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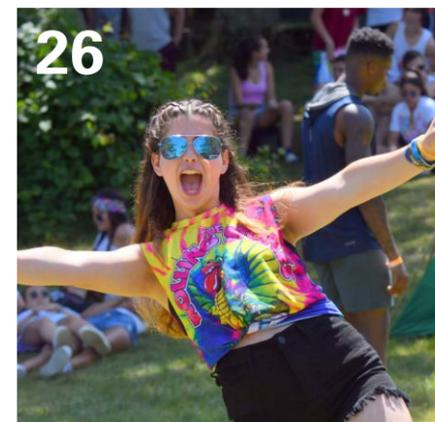
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ON THE COVER

Our cover photo — “Last Light” — is *Camping Magazine’s* 2020 Golden Lens Award Winner (see pages 74–75 for all award winners), courtesy of photographer Ben Cole, taken at the Camp Manitou for Boys.

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Camping Magazine focuses on critical topics and emerging issues that influence our readers and help them successfully own, administer, and/or direct their own camps. As the premier resource for camp professionals, *Camping Magazine's* primary responsibility is to present new programming ideas, the latest trends in camp, current legislative and risk management issues affecting camp management, and progressive information affecting child and youth development.

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TOM ROSENBERG
President / CEO

The Impact of Community

I HAVE BEEN SO DEEPLY INSPIRED by the way many summer camps across America came together virtually as a community online to sing, play, and connect during the COVID-19 coronavirus crisis. It was as if the summer of 2020 began in March this year. These virtual camp programs rekindled the spirit of connection and belonging for thousands of children, teens, and adults who were confined to their homes and, like many of us, filled with anxiety and fear. With everyone emotionally starving for human connection, these programs were tremendously therapeutic and restorative. They also illuminated a path forward toward greater community and humanity in the summer to come.

People are hardwired for connection. From the moment we are born, we spend our lives seeking loving, secure relationships with our family and friends. In times of crisis, the need for connection is perhaps greatest. The act of being together inspires us to reach out, share generously, and celebrate common values and kindred spirit. Perhaps one of the greatest lessons of COVID-19 was not to take in-person, human community and connection for granted. It reminded us to cherish the people, experiences, and connections we have at camp and find ways to extend that community and those values to the rest of our lives at home, school, and work.

With this issue of *Camping Magazine* being devoted to staff training and development, I have been reflecting on how our recent COVID-19 experiences might inspire everyone on camp staff this summer to lift up the power

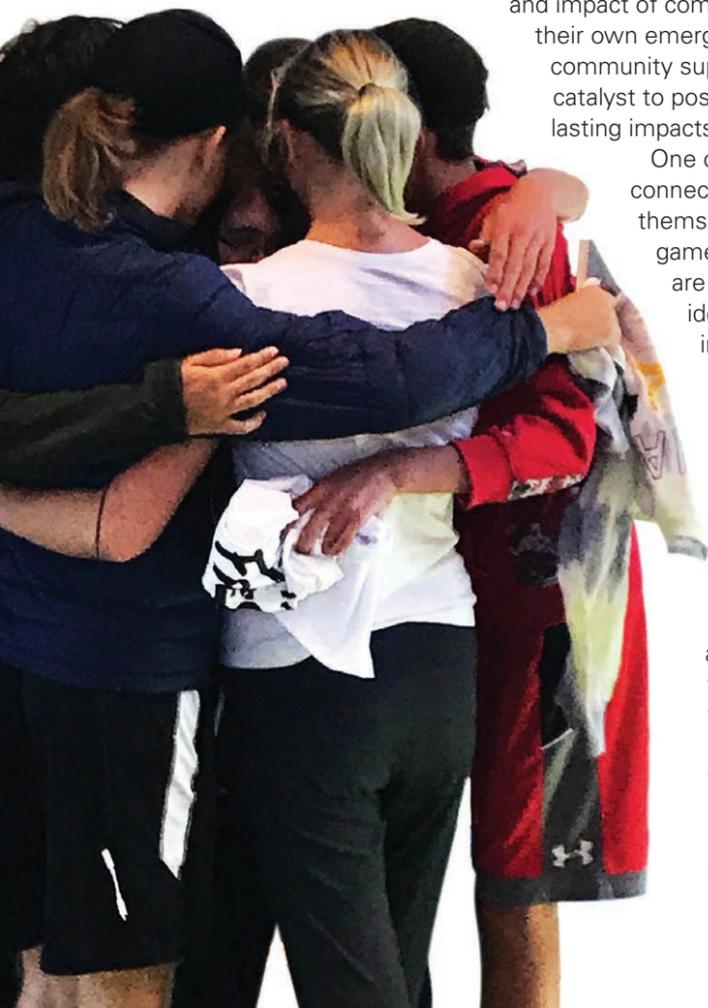
and impact of community in daily life at camp. Each camper comes to camp with their own emerging life story, unique perspectives, and experiences. Your camp community supports and guides them as they use their past experiences as a catalyst to positively impact the future communities they will go on to serve. The lasting impacts of camp experiences are powerful.

One of the greatest ways to engage your campers to deepen their connection to the camp community is to get them to share stories about themselves and causes they are passionate about. Get-to-know-you games and opportunities for creative expression through art and writing are great ways for them to share. Make a point of celebrating diverse ideas and critical thinking in these programs. Make sure the group is inclusive, emotionally safe, and accessible.

It is inspiring to watch thriving camper cultures develop over time into communities of action at camp and beyond. As a young boy, I learned about cultural differences, repairing the world, social justice, and servant leadership with my friends at camp — formative lessons I will always treasure. Writer and organizational expert Meg Wheatley is often quoted as saying “There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.”

How will you facilitate inspiring discussions with your campers about what is important to them this summer at camp? How will you work to help them become a community of leaders inspired to action? Few experiences in their young lives will immerse them in a human-focused, tech-free, near-peer-led adventure where they are encouraged to try new things, take positive risks, make mistakes, and be change-makers. Thank you for inspiring them to make the most of camp’s deep connections and community and to dream of the possibilities that lie ahead in their lives.

“ I have been reflecting on how our recent COVID-19 experiences might inspire everyone on camp staff this summer to lift up the power and impact of community in daily life at camp. ”



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Connectedness to Nature Linked to Happiness in Children

CAMP PROFESSIONALS have always known about the benefits of being out in nature — and now, a recent study has reaffirmed that belief with its findings linking connectedness to nature with happiness.

A study by Barrera-Hernandez, Sotelo-Castillo, Echeverria-Castro, and Tapia-Fonllem examined environmental psychology (EP), which looks at the relationships between behavior and the environment, and aimed to demonstrate “the relationship between connectedness to nature and sustainable behaviors, as well as the impact of these two factors on the perceived happiness of children” (2020).

The research showed that there is a relationship between feeling connected to nature and carrying out sustainable behaviors (altruism, equity, frugality, and pro-ecological behavior) (Barrera-Hernandez et al., 2020).

Participants showed the highest level of happiness when it came to their connectedness to nature (Barrera-Hernandez et al., 2020).

But interacting with nature has more benefits than just happiness. Another study shows that nature play may have positively impacted several children’s health and development outcomes, including physical activity, health-related fitness, motor skill development, cognitive learning, and social and emotional development (Dankiw et al., 2020).

According to the National Wildlife Federation (NWF), children are spending half as much time outside today as they did 20 years ago — the negative impacts of which are far-reaching. Reduced time in nature has been linked to the increased childhood obesity rate and declining levels of creativity, concentration, and social skills (2020).

The benefits of nature play, however, are significant: children who spend more time in nature are more physically active, more creative in their play, less aggressive, and demonstrate better concentration (NWF, 2020).

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New Camping Magazine Editorial Advisory Committee Member

SARA SCHMIDT has joined the Editorial Advisory Committee for *Camping Magazine*. Schmidt serves as administrative director and registrar for Green River Preserve in Cedar Mountain, North Carolina. Schmidt also manages the camper scholarship committee and serves as editor of Green River Preserve’s seasonal newsletter, *Whispers From The Preserve*. She will be a true asset to the EAC.

Schmidt steps into her role as Robin Galloway completes her second term on the committee. ACA would like to thank Galloway and Schmidt for their commitment to the quality of *Camping Magazine*.

Sufficient Sleep and Mental Health in Children

A NEW LARGE-SCALE ANALYSIS of sleep duration in children aimed to identify how sleep relates to psychiatric problems — like depression — cognition, and brain structure (Cheng et al., 2020). The study built onto a previous Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development (ABCD) study and found that dimensional psychopathology — depression, anxiety, impulsive behavior, etc. — in children was negatively correlated to sleep duration. Data showed that psychiatric problems, particularly depression, were significantly associated with short sleep duration a year after the original study period completed. (Cheng et al., 2020).

Studies like this show how important it is for children and young adults to get adequate amounts of sleep. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), insufficient sleep can also increase a child’s risk of developing other health problems such as obesity, diabetes, and injuries (CDC, 2020a).

The amount of sleep required varies based on a child’s age. Children ages six to 12 years old should receive nine to 12 hours

of sleep within a 24-hour period; ages 13 to 18 should get at least eight to 10 hours of sleep per 24 hours (CDC, 2020a).

The CDC recommends the following for a good night’s sleep (2020b):

- Go to bed at the same time each night and get up the same time each morning, even on weekends
- Make sure the room you’re sleeping in is quiet, dark, and relaxing
- Remove all electronics from the room
- Avoid large meals and caffeine before bedtime
- Exercise — being active during the day can improve sleep at night

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Obituaries

KEN ROSKOS

Ken Roskos passed away on January 27, 2020. He served as executive director of Red Oak Camp in Ohio for 43 years. Ken was 87.

