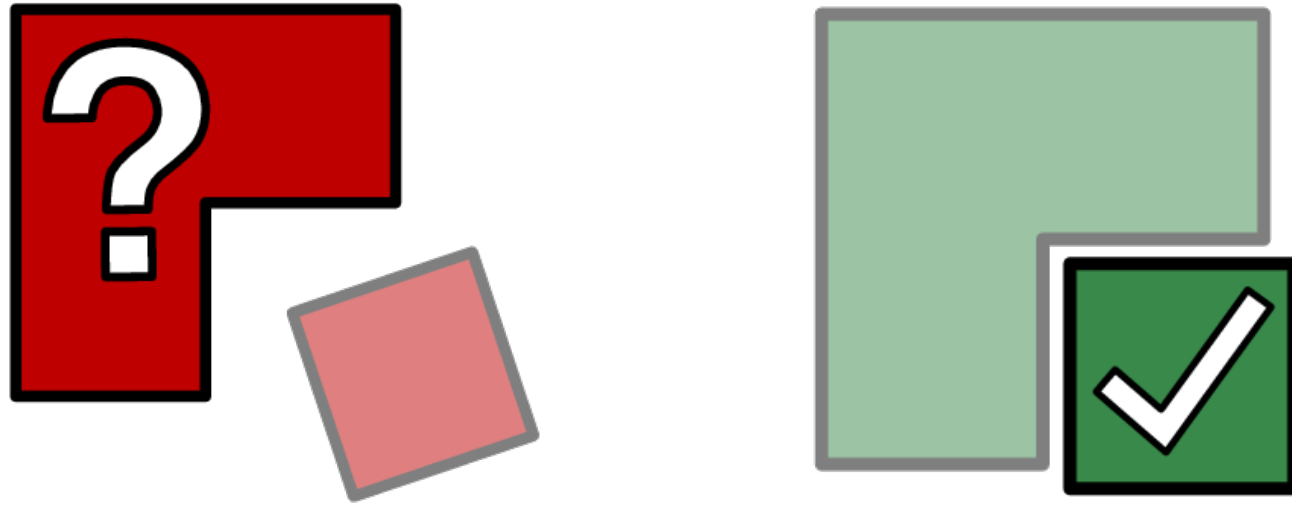


# \*Yom\* sport options

- Allow for neutrality. Not everyone wants to fight a war.
- Cheers and conflict can be awful for some kids.
- Make sure they have something else substantive to do.
- If you do silent lunch, have a designated communication zone or a way to signal the need to communicate something important.



# Planning for troubleshooting



- It will not be possible to plan for access all the way in advance.
- Plan to allocate staff time to accessibility troubleshooting.



# Presume good faith

- Kids who are difficult are usually having a really hard time.
- Don't take it personally.
- Don't judge them harshly. Assume that they're having a hard time and that there's a solution.
- Take a troubleshooting approach.

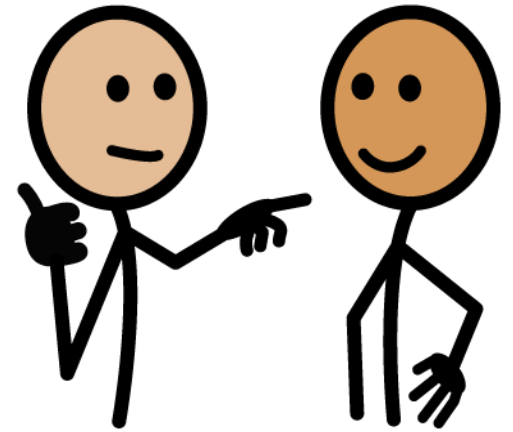


# Make expectations clear during staff week.

- Access troubleshooting is not a distraction from your job.
- It is part of your job.
- If something isn't working for all the kids, it's not working.
- Don't be mean to kids and staff who are having a hard time.

# Designated roles

- Some things happen more consistently if someone is assigned to do them.
- This is particularly important at meals, large group activities, trip planning, and any time the usual flow of activities will be disrupted.



# Accessibility planner role

- Plans for accessibility issues ahead of time.
- Point person for access questions and potential issues.
- Debriefs after the activity about what worked and what didn't.

<b>PLAN</b>	
1.	_____
2.	_____
3.	_____

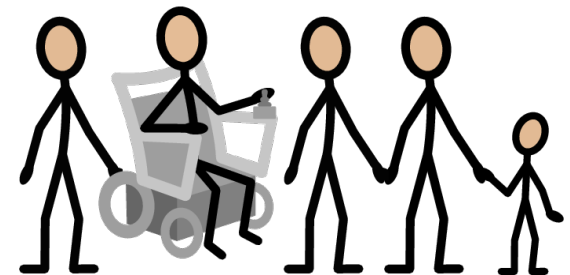
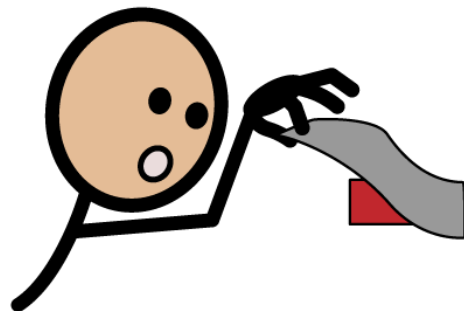


