Structured Flexibility

Narrator: A big part of Shutaf’s inclusion success is what we like to call “structured flexibility.”

Structured flexibility? Is that even a thing?

It is a thing. You see, when you’re building a program or creating a lesson plan, you’re thinking about your goals and how to meet them. Let’s call that your structure - your content and related activities, how you’ll break up the group, prepare and train your staff. You’ve got every detail thought through.

You're planning for success. But guess what - it doesn’t always go as planned!

What if…The kids won’t take part in the activity.
You had an unexpected cancellation - your guest teacher didn’t show up.
You’d booked a room but there’s a last minute change…
You can’t make these things up…..

What to do? Get into flexibility mode. When you’re flexible, you’re thinking out of the box. You’re ready to be more inclusive.

Don’t freak out. Don’t lose your cool. Don’t get stuck. The show must go on.

Counselor: That’s easy for you to say!

Narrator: Hold on, it may not be that hard to regroup. There are ways to be flexible within that structure that you originally built.
Don’t scrap everything and start from scratch.

Last minute changes might be frustrating, but they can also be moments for creative opportunity. You might need to pivot - you know, turn your attention towards the changes you need to make in the moment so you can succeed along with the group.

Inclusion? It’s all about being creative, allowing for difference and yes, flexible thinking.

You can do this.
Counselor: At Shutaf staff training, we’re taught to have activities at-the-ready in our back pocket. A card game, a couple of balls to play with outside if something in the program changes, ends early or isn’t going as well as we had hoped.

If I go out with a kid who needs a break, I always tell another staff member where I’m going. And it’s good to remember to check back with the group every so often, so we can all stay connected.

We learn how to take charge, run an activity, and handle a group. It’s an important part of our training. Alternate activities? They’re not just to fill time, they’re goal-based, related to the needs of our group.

Narrator: And maybe you thought that everyone was going to do the same thing at the same time.

What if they don’t? There too, you need to be flexible. Understand that not everyone will participate in everything. And maybe that’s okay.

Because you actually expected this. You expected the unexpected, and you built a flexible structure with clear goals and room for accommodation.

That’s why you have a Plan B. You thought about the different needs of each child in your group and how to engage them. You planned for choice. That’s structured flexibility.

Choice is really empowering for everyone. When you offer choices, you’re in the mindset that allows for difference. Then everyone can relax and be themselves while also being part of the group. That’s what it’s all about!