LOIS A. CARLSON

Lois A. Carlson passed away on February 2, 2020. Lois was a longtime ACA member. She worked for Camp Fire USA and was a standards chair for ACA, Northland; a member of the ACA Council of Delegates; and an ACA accreditation visitor and trainer. Lois was 83.

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Anxiety — It Isn't Just a Camper Thing

Marcia Ellett

WHILE YOU MAY BE CALLED UPON

to help one or more campers in the throes of anxiety this summer, chances are they aren't the only ones feeling anxious. Whether it's graduating from one phase of your life to the next, starting a new job, experiencing a new environment, or the worldwide spread of a new virus, this year has held plenty of causes for anxiety. Unchecked, anxiety has a way of taking on a life of its own, which can have serious health and life consequences for sufferers.

According to Jessica Maples-Keller, PhD, and Vasiliki Michopoulos, PhD, of Anxiety.org, "It's important to note that everyone feels anxiety to some degree regularly throughout their life. Fear and anxiety are helpful emotions that can function to help us notice danger or threats that keep us safe and help us adapt to our environment." Disorders come into play and issues arise "when significant distress impairs your ability to function in important facets of life, such as work, school, or relationships" (Maples-Keller & Michopoulos, n.d.).

"Doctors don't completely understand what causes anxiety disorders," said *Healthline* writer Erica Cirino. "It's currently believed certain traumatic experiences can trigger anxiety in people who are prone to it. Genetics may also play a role in anxiety. In some cases, anxiety may be caused by an underlying health issue and could be the first signs of a physical, rather than mental, illness."

While anxiety symptoms can vary from person to person, some common symptoms include (Cirino, 2016):

- Feeling nervous, restless, or tense
- Feelings of danger, panic, or dread
- Rapid heart rate
- Rapid breathing or hyperventilation
- Sweating
- Trembling
- Weakness and listlessness
- Insomnia
- Difficulty focusing on anything other than what you're worried about

How you respond to anxiety when it strikes has a lot to do with your overall happiness and well-being, and taking small, deliberate steps can be the key to overcoming those feelings of unease and panic. Following are a handful of techniques (you'll find many more online) you can practice right now to gain control of your anxiety.

Don't Live on the Dark Side

Negativity abounds in traditional media and social media alike. If you already have anxiety, "your thoughts are more prone to being negative and fearful," said CalmClinic writer Micah Abraham. It's easy to get sucked into the mindset of always thinking about the worst-case scenario, but this is a slippery slope that often leads straight to flop sweat and dread.

"It's important to be in the know. But you don't need to obsess over the news," said NPR reporter Allison Aubrey (2020).

Psychologist Tamar Chansky, PhD, suggests you can combat worst-case-scenario thoughts by examining how realistic they are (Hughes, n.d.). For example, if you're nervous about being a first-time camp counselor, rather than think, "I'm going to be bad at this," say, "I'm nervous, but I went through staff training, so I'm prepared for this."

"Getting into a pattern of rethinking your fears helps train your brain to come up with a rational way to deal with your anxious thoughts," said WebMD author Locke Hughes (n.d.).

Avoid Avoidance

"Bouts of anxiety usually don't last very long, so try not to fight off your feelings of anxiety, but accept it and say to yourself that it's OK to be anxious," said Graham Davey, PhD (2018), in a *Psychology Today* article.

"Avoidance is arguably the main factor that allows anxiety to develop and propagate," Davey said. So, while avoiding things that are clearly dangerous, such as swimming in alligator-infested water, is good and sensible, avoiding experiences that most other individuals believe are safe may indicate you are giving in to anxiety (Davey, 2018).

"Avoiding the things that make you anxious never allows you to find out the reality of the threat — it may not be a threat at all. But you don't discover there's no monster in the closet if you continue to avoid opening the closet door," said Davey (2018).

Steady Your Breathing

"Anxiety can actually alter the way you breathe," said Abraham. "Those with anxiety tend to take faster breaths, often taking in more oxygen than they need. This is called 'hyperventilation' and it's responsible for many of the physical symptoms of anxiety attacks" (2018).

On the other hand, some people have a tendency to hold their breath when they're anxious. Neither breathing extreme will help calm you down. But taking deep, measured breaths will. Try inhaling slowly through your nose, holding your breath for about 10 seconds, and then slowly exhaling through your mouth.

Bernard Vittone, MD, said, "To make sure you're breathing correctly, place your hand on your diaphragm, just below your rib cage. Feel it rise with each inhalation and fall with each exhalation. Practice this technique regularly throughout the day for about a minute at a time, or any time you're feeling anxious" (Prevention.com, 2014).

Put Pen to Paper

Consider keeping a journal. According to PositivePsychology.com, journaling "is a form of self-expression that can lift and empower people to understand their complex feelings and find humor with it" (Ackerman, 2020).

Overall, journaling has been found to (Ackerman, 2020):

- Boost your mood
 - Enhance your sense of well-being
 - Reduce symptoms of depression before an important event
 - Reduce intrusion and avoidance symptoms post-trauma
 - Improve your working memory
- According to *Healthline*, "Writing down what's making you anxious gets it out of your head and can make it less daunting" (Hirschlag, 2018).

Furthermore, journaling can "make us more aware (and self-aware!) and help us detect sneaky, unhealthy patterns in our thoughts and behaviors," according to PositivePsychology.com. "It allows us to take more control over our lives and puts things in perspective" (Ackerman, 2020).

Practice Good Posture

Believe it or not, good posture can help relieve anxiety. Chansky said, "When we are anxious, we protect our upper body — where our heart and lungs are located — by hunching over." If you want to send your body the message that it is back in control, you can do so by pulling your shoulders back, standing or sitting with your feet apart, and opening your chest (Hughes, n.d.).

When It's More Than a Temporary Uneasy Feeling

"It's not always easy to tell when anxiety is a serious medical problem versus a bad day causing you to feel upset or worried," said Cirino, but consider a visit to your doctor if you feel (2016):

- You are worrying so much that it's interfering with your daily life.
- Your anxiety, fear, or worry is difficult to control and an ongoing source of distress.
- You are using alcohol or drugs to cope and are depressed.
- The cause of your anxiety is an underlying mental health problem

Remember, a little bit of anxiety can be a good thing. According to Prevention.com (2014), "It helps motivate you It also keeps you from meeting danger head-on. As part of the fight-or-flight response, anxiety causes your heart rate to increase and your muscles to tense should you need to act." However, if anxiety becomes a constant in your life and undermines your ability to function, then seek the help of a medical professional.

Marcia Ellett is the editor-in-chief of *Camping Magazine*.

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“...if you're nervous about being a first-time camp counselor, rather than think, "I'm going to be bad at this," say, "I'm nervous, but I went through staff training, so I'm prepared for this.”

Sesame: The Fastest Growing Allergy Threat

Kimberly Whiteside Truitt

FIFTEEN-YEAR-OLD Natasha Ednan-Laperouse and her father were flying from London to France on a British Airways jet in July of 2016. Natasha was eating a baguette purchased before boarding from the Pret a Manger bakery at London’s Heathrow airport, when she suddenly had difficulty breathing. Her father quickly injected her with two EpiPens, but Natasha succumbed to anaphylaxis, tragically dying in flight. Natasha’s cause of death: sesame seeds. These food allergens were not listed on the baguette packaging ingredient list (Doward, 2018).

immunologist Dr. Robert A. Wood, professor of pediatrics and chief of pediatric Allergy and Immunology at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, says that sesame allergy cases have risen more than any other food allergy type over the last two decades. Wood reported that sesame had already risen to be the top fourth or fifth allergen among his 4,000 clinic patients in 2010, and that sesame is now one of the top six or seven allergens in the US. Israel reports that sesame is one of the top two or three most common allergens

Labeling Dilemma in the United States

Finding sesame ingredients on US food labels can be burdensome because of its many names and the fact that sesame is hidden within dips, sauces, snack foods, and is a favored ingredient among ethnic foods internationally. Dr. Gupta has been an advocate for FDA required labeling of sesame as an allergen ingredient on food packaging. In the United States, the Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act (FALCPA) is the allergen labeling law. Currently, FALCPA does not require sesame or other seeds such as mustard to be listed on food labels, however, the FDA is considering this regulation (Federal Register, 2018).

According to a petition filed with the FDA by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, Australia, Canada, the European Union, and New Zealand all mandate the labeling of sesame on consumer food product packaging. This entity felt this fact provided the urgency and proof that the US should expediently follow suit (Center for Science in the Public Interest, 2018).

To date, Illinois is the only state to enact a state law requiring sesame to be listed on food packaging (Bloom, 2019). (snacksafely.com/2019/07/illinois-enacts-law-requiring-food-manufacturers-to-label-for-sesame)

British-governed countries England, Wales, and Northern Ireland have resolved to prevent further tragedies from consumption of sesame by mandating Natasha’s Law, named for the 15-year-old who died after eating a baguette with sesame ingredients. Natasha’s posthumous legacy is a fulfillment of her parents’ wishes and will be established by the summer of 2021. It requires all ingredients to be listed on food packaging within a two-year period (BBC News, 2019).

(Cronin & Stone, 2015).

A study led by Ruchi S. Gupta, MD, at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine of Chicago resulted in the discovery that 1.5 million US adults and children suffer from sesame allergies. Gupta’s study also indicated that half of those with a sesame allergy also had an additional allergy. This study, published in an August 2019 JAMA Network Open journal, also discovered that sesame allergy symptoms vary within individuals and may range from mild reactions like hives to severe reactions such as anaphylaxis, requiring an injection of epinephrine (Warren, Chadha, Sicherer, et al., 2019). Other sesame allergy symptoms include abdominal pain; facial flushing; itching in the eyes, throat, or mouth; swelling of the lips, face, tongue, uvula, and glottis; nausea; diarrhea; vomiting; coughing; asthma; wheezing; and difficulty breathing (Medical News Today, 2020).