# Accessibility planner example: 7th and 8th grade trip

- Sarah, the Rosh Eidah for the 7th graders, is the designated access planner for the trip.
- Sarah makes sure that the bus has a wheelchair lift, and that all sites have accessible bathrooms.
- Sarah verifies that appropriate food will be available for kids with dietary needs. (And that they will have access to treats when other kids do.)
- A camper with a low noise tolerance ask Sarah to plan for access to quiet space. Sarah does that, and also suggests that the camper bring fidgets.
- A counselor asks for a clear written schedule to give to kids who get anxious if they don't know what's coming next.

# Accessibility floater role

- Troubleshoots access issues \*during\* the activity/trip/meal/etc.
- Proactively watches for and troubleshoots problems.
- Point person who can be asked for help solving a problem.
- Should be visibly identifiable.
- May or may not be the planner. If they're not the planner, they're in communication with the planner.
- Can be the same person all summer, or can be a rotating role.



# Accessibility floater

## example: 5th grade tefillah

- David, a bunk counselor, is the accessibility floater for the combined 5th grade tefillah this week.
- David notices that Ben doesn't have his transliterated siddur, and gets it for him.
- Or: A new prayer is being taught. The teacher forgot to transliterate it for Ben. David googles to see if he can find a transliterated version quickly.
- If he can't, he apologizes to Ben and promises to get it for tomorrow — and follows up.
- David tells the accessibility planner and the teacher about what happened, and they make a plan for making sure it doesn't happen again.

# Accessibility floater example: Yom Superhero

- On the specialists' day off, Ariela, a bunk counselor, is the accessibility floater.
- During cape making, Ariela notices that some kids are having trouble cutting fabric.
- It turns out that they need left handed scissors.
- Ariela figures out where the left handed scissors are and brings them to the kids who need them.

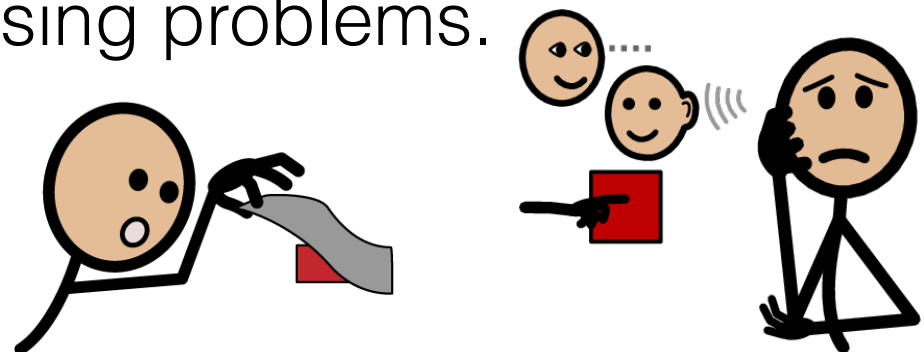


# Yom Superhero example continued

- Sandy, a 7th grader Ariela doesn't know well, is staring at her cape not drawing anything.
- They talk, and Ariela figures out that Sandy doesn't have the motor skills to control a marker.
- Ariela offers to help. They end up designing the cape together.
- Ariela draws the design Sandy picks.

# Break facilitator role

- Watches for kids who may need a break.
- Offers and facilitates breaks.
- Point person kids can ask for help getting a break.
- Briefly covers for other staff who need a break.
- Alerts the access planner and access facilitator about activities that are causing problems.



# Break facilitator example

- Each day, bunk counselors rotate the responsibility of being their bunk's break facilitator at meals.
- Today, Lior notices during loud singing that Avi is covering his ears and looking miserable.
- Lior offers to take Avi outside for a break.
- Avi agrees, and they sit on the porch until the singing gets a bit less loud.

# Break facilitator example:

## Game Show Night

- The 7th and 8th graders are competing in a Game Show Night activity.
- Gabriella, the activity's break facilitator, notices that Alex seems to be having a hard time. He's rocking back and forth and covering his face.
- Gabriella offers Alex a break. Alex says that he doesn't want to miss the game and would rather stay in for now.
- Gabriella accepts that answer and tells Alex to let her know if he would like a break later.
- Afterwards, Gabriella lets the access planner know that something about the room or activity seemed to be overloading to some campers.

# Access is easier when you budget for it

- Every unanticipated expense can seem insurmountable
- An accessibility budget line-item can mean that access is not an emergency
- Programs overall and individual programs should have accessibility line items.



# The Matan Pledge

- I acknowledge that ability, disability and humanity coexist, and I pledge to see my students as they are without downplaying either.
- I will not look past their disabilities; I will instead seek to understand how their disabilities affect their life, learning and social experiences.
- I will not overlook their abilities; I will instead actively seek out their abilities and learn to teach them effectively.
- I will not overlook the humanity of my students; I will remember that they have individual interests and a perspective of their own and that they were each created b'tzelem Elohim – in the image of God.





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