“...sesame allergies have increased significantly globally, especially in the past two decades...”

Defining Sesame

Sesame allergy is the only known seed allergy, and the ninth most prevalent in the United States (SAGE Digest, 2020). Sesame seeds are cultivated tropical or subtropical annual herbs that develop within capsules or pods on flowering sesame plants. The world’s biggest producers of these minute organisms are China, India, and Myanmar (formerly Burma), followed by the US. Southern states produce the most sesame in the US (KUKI, 2020).

From One to Millions

A sesame reaction was first documented in the New York State Journal of Medicine in 1950 (Torsney, 1964). Since that documentation, sesame allergies have increased significantly globally, especially in the past two decades, according to a 2010 survey as reported by Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE, 2020). The rate of growth in the US is so significant that world-renowned

Accommodating Sesame Allergies at Camp

Just as in other food allergy accommodation, successfully meet the needs of your campers and fellow staff with sesame allergies by:

1. Identification

- Identification of campers with the allergen via camper registration/food allergy forms
- Consistent method of food allergy notification at meal and snack times (bracelet, card, color coded name tag, etc.)

2. Communication from:

- Administration to food service manager
- Food service manager to parents
- Administration to counselors, program staff who need to know for cookouts, etc.
- Administration to camp nurse
- Food service manager to food service staff

3. Vigilance

- Consistent and vigilant surveillance for allergen within foods. Read all labels.

As with other food allergies, sesame is also listed by other names and in many other forms. (See the Sesame Ingredient Avoidance List for more details.)

Nonfood Sesame Allergens

Certain cosmetics, medicines, and insect repellents also contain sesame or sesame-based products. Some of these items include sunscreens, lipstick, lotions, soaps, and hair products.

Sesame Ingredient Avoidance List

NAMES FOR SESAME

Ajonjoli, Ajonjolies
Alegria
Benne, Benne Seed or Bene Seed, Benniseed
Gingelly, Gingilly, Gingelly Oil, Gingilly Oil
Goma, Kura Goma (Japanese)
Gomasio, Gomashio (Sesame Salt)
Halva, Halvah, Halavah
Jai Jinedra (Black Sesame Seeds)
Milakai Powder
Pasteli
Sesame, Sesamo, Sesame Oil
Sesame Flour, Sesame Paste, Sesame Salt
Tajini, Tahini, Tahina, Tehina, Tahini Sauce
Sesamol, Sesomolina, Sesarmol
Sesamum Indicum (Latin)
S. Indicum, S. Radiatum, S. Schum, S. Thorum, S. Albumin
Sim Sim
Til (Hindi), Til Oil, Teel
Black Til

FOODS THAT MAY CONTAIN SESAME

Asian, Greek, and Middle Eastern Foods
Baba Ghanoush
Breads, Bagels, Breadcrumbs, Buns
Cereals, Chips, Crackers
Dressings, Gravies, Marinades
Energy and Protein Bars
Falafel
Flavor, Flavoring
Flavored Rice, Noodles, Risotto, Stir Fry
Granola, Granola Bars, Muesli
Herbs, Herbal Teas
Hummus
Natural Flavorings, Other Flavors
Pretzels, Rice Cakes
Salad Kits
Sauces
Seasonings
Seeds
Soups and Stews
Spices
Sushi
Tempeh
Tocopherols (Foods fortified with Vitamin E)
Turkish Cake
Vegetable Oil
Vegetarian Burgers
Wasabi

Note: If sesame is not listed for vague ingredients like “seeds” or “seasonings” you may need to call the manufacturer and ask if sesame was specifically used as an ingredient.

Nonfood Ingredients That May Contain Sesame

- **Cosmetics:** lipstick, lip balm, soap, shampoo, lotion, sunscreen, cleanser, brow liner, spa products, etc.
- **Repellents:** insect, snail, and slug
- **Over-the-counter medications**

These products may list any of the following ingredients:

- Sesame
- Natural, Organic, Unrefined, or Virgin Sesame (Seed) Oil
- Hydrogenated Sesame Seed Oil
- Sesamum Indicum (Sesame) Oil
- Unsaponifiables
- Sesamum Indicum (Sesame) Seed Oil
- Sodium Sesameseedate



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Kimberly Whiteside Truitt is former food service manager at Camp Gilmont and Camp Zephyr, and has served on Camping Magazine's Editorial Advisory Committee. Kimberly was a presenter at the 2018 North American Food Service and Maintenance Conference.



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CO-COUNSELOR MASH-UP

How to Work More Collaboratively — and Happily — With Your “Co”

BOB DITTER

Mariana and Jessica are exasperated with one another. Mariana thinks the girls they share responsibility for as co-counselors are way too noisy and messy. She is always the one who gets these rambunctious fifth graders to quiet down or finish their cabin cleanup chores. Because she is typically the counselor who speaks up first, the girls have begun to favor Jessica, whom they see as “nicer.” Jessica, who went to camp here as a camper, thinks that Mariana is too strict. She feels Mariana doesn’t understand that camp is a place where you get to “chill” — to take a break from the pressures of school and the “TEA” (the juiciest gossip, typically shared between friends on Snapchat and Instagram; it is a bonding tool for people who come together when they share it, and is usually about someone you know, but can also extend to celebrities, random internet scandals, and so on.). Jessica thinks Mariana needs to lighten up. Her response to Mariana, often delivered in front of the girls, doesn’t help the situation much. “It’s camp! Lighten up!” she says. This only makes Mariana fume.

Mariana and Jessica are fictitious, a co-counselor pair I invented out of a composite of tens of thousands of camp counselors I have worked with over the past 40 years. The challenges and secrets of working well together as co-counselors apply to most camp situations, no matter what gender you identify as or whether you work in a day camp or resident camp, or in a single-sex or coed camp. Indeed, working as co-counselors requires more preparation and time than most camps ever think to give you. Which is unfortunate, because how happy and successful your campers are — and how happy and fulfilled you feel at the end of camp — depends largely on how well you and your co-counselor(s) can collaborate and work together toward the same goals and values. After all, it is you, the counselors, who execute the camp program and interpret the values of camp directly to the campers.

The Critical Five

You and your co-counselor(s) can benefit from five critical parameters or personal tendencies by reflecting on and then sharing the following. These are the areas that will most directly impact the way the two (or three or four) of you work together with your campers and even with other staff members:

1. Do you tend to be an introvert or an extrovert?
2. Are you a night owl or a morning person?
3. Do you tend to have a high or low tolerance for noise, mess, and “organized chaos”?
4. What is your preferred style when it comes to planning things? Are you a go-with-the-flow kind of person, or do you prefer to spell it all out ahead of time?
5. What is your experience with and your go-to when it comes to discipline?

Knowing beforehand how you stack up in these areas and how your co-counselor(s) compares with you can help both (or all) of you to plan ahead and avoid being at odds with one another.

Introvert or Extrovert

Whether you tend to be an introvert or an extrovert may have a big impact on how you connect with people (campers and other staff), as well as how you go about recharging your batteries (by being alone or with other people) and how comfortable you feel taking the lead in various situations (Cain, 2012). The point in knowing your tendency on this measure is, again, so you can plan ahead with your co-counselors. For example, if you are both introverts, you are going to have to agree ahead of time on who will take the lead in a group situation with campers. You may also have to talk more intentionally about who is going to hang with the very active kids while the other is with the quieter kids. As I have often joked, camp was designed for extroverts in that everything is done in groups. You change together, do activities together, eat together, clean up together, fight together, and play and make up together! To be an introvert at camp means learning how to function as an introvert in an extroverted world.

How do you know if you tend one way or another? I have a 10-point questionnaire with a scoring system that serves as an activity to help you evaluate yourself. You can request it from me by emailing bobditter@gmail.com. In the meantime, here are the basic questions:

- Do you tend to rejuvenate and draw energy for yourself from time alone rather than from time with others?
- Do you do your best work alone?
- Do you worry, get anxious, and “rehearse” in your sleep when you have to stand in front of a group and give a talk or presentation?
- When you are at a party or social gathering, even if you are having a good time, do you find you take breaks from the group and head to the bathroom, step outside, or go into another room to be by yourself or one-on-one with just one other person?
- Do large crowds drain you rather than excite you?

- Does a lot of exposure to noise, light, activity, or other high levels of stimulation tire you out or leave you drained, spacey, or with a headache?
- When you were in school/college did you dread speaking up in class? Did you get flustered or have to work up your nerve to speak even if your points were solid and well received?
- Does sudden public attention in a group or social setting turn your face red?
- Do you have an active inner dialogue, and do you tend to ruminate a lot about your decisions or actions?
- Do you feel pressure to perform, “get out there,” or get ahead in your career when you would rather stay home or keep a lower profile?

The more you answer “yes” to these questions, the more on the introverted end of the spectrum you are. If you are more introverted, you will need to be even more deliberate about finding time to get away from others to recharge your batteries. This will take some planning ahead and coordinating with your co-counselors. Finding time to be by yourself at resident camp or resisting the draw of social engagements during the week at day camp can be a challenge.

If, like many people, you find that you tend to be more introverted but have learned to function well in an extrovert-oriented environment (like camp), you still need to find ways to get away from the crowds to renew your energy level.

If you tend toward the more extroverted end of the spectrum, your challenge is to figure out how to withdraw from the stimulating environment that camp is for most extroverts and get some rest. Otherwise, you may burn out before the end of the season.

Night Owl or Early Bird

People tend to be either night owls (they get a second wind late into the evening) or early birds (they love to be up early and have more energy at the start of the day). Your tendency to be one or the other will have a big impact on you and your co-counselors at camp. Early birds do better on those early morning day camp bus runs, or when it comes time to wake up the campers in the morning at resident camp. Night owls, on the other hand, are better suited for getting kids to bed and for those after-bedtime talks that sometimes arise with a homesick or upset camper who just can't get to sleep. If both you and your cabin co-counselor are in the same category, plan out how you will deal with those times when you are either both half asleep or both raring to go! If you are opposites, make sure you have compassion for your co-counselor when the time of day is challenging their circadian rhythm.

“...how happy and successful your campers are — and how happy and fulfilled you feel at the end of camp — depends largely on how well you and you co-counselor(s) can collaborate and work together toward the same goals and values.”



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“Laughter is the sound of success.”
 — Marc Honigfeld, Director, Trail's End Camp

Tolerance Level for Chaos

One of the most important characteristics for you and your co-counselor(s) to discuss is how each of you tolerates things like noise, activity level, and how chaotic things can get when working with children. A person with a lower tolerance for noise and mess is more likely than someone with a higher tolerance to step in and try to calm the kids down. This discrepancy can lead to all kinds of misunderstandings among co-counselors. Counselors with a lower tolerance level will step in more quickly and often feel like their partners are not doing their part to restore order. The campers themselves always notice this difference and may begin to favor the more tolerant counselors because they will feel less judged by them. This split can lead to one staff member not only feeling like they are working harder than the other, but that the other counselor is turning the campers against them. For this reason, reflecting on and sharing your tolerance level tendency is important to avoid unnecessary conflict.

Planning Ahead/Go with the Flow

Differences in planning style — the tendency to plan things ahead versus “winging it” — can also be a potential source of conflict. Let’s say that you and your co-counselor want to have a cabin or group meeting with your campers, and only one of you is the “go with the flow” type. A struggle around planning can adversely affect how that meeting will go. For example, are you clear about:

- What you want to cover and what you want to get out of the meeting?
- Who is starting?
- How you will explain the theme or purpose of the meeting to the campers?
- Who will be responsible for bringing up which points?
- How long the meeting will be?
- When the best time is to have the meeting?
- How and when you will end the meeting and who speaks last?

If one of you resists planning, you may find yourselves in the middle of the meeting going in different directions in front of the kids. “Surprises” may come up because you didn’t talk it out ahead of time — subjects that are unproductive or that you are not prepared to talk about. The point is to have enough of a dialogue with your co-counselor that you appear organized and on the same page in front of the kids. As I often say, surprises are for birthdays, not camp!

Discipline

You may never have thought about your discipline style before, or how you were disciplined growing up, but there are four general categories when it comes to how adults parent children (Bright Horizons, 2020):

AUTHORITARIAN

This is a kind of my-way-or-the-highway, strict style where the parents exert external control over their kids. This style of parenting often includes punishment and little flexibility. Communication is often one-way, from the parent down to the child without much listening or considering what the child is experiencing. Whatever the rules are in the home, they are strictly enforced and seldom explained. Kids are just expected to know and act accordingly.

PERMISSIVE

Permissive or indulgent parents mostly let their children do what they want and offer limited guidance or direction. Such adults are more like friends than parents. Communication is open, but these parents let children decide for themselves rather than giving direction or holding their kids accountable. Parents in this category tend to be warm and nurturing. Expectations are typically minimal or not set at all.

UNINVOLVED PARENTING

Uninvolved parents give children a lot of freedom and generally stay out of their way. Some

parents make a conscious decision to parent in this way, while others are less interested in parenting or unsure of what to do. An uninvolved parent lets a child mostly do what they want, probably out of a lack of information or, possibly, caring. This group of parents offers little nurturing and set few or no behavioral expectations.

AUTHORITATIVE PARENTING

Authoritative parents are reasonable and nurturing and set high expectations, which they articulate clearly and often. Children with parents who demonstrate this style tend to be self-disciplined and think for themselves. This style is thought to be most beneficial to children because the disciplinary rules are clear and the reasons behind them explained. Communication is open (two-way), ongoing, and appropriate to the child’s level of understanding. Authoritative parents and counselors tend to be nurturing, even while expectations and goals are high but stated clearly. As children get older, they may have input into their own goals.

As a counselor, you may have strong feelings, either positive or negative, about the way your parents disciplined you. These feelings will get stirred up when you encounter campers who, in a given moment, can’t self-regulate. For example, when campers are teasing one another and becoming hurtful or overly aggressive; or when campers aren’t cleaning up, either in a cabin or at an activity, and someone needs to step in and prompt them. You and your co-counselors must share with one another what your beliefs are with regard to your own default “parenting” styles. Even though you are likely not parents, you will be in situations where you will have to discipline your campers. Whether you have had similar parenting experiences or very different ones, you will have to discuss how you want to approach your campers so you are all on the same page. You don’t want your campers to get different messages from each of you about what is and is not OK at camp. Also, think about

the general style of parenting your campers have experienced back in their respective households. If the approach you and your co-counselor(s) have is strikingly different from the experiences your campers have had, you will have to help your campers make some adjustments to how things are run at camp.

Closing Thoughts

Working together with one or more co-counselors is as much an exercise in growth as any other part of camp. The most important aspect of a strong, positive co-counseling relationship is that you talk to one another. No one is right or wrong. Share your different backgrounds and experiences with one another and appreciate that another person’s experience — their “truth” — does not negate yours. It is simply different, and that will require *communication without judgment*. If things become tense and less workable for the two (or more) of you, ask a trusted senior staff member to facilitate a conversation to help you get on the same page. For a guide on the conversation you and your co-counselors can have before the campers arrive, email me at bobditter@gmail.com.

Bob Ditter is a licensed clinical social worker specializing in child, adolescent, and family therapy.

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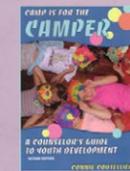
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SELF-CARE

in a Camp Environment:

A SURVIVAL GUIDE

MEREDITH STEWART AND KATIE JOHNSON

AS FORMER CAMP DIRECTORS, we've both had experiences where we pushed ourselves to the point where we weren't safe. Imagine this scenario:

It is the last day of camp. As a program director, you must make sure you finish the last round of activities without anyone getting hurt. Then you must make sure your campers get packed up, and that transportation is organized. You stay up all night long because the first bus is packed at 3:00 a.m., then at 5:30 you have to drive another bus two hours to get some campers to the airport. You haven't slept, sat down, or eaten properly in at least 24 hours. Sometimes you haven't even had time to go to the bathroom. Now you're driving a bus full of kids.

Sound familiar? While to outsiders that might sound exaggerated or extreme, we suspect it's familiar to many camp professionals. This scenario — or ones like it — happens at high-functioning, well-organized camps all the time. And note that while this example talks about a program director who is being pushed to the brink of exhaustion, counselors and staff are just as

vulnerable to overdoing it.

Increasingly, camps are realizing that we need to rethink some aspects of our culture. And we are by no means alone.

In recent years, the restaurant industry — famous for its macho culture and high-pressure lifestyle — has become extremely conscious of the need for self-care. From organizing workshops on sobriety to how to manage stress, restaurateurs have realized that having their top talent burn the candle at both ends is a self-destructive and self-defeating mode of operation.

The military is recognizing similar issues. Whether it's support for marriage counseling or better food in mess halls, there is recognition that no soldiers can perform at their best if they are not able to take care of their needs as a whole human being.

Camp is no different. It is often in a high-pressure environment where you are asked to make decisions that can affect a child's life, where sleep is sometimes minimal, and where alone time is scarce to nonexistent. Of course, camp is for the campers, but that doesn't mean you should

neglect taking care of yourselves. In fact, role-modeling self-care for your peers and for the campers is the first step to being the best possible counselor — and being the best possible counselor is essential for keeping campers safe.

In our work now, we regularly review the claims we receive to see if we can identify patterns or opportunities for improving safety. On reviewing our claims from the most recent summer, we noticed that both the severity and frequency of claims were disproportionately occurring toward the end of the season, or in situations where camp staff and counselors were tired, burned-out, and no longer able to focus on the trainings they received back when they were fresh, enthusiastic, and raring to go.

Obviously, camp leadership and management have an important role to play in creating cultures where self-care is not just permitted, but actively encouraged. However, you can contribute to both modeling that culture and advocating for it within the camp environment. Following are some suggestions for places to start.



Eat Regularly, Eat Well, and Drink Lots of Water

Nobody can function at their best if their body isn't fueled. And yet the chaos of the dining hall often means you spend more time controlling behavior or making sure everyone else is fed, that you don't really get a chance to look after your own needs. Take the following steps to make sure your body is getting the sustenance it needs:

- Select healthy foods, not just junk foods. That includes fruit, vegetables, and a good source of protein.
- Snacking doesn't have to mean a candy bar. Having fruit, proteins, or other on-the-go options available can help keep your energy up when time is short.
- Drink water, and lots of it. Whether you take a water break along with campers or set a routine to drink a full glass of water with every meal, staying hydrated protects you — and it models safe behavior for campers too.
- Save the cheers for later. Yes, you need to make sure that little Jimmy is eating his greens and Kim and Kayla aren't fighting again, but you also need to make sure that you get time to eat properly and recharge. If that means saving the cheers or songs until after everyone has had the opportunity to eat, so be it. You can't cheer well on an empty stomach anyway.



Get Some Sleep by Any Means Necessary

Of all the things our body needs to be healthy, sleep may be the most challenging in a camp environment — especially for staff and counselors who are expected to supervise cabins when campers are asleep. The following suggestions may help to mitigate that problem:

- Use your down time wisely. Be aware of how much sleep you get at home, and find ways to make up for lost sleep when you can. If that means going to bed when campers do, then go ahead and do that. It may actually be necessary to get more sleep at camp; it's busy and hot and your body heals and recharges when you are sleeping.
- Shape your environment. If you can't get sleep in the cabin environment, talk to camp leadership about finding alternative spaces for staff to nap.
- Watch the stimulants. Yes, coffee is key to surviving camp for many of us. But be aware of how coffee or other stimulants may be impacting your sleep patterns. Consider going without if you need to.



Fear the FOMO

Camp is exciting, and there is always something going on. But you can't do it all. Be sure to pay attention to your own impulses if you are concerned about missing out on a beach trip or a late-night movie. Use your time off wisely. Refill your energy bucket during time off so you can be the best for your campers when you return.



Emotional and Spiritual Well-Being Matters Too

All of us need to recharge not just our bodies, but our minds and hearts too — whether that is through prayer, meditation, simple reflection, working out, running, or a quiet walk in the woods. Regardless of faith or cultural traditions, each of us can benefit from time out for nurturing our inner well-being. Here are some ideas for doing that:

- Reflect on what you need back home and then replicate. If you

regularly attend church, temple, mosque, or synagogue; if you talk to your mom daily; or if you practice yoga regularly; find ways to replicate that experience within the camp space. You might need to get creative, talking for longer once a week, or holding an informal prayer session or meditation group with friends.

- Build a support network, and don't be afraid to reach out. Being away from camp means being away from your usual network of friends, family, and mentors. Look to build

a supportive group of friends — and try to be that friend for others. Don't be afraid to reach out to leadership if you are feeling lonely.

- Keep an eye on mental health. A growing number of camps are offering Mental Health First Aid training to spot campers, counselors, or other staff who may be in distress. Take these trainings if available, and keep a close eye both on your own mental well-being and on those around you. Be sure to reach out if you feel like somebody is struggling.

Take Care of the Basics

Some of us are more open about the intimate workings of our bodies than others. Yet making sure that you are taking care of your body means paying attention to those details. This includes:

- **Regular bathroom habits.** You're in a strange environment with less privacy than you might be used to. Make sure you're going to the bathroom regularly — and if you're not, be sure to eat fiber and/or talk to leadership about finding more privacy to do what you need to do.
- **Hygiene matters.** There are plenty of jokes about how bad we all smell once camp is over, but we don't need to go to extremes. Washing hands, bathing regularly, and generally taking care of your body will help you feel refreshed and keep illnesses at bay. Your

fellow staff and counselors will appreciate it too.

- **Ask for what you need.** Whether it's feminine hygiene products, deodorant, or a fresh toothbrush, if you need supplies to help look after your body, do not be embarrassed to ask. (You will not be the only one.)
- **Keep up with medication.** If you take any medications or vitamins, be sure to keep up with that routine as recommended by your physician. If you have the opportunity for a pre-camp physical, or to check in with your camp's health care provider, that's a great time to check in with the doc about the physical, mental, and emotional stresses of being a busy camp counselor. Elite athletes achieve incredible things. And they go through an awful lot of pain and challenges to do so. But they are only able to

do so because they are careful about how they treat their bodies and their minds.

At some point this summer, you will hit a moment when you are tired, hungry, dehydrated, or all three. Your ability to make decisions for yourself will be challenged, not to mention your ability to make decisions for the campers in your care. The reality of camp is that it is a 24/7 endeavor. It takes a lot of time and energy to make it all work. Food, water, and rest — those are the basics. And they are central to being able to deliver on everything else. This is a marathon, not a sprint. So be sure to fuel up accordingly so that you are performing at your best. That way, you will be able to provide campers with the positive, safe experience they deserve.



Checklist for Self-Care

Following is a set of suggestions for getting the most out of your camp experience while looking after yourself and others. Consider printing this as a reminder and hanging it in your locker or cubby:

- Get eight hours of sleep.
- Shower daily (the lake/pool doesn't count).
- Wash your hands before eating and after using the restroom.
- Take 10: Find 10 minutes a day to pray/meditate/read/run — whatever activity feeds your soul.
- Consider journaling or making notes about your day.
- Say something kind to at least three people.
- Reach out to different people and make new connections each day.
- Drink at least 64 ounces of water (more if possible, especially in hot climates and when on active assignments).
- Wear sunscreen.
- Take care of your feet! Wear the right shoes for the activity.
- Take your meds/vitamins.
- Eat three well-balanced meals a day.
- Choose healthy snacks.
- Return from your time off rested.

Meredith Stewart and Katie Johnson both serve as risk consultants for The Redwoods Group, a mission-driven social enterprise that uses insurance to prevent harm. Prior to joining The Redwoods Group, Meredith Stewart was involved with YMCA Camp Seafarer and YMCA Camp Kanata, both in North Carolina. Meredith can be reached at mstewart@redwoodsgroup.com.

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KIM AYCOCK, MST

AS YOU CAN PROBABLY IMAGINE

and were most likely told in your interview, working at camp requires a lot of energy and enthusiasm. This is 110 percent true. Camp is, without a doubt, a place where these two attributes can be found at very high levels. You may be wondering just how much of them are needed on an individual or daily basis. Chances are, you will hear on multiple occasions throughout the summer from camp leadership that staff are lacking energy and enthusiasm. But high levels of both are neither realistic nor sustainable (or desirable) all the time.

Beginnings and endings of the camp day, activities, mealtimes, and special events each call for varying levels of these vital commodities. What camp directors really want you to have is an appropriate level of energy and enthusiasm, depending on what the situation calls for. Stick around for some guidance on how to find your “sweet spot” of each, as

well as an effective system to gauge and monitor your own energy and enthusiasm for different situations in the camp schedule — to maintain a manageable pace all summer long.

It wasn't until last summer that I really put some brainpower into thinking about the relationship between energy and enthusiasm. Wondering, “How are the two related? Does high energy always mean high enthusiasm? Is low energy usually accompanied by low enthusiasm? Is it possible to have high energy but low enthusiasm or vice versa?” I imagined various situations at camp, and I came to the conclusion that equal levels of energy and enthusiasm do not always go hand in hand. Let me explain.

According to the Oxford Online Dictionary (2020), energy is “the strength and vitality required for sustained physical or mental activity.” When I think of having energy at camp, I envision someone who has get-up-and-go, is full of pep, and exudes spirit. Enthusiasm is defined as “intense and eager enjoyment, interest, or approval (Oxford Online Dictionary, 2020). Someone who depicts eagerness, passion, and zest paints a clear picture of having enthusiasm at camp. Energy and enthusiasm together can be a dynamic duo.

Opening day of each camp session is universally a time when staff are expected to exhibit a high degree of both energy and enthusiasm. Actively meeting and greeting campers and/or parents by giving a big smile, making eye contact, offering a friendly handshake, and taking the initiative to help unload the car or assist with a backpack signifies high energy.

You can express a high level of enthusiasm on the first day of camp by:

- Knowing something about each of your campers before they arrive to make them feel welcome
- Helping campers make connections with each other
- Anticipating questions by letting campers know what is happening next
- Setting expectations with the group so they begin to feel a sense of being comfortable and safe

High energy and enthusiasm will put kids and their parents at ease as campers embark on their summer adventure.





On the other hand, low energy does not necessarily indicate someone is lacking in enthusiasm. At mealtimes, for example, it is usually not desirable for campers to be bouncing off the walls while eating. Having a calm demeanor, which may seem like low energy to an outsider looking in, may be just what is needed. Being engaged with the campers during meals, taking care to ask about their day, making sure each person gets a chance to take part in the conversation, and following up with thoughtful observations or additional questions is precisely what makes for a peaceful setting during meals. High energy (even pounding on the tables) may be invited back to the scene when everyone has finished eating and is ready to sing favorite camp songs.

Sitting off to the side and disengaging altogether is a prime example of low energy and low enthusiasm. Directing campers to clean up the cabin while sitting on your own bed is a sure way to send a message of "Do as I say, not as

I do." Teaching basketball or other activity from a seated position and letting campers just play without any instruction or demonstration robs them of opportunities to gain or improve their skills. Hanging out with counselor friends instead of your camper group takes the focus away from your number-one priority, compromises supervision protocols, and falls into the category of low energy/low enthusiasm.

Fundamentally, there is no scenario at camp where low energy and low enthusiasm are on the menu. If you find yourself struggling to muster both on a regular basis, either a break (time off) is in order (with permission), or a trip to the health center may be a good idea to see if these symptoms are related to your overall well-being. Also, think about how your lack of energy and enthusiasm affects other staff. Are your coworkers having to pick up your slack and carry the weight because you don't or can't? Everyone has a bad day now and then (even at camp); however, if off days are the norm for you, the greater camp community will undoubtedly be affected.

So, how do you manage the levels of energy and enthusiasm appropriate for different situations within the typical camp day? How do you find your sweet spot so you can last for the marathon of camp and not the sprint? You can probably relate to the charging battery icon on our devices that we rely on to signify how much "juice" is left (or used) as a guide for monitoring your own energy and enthusiasm reserves.

- Being fully charged (100 percent) means you are "rockin' it" and are spot on with energy and enthusiasm as called for by the situation.
- Seventy-five percent indicates appropriate levels of energy and enthusiasm and that you are "pretty darn good" for the given circumstances.
- Fifty percent says you are "OK, but not stellar."
- At 25 percent, your fading energy and enthusiasm are not where they need to be for the conditions.

- At 0 percent, you are really struggling; your energy and enthusiasm are nowhere close to what they need to be for what the situation requires.

Using this battery-charging analogy, it becomes easy to recognize what the various levels look like so that you can adjust accordingly and find your sweet spot for each camp activity. Starting with the beginning

of the day, energy and enthusiasm should be high. What does "rockin' it" look like? You arrive early to day camp so you are set to greet campers as they are dropped off. Give each camper a warm welcome and share exciting things about the day ahead. At sleepaway camp, rise before your campers and be ready to help them start their days (getting out of bed and dressed, making their beds,

You can probably think of situations when high energy is not always accompanied by high enthusiasm. In the camp context, you may discover folks who bring a lot of energy or momentum to an activity or task, such as cabin cleanup or putting things away at the end of a class, but it is not channeled in a way that rallies the troops to take action in a positive direction.

In those cases, while there is a certain boisterousness to the mood or even a lot of laughter and humor, there is also a message being sent to campers that says, "I really don't want to do this, and I may not really care about the impact this will have on the greater camp community." I see it as a disconnect; the energy is there, but the enthusiasm is clearly missing the mark.

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“ Being fully charged means you are “rockin’ it” and are spot on with energy and enthusiasm as called for by the situation. ”



packing for the morning’s activities, engaging in cleanup, heading to breakfast, etc.).

Starting the day at “OK, but not stellar” looks like getting to day camp with little time to spare and taking campers to their first stop for the morning with minimal interaction. At overnight camp, you get up with your campers and half-heartedly help them get prepared for the day ahead. If you are really struggling in the morning, you most likely arrive late to camp or are up after your campers and rely on them to take care of themselves and prepare for the upcoming day.

“Rockin’ it” with energy and enthusiasm in activities means you arrive ahead of your campers (if possible), structure a well-planned lesson, prepare supplies and equipment so they are out and ready to be used, and engage with campers throughout the activity period. (As examples, think in the water during swim instruction,

standing up and demonstrating proper shooting stance at archery, sitting at the table and engaging with campers for arts & crafts, etc.) “OK, but not stellar” resembles getting to the activity around the same time as campers, having a loose idea or plan for the lesson, and exhibiting average engagement with the campers. Arriving late to activity periods, winging the lesson without any preplanning or thought, and having minimal to no engagement with the campers is a sure sign that you are “struggling” with energy and enthusiasm.

Meals, as previously mentioned, are typically times for a sweet spot of low energy and high enthusiasm. In addition to connecting with campers while enjoying a meal, “rockin’ it” also shows that you are modeling and enforcing a civilized eating experience with basic manners (saying “please” and “thank you,” waiting until everyone is served before starting, staying seated

unless excused, etc.) and engaging in conversations with campers and relating to their interests (instead of conversing with staff on adult topics).

“OK” in terms of enthusiasm during mealtime may reflect partial engagement with campers with little follow-up beyond surface-level interactions and paying average attention to camper manners and noise level. If your battery is lacking in this area, campers will converse with each other and throw table manners and volume control out the window while your attention is elsewhere.

Special events generally call for both high energy and high enthusiasm when calibrating your sweet spot. Color War, Capture the Flag, and other popular large-group or all-camp activities usually fit into this category. You need to rock this — motivate your group, cheer for and encourage team members, and keep the peace. Functioning at this level makes the activity more fun for the campers and for you. If you are mostly engaged, but your body language says you would rather be someplace else, campers will pick up on this vibe. If your battery is dead for these events, the campers will certainly take charge (for good or bad) and will often struggle themselves to make it through without conflict. Your team’s dysfunction will make it clear

that you have checked out.

The end-of-the-camp-day sweet spot is another time for low energy and high enthusiasm. Parents will greatly appreciate it if campers are sent home, either on the bus or with a family member, having had a great day at camp and eager to come back tomorrow. Consider giving campers talking points for when they share about their day or questions for parents that will engage campers beyond yes or no responses.

At sleepaway camp, make sure campers wind down before bed; a good night’s sleep is important for them and for you. Counselors who rock it at bedtime actively facilitate getting ready for lights out by having a system in place for campers to get cleaned up, change into pajamas, and brush their teeth. Check in with campers as a group or individually to find out highlights and growth opportunities from each exciting day.

If you are not totally on top of the bedtime routine, or if you’re operating at close to 0 percent, campers may be left to their own devices while getting ready for bed. That means you are not being vigilant to camper actions and interactions.

As depicted here, different situations in a typical camp day call for varying levels of energy and enthusiasm. Your energy level will

vary throughout the day, but your enthusiasm should remain high to provide campers with the most engagement and the best possible experience. Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Nothing was ever achieved without enthusiasm.” He was right! Monitoring your levels of energy and enthusiasm (see chart) will help you discover your sweet spot for each time period as you move through the days and weeks ahead and adjust accordingly. Doing so will also make it easier to find and maintain a realistic pace all summer long!

Discussion Questions:

1. How are energy and enthusiasm related? Give examples of both high and low energy paired with high enthusiasm at camp.
2. How can high energy and low enthusiasm be detrimental to the camp community?
3. What should you do if you notice that you are consistently struggling to maintain appropriate levels of energy and enthusiasm?

Kim Aycock, MST, has 30+ years of experience developing young people with skills robots are unable to do. Blending the talents of a master teacher with the knowledge of a seasoned camp expert, Kim ignites the learning for varying levels of campers and staff worldwide. Kim speaks professionally at regional and national conferences, presents webinars, contributes regularly to Camping Magazine and ACA blogs, and serves as cochair of ACA’s Project Real Job Committee. More information can be found at: kimaycock.com. Kim may be contacted at kimdaycock@gmail.com.

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CAMP DAY					
What It Looks Like	Rockin’ It! Spot On For Situation	Pretty Dam Good: Mostly Appropriate	Doing OK: Not Stellar	Fading: Not Where You Need To Be	Struggling: Lacking In A BIG Way
Beginning Of Day					
Activities					
Meals/ Snacks					
Events					
End Of Day					

In the Care of Other People's Children, Part 3

Supervision Tips for Frontline Staff

DIANE TYRRELL, CCD, MA ED

MOST ACCIDENTS INVOLVING CAMPERS occur in program, living, and common areas — typically when campers are (or were supposed to be) under the supervision of frontline camp staff such as cabin counselors, program staff, and activity-area supervisors. If this describes your role, this makes sense because you spend the most time directly with campers, including during program activities, mealtimes, and over night. As such, your day-to-day decision-making and supervision is a primary control for managing risk.



Unfortunately, many camper accidents occur as a direct result of frontline staff making poor decisions, specifically in areas of safety or supervision, putting campers at risk. As a frontline staff member, it is important to understand how your actions, decisions, or judgments affect a camper's safety and well-being, or the quality of the program.

Every decision you make (or fail to make) or action taken (or not taken) can be the difference between a camper getting hurt — physically or emotionally — or having a great time.

You are responsible for making sure that no camper is left unsupervised. Camp activities are rarely static, and campers are going to be energetic and often in perpetual motion — so supervision should never be passive. Rather, supervision is an active skill. And active supervision requires focused attention and intentional observation of campers at all times.

“Position yourself so you can easily and continuously observe all the campers in your care. Consistently implement surveillance strategies such as watching, counting heads, and listening.”

Be Where the Action Is

Staff should always be in close physical proximity to wherever the campers are. Position yourself so you can easily and continuously observe all the campers in your care. Consistently implement surveillance strategies such as watching, counting heads, and listening. In situations where you should not be visually observing campers for child protection reasons, such as when campers are showering or changing, stay within hearing range to remain aware of what is going on (or otherwise follow your camp's policies).

Set up the environment and position yourself in a location so that you are easily accessible to campers. For some activities, that means always being set up and prepared for rescue/emergency response in a quick and effective manner. Consider how long it will take to respond to campers from that distance. Stay close to campers who may need additional support. As applicable, keep spaces between staff and campers clear and free of equipment, etc., with nothing blocking visual surveillance or in the way of potential emergency response.

Stay Mentally Focused and Engaged

In addition to being physically present, you should also be mentally engaged without any distractions. Avoid anything that distracts you from paying attention to your duties — conversations with other staff, use of electronics or headphones, etc.

Pay Attention to Interactions Between Campers

Watch for cliques, kids getting left out, bullying, and other problematic behaviors. What are they doing with — or to — each other? Is it appropriate? Is it emotionally safe? Is it physically safe? Is there potential for harm? Is there a way to make it safer? Is everyone included? Or is there a child being left out?

Count Your Campers

Staff are expected to always be able to account for the campers

in their care. Continuously scan the activity/area to know where everyone is and what they are doing. Regularly account for all your campers by visually identifying each child and doing head counts. This is especially important during transitions between activities; count campers when departing the cabin/activity area and again when arriving at the next location to make sure no one was left behind.

Listen

Staff should always be within hearing distance. Staff who are listening closely can often identify signs of potential danger. Specific sounds or the absence of them may signify reason for concern. A group of campers who suddenly fall silent is a good indicator that someone may be up to no good. As applicable (and appropriate), enforce keeping room doors open/ajar, and eliminate any barriers to being able to hear campers, including loud music or headphone use.

Anticipate Camper Behavior

Use what you know about your campers — such as their individual interests, personalities, behavior challenges, issues, skills, etc. — to predict what they will do, and plan ahead to counter any negative or unsafe behaviors. As applicable, use any information provided about the camper, such as medical, mental, emotional, or social health issues to anticipate behavior. Examples of potentially unsafe behaviors include wandering off or not controlling emotional impulses when they get upset, aggression, fighting, or dangerous risk-taking. Staff who know what to expect are better able to “get ahead of the problem” and protect campers from harm. This may include helping campers develop strategies for dealing with issues to deter or prevent unsafe situations. It is not expected that a week at summer camp will cure behavioral problems. However, if you can anticipate the cause, it can help reduce or prevent associated risk issues.

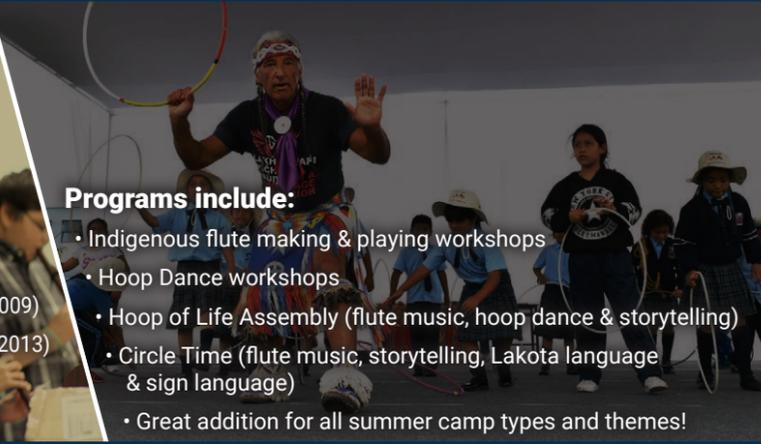


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Maintain Clear Rules and Boundaries for Behavior, and Be Consistent

Beware of trying to cut campers slack on the rules, especially with the intention of getting them to like you better. Failure to address/correct behaviors sends the message that rules are not really rules. Failure to correct behaviors when they occur sends a message to the other campers that the behavior is OK. And the perception that the behavior is OK perpetuates the behavior and may also cause campers to question your credibility and perhaps even challenge you further. This can become a critical issue when the rules pertain to camper safety or impact supervision.

It's OK to Set Limits, Redirect, or Say No

As camp staff, it's your job to make decisions based on what is appropriate and safe, which is sometimes contrary to what is

popular and attractive to the campers. Yes, you want to make the campers happy and it can be difficult to tell them they can't do something, but safety should always be the first priority. Enforce rules and regulations to prevent injuries; don't succumb to camper pressures — and know how to respond when campers try to negotiate or manipulate you.

While staying consistent with your camp's mission and policies, practice consistent limit setting, as well as camp-acceptable ways to say no or otherwise redirect campers. This may include offering an acceptable alternative or using a calm explanatory approach in redirecting campers to a more appropriate activity.

What Would Their Grownup Say?

Possibly one of the easiest and most effective tools to evaluate your decision-making is to imagine that the camper's parent(s)/guardian(s) were standing right there watching.

Would you make the same decision? Would you say what you just said? Would you behave in the same manner? If you wouldn't do it with a child's parent watching, then you shouldn't do it.

Personal Behavior and Consequences

When caring for other people's children, your conduct must establish and maintain an environment that supports the campers' physical and emotional safety. For some, the social aspects of working at camp can be a significant challenge — and *really* easy to overdo. Along with getting enough sleep, it's important to keep the partying under control. You won't be able to bring your best self if you are exhausted or impaired. Further, the consequences of not being 100 percent on the job can literally become a life or death issue for the campers in your care. Don't do something dumb that jeopardizes kids' safety or the reputation of the camp — or that may haunt you for

the rest of your life. If your social activities are impacting your ability to perform your job duties, odds are you won't have those duties for long; no responsible camp is going to tolerate staff who are drunk, stoned, high, or hungover while in the care of other people's children.

Personal Well-Being

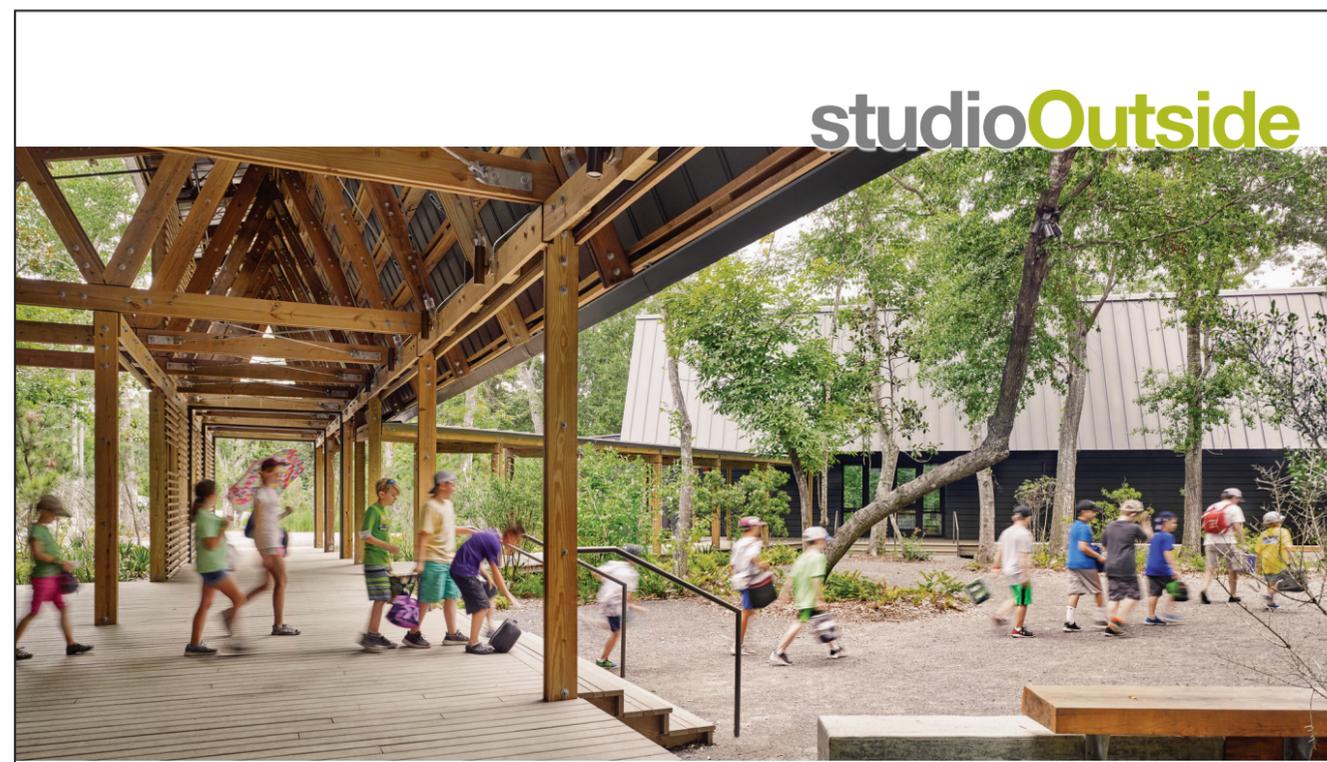
Everything from the long hours and heat to camper interactions and the constant need to "be on" can take a toll. Factors such as stress and exhaustion can significantly impact your ability to maintain high-quality supervision of campers. As much fun

as the staff social scene can be, it's critical to maintain a healthy balance between work time, downtime, and play time. As permitted, try to go to bed when your campers go to bed — even if it's before curfew — and sleep during rest periods whenever possible. Sleep during your time off. Sleep on your days off. Be intentional in taking your time off, and make sure to take time away from the camp, campers, and/or your coworkers. While it may seem fun for the first week or so of camp, no one can sustain burning the candle at both ends for the duration of the season — and your goal is to shine brightly, not to burn out.

Diane Tyrrell, CCD, MA Ed, has over 25 years of professional experience working within the camp, youth development, and education fields with for-profit and nonprofit camps and organizations. Diane is the owner and director of Chef Camp, a residential culinary immersion program for teens, and CEO of Frog Pond Consulting, providing integrated solutions to help meet ever-changing marketplace challenges for universities, private schools, camps, recreational facilities, and nonprofit organizations. She can be reached at dianetyrrell@gmail.com.

Discussion Questions

1. How would you assess your ability to remain focused on and engaged with your campers? Is there anything you can begin doing today that would improve that ability?
2. You are paying attention to your campers' interactions during an outdoor activity and realize several of your campers are being excluded. What actions might you take to make sure everyone is feeling included and actively participating?
3. What are some actions you can take to make sure your campers are clear about the rules?



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7 TIPS

FOR WORKING WITH
EXCEPTIONAL CAMPERS

AUDREY MONKE, MA, AND DEBBIE REBER

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REGARDLESS OF THE CAMP where you have chosen to spend your summer, many campers you'll work with will be "differently wired." In fact, one in five kids have ADHD, dyslexia, giftedness, autism, anxiety, or some other type of neurodivergence. The exceptional kids you'll lead this summer may have unique challenges that can impact their experience at camp both positively and negatively.

Being prepared for kids with neurodivergences, and learning some effective counseling strategies, can make the difference between these campers having a disappointing or a successful camp experience. As their leader and guide this summer, you can be instrumental in helping differently wired campers have as positive a camp experience as their neurotypical peers.

These exceptional kids may arrive at camp accustomed to living in a world that doesn't embrace who they really are. They may never have felt the sense of belonging they desperately need to thrive. At school and in other settings, they likely haven't always received support to make friends and to feel they are a valued part of a community.

This summer at camp can be life-changing for your differently wired kids, because it could be the first time — under your leadership and mentorship — that they experience the acceptance and belonging every human needs.

Some of these kids will arrive at camp and in your group or activity with a formal diagnosis, while others may not. In some cases, you and your camp may have useful information from the parents ahead of time about how to support their child. It is not your job to diagnose, but it is your privilege to take steps to help each of your campers — including those with neurodivergences — have a positive camp experience.

Here are some simple guidelines to bear in mind.

1

Gather Information and Resources

If the parents have provided information about their child, read through and familiarize yourself with the camper's needs and what has been helpful to them in other settings. Ask questions and seek guidance from experienced camp leaders who have worked with other neurodiverse campers. If you notice that a camper seems different from neurotypical kids, and you haven't been provided with any information about them, don't panic! Ask your camp director or other experienced staff members for guidance. They likely have resources to help, regardless of whether the parents have provided information or there is a formal diagnosis. They can also contact the parent or guardian to request more information.

2 Have an Open Mind about Timelines

Many differently wired kids develop asynchronously, so their chronological age may be out of sync with their emotional or intellectual age. For instance, a neurologically atypical child may be reading Nietzsche but struggle with simple social interactions or lack the coordination to tie shoelaces or catch a ball.

Dropping the expectations surrounding differently wired campers' timelines will take the pressure off them and make room for practicing and developing their fledgling skills in an emotionally safe way.

3. Assume Lagging Skills, Not Bad Behavior

Most disruptive behavior by differently wired children isn't purposefully designed to be bad or create problems — it's the campers' way of communicating needs. For example, perhaps they don't know what to do or how to make a better choice. Perhaps they are processing big, difficult emotions, such as anxiety or embarrassment, and they don't have the emotional regulation strategies to move through them in a more positive way.

Rather than focusing on discipline or punishment, get curious about what is at the root of the behavior, and talk with the camper about how to address that core issue.

4 COMMUNICATE ABOUT BEHAVIOR IN YOUR GROUP

Communicate with the other campers in your group about behaviors they might see and how they can help ensure a positive camp experience for everyone.

Neurodiverse kids often benefit from having an opportunity to explain their needs to their peers. Alternatively, the camper's parent or you as the counselor may have permission to let the other campers know how to be a good friend to their differently wired campmate. It's always best to focus on what behaviors other campers might notice and what peer behavior can be most helpful, as opposed to talking about diagnoses.

For example, you might say something like: "Suzie is really interested in astronomy and has

a lot she wants to share with us. Sometimes she has a lot to say on the topic, and she may not notice when others start to lose interest. Because it's important to her that she shares, let's give her time at each campfire to share some of what she knows. When you'd like to change the subject, Suzie responds positively when her friends kindly say, 'Suzie, I'd like to talk about something other than astronomy now.'"

Or you might say, "Competitions can feel very stressful for Justin, and if his team loses, he could get upset and act like a sore loser. Instead of getting frustrated with Justin, he'll feel better more quickly if we give him a few minutes to calm down and then invite him to do another activity with us."

5 Ask Questions and Seek Support as Needed

If this is your first time working with neurodivergent campers, you may find yourself unsure about how to help a camper who's having a rough time. Remember that you have a team of experienced leaders at your camp who have likely worked with other neurodiverse kids and have extra resources and knowledge to share with you. Ask around and get advice for how to problem-solve challenges in a way that fosters a deeper connection and understanding that will benefit the whole group.

6

PRACTICE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR AND GROUP MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

While this approach benefits all campers, it's especially important for your differently wired campers, many of whom may struggle with low self-esteem or feel insecure about their neurodifferences. They also can be extremely aware of your cues — sensing your frustration more acutely than other campers.

As a rule, lead and support all your campers, including those with some kind of neurodiversity, by:

- Focusing on your campers' strengths. Point out and talk with them about cool and unique things you've observed. As you interact with your campers, see what they bring to the group. A high-energy camper can really add to the fun in your group. Let them know you appreciate how they get everyone pumped up for an activity.
- Catching all your campers doing things right. Let them know from the start of the camp session that you will be noticing their good behavior. When campers demonstrate prosocial behaviors, point them out. The more you point out the good behaviors, the more of those behaviors you'll elicit from your campers.

- Reviewing the schedule and providing consistent, predictable structure for your group. If you're a laid-back kind of person who tends not to plan ahead, you'll have to adjust now that you have a group of kids who need you to lead them. Kids respond much better to a predictable, consistent routine and clear instructions. If your kids are not doing what you'd like them to, look for ways you can set them up for success through your leadership.

- Following the camp schedule to be sure all your campers get plenty of sleep and downtime. Kids (and adults) are at their best when they are well rested, well fed, and well hydrated. From the start of camp, be observant of and attentive to these basic needs of your campers. When a camper is not behaving as you'd like, consider first whether they need some of their basic needs better met.
- Giving plenty of warning before transition times. Nobody likes to feel rushed. Let your campers know well in advance about what's happening next. If it's rest hour and the next activity is in the water, you might say, "Hey, campers, we have canoeing this

afternoon. In 20 minutes, I'll remind you to get your bathing suits on, reapply your sunscreen, and get your towels, but you can start getting ready now if you need more time. Start with changing into your bathing suit."

- Providing clear directions. Many kids benefit from step-by-step directions. Using sarcasm will often confuse kids, so don't say the opposite of what you want or veil a criticism with a sarcastic or humorous comment. Say exactly what you'd like them to do and check for understanding.
- Debriefing with your campers regularly to check in with them. Sharing their highs and lows of the day is a simple way to find out how each of your campers is doing. While walking between activities, during meals, or at some point when you "circle up" are all great opportunities to hear from your campers.
- Checking in with your campers one-on-one. It only takes a minute or two to check in individually with each of your campers. Be sure to do so every day to see how their camp experience is going and how you can best support them.

7 Ask Your Neurodivergent Campers What They Need

These exceptional kids often have become well versed in what is most helpful for them. Don't hesitate to ask how you can help them adjust to camp and have a fantastic experience.

If you don't have any previous experience working with differently wired kids, don't worry. Even parents, teachers, and specialists don't have all the answers when it comes to exceptional kids. By being a caring, observant, and positive leader, you will be doing exactly what it takes to ensure all your campers, including your neurodivergent ones, have a successful camp experience.

You can also feel great about giving these campers a positive experience at camp, which may be the very thing they need most.

Audrey Monke, with her husband Steve, has owned and directed Gold Arrow Camp (Lakeshore, California) since 1989. On her website (sunshine-parenting.com) Audrey shares resources for parents and youth development professionals about summer camp, parenting, and happiness. Her podcast (Sunshine Parenting) features interviews with parenting authors and experts, including camp directors. Audrey's book, Happy Campers: 9 Summer Camp Secrets for Raising Kids Who Become Thriving Adults (Hachette, 2019), shares strategies for bringing the magic of camp home.

Debbie Reber is a parenting activist, New York Times bestselling author, keynote speaker, and the founder of TiLT Parenting, a top podcast, community, and educational resource for parents raising differently wired children. Her newest book, Differently Wired: The Parents' Guide to Raising an Atypical Child with Confidence and Hope, came out in June 2018. After living abroad in the Netherlands for the past five years, Debbie, her husband, and 15-year-old son recently moved back to New York City.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Check out these resources to learn more about leading neurodiverse campers:

- *Differently Wired: The Parents' Guide to Raising an Atypical Child with Confidence and Hope*, by Deborah Reber
- *Happy Campers: 9 Summer Camp Secrets for Raising Kids Who Become Thriving Adults*, by Audrey Monke
- *TiLT Parenting Podcast*
- *Sunshine Parenting Podcast* (check out Audrey's interview with Debbie in Ep. 111)

CHALLENGING YOUR COMFORT ZONE

GREG CRONIN, MPA, CCD

Making decisions is a part of life. Growing means you have to test your comfort zone. You can do this by empowering yourself with knowledge, desire, and the necessary skills to expand your perceived limits.

To be an effective counselor in 2020, you must be able to evaluate the social environment, manage a host of camper situations, and develop the appropriate personal skills to expand your existing comfort zone. All staff come to camp with predetermined limits of personal boundaries and emotional barriers. This creates a spectrum of ability, from those who willingly embrace challenges to staff who avoid most risky social situations. Most camps have a few talented people who seem to transcend circumstances because they have a way of knowing what to say in moments of uncertainty, but they are in the minority.

Through life experience, each of you has an idea of what you will and will not try in any given situation. When leadership action is required and you need to create a plan or demonstrate a skill, how will prior experience guide you in new situations? How do you know when to challenge your comfort zone?

Any decision you make will come with an expected level of stress or pressure. The depth of your comfort

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Getting out of your comfort zone actually creates good stress. It helps you to focus on dealing with the pace of camp, being creative, developing skills, and increasing social interaction.”

zone, or your ability to feel secure and unchallenged, depends on how you process decisions. Your comfort zone is the safe place where you know what works for you, allowing your personality traits to support your methods of finding answers. Everyone has their own comfort zone — a psychological/emotional/behavioral construct that defines the routine of our daily lives. It describes the patterned world of our existence, keeps us relatively comfortable and calm, and helps us stay emotionally even, free from anxiety and worry to a great degree (Brenner, 2015).

Camp life is hard! It takes constant energy to keep track of campers, activities, and schedules. All day long you must make decisions, and sometimes staying in your comfort zone makes sense because it saves time or promotes a healthy routine. It is also appropriate when you first master a skill and need time to get used to doing things a certain way or when camper safety demands that you follow a prudent course of action.

The downside of staying in your comfort zone is that it challenges neither your ability nor your determination to accomplish something new. Some staff will choose not to expand their comfort zones out of fear of failure, looking silly, criticism, pain, uncertainty, etc. In deciding how much or little you want to expand your comfort zone, remember, this progression is exactly the same process you want your campers to try!

Camp provides many ways for campers to grow, and one of the most powerful tools you have is modeling appropriate behavior. It is very insightful for campers to see you learning things for the first time or asking questions about how to do something, because it promotes a healthy way to solve problems by challenging yourself in a controlled environment.

Stanford psychology professor Carol Dweck, PhD, in her research on fixed versus growth mindset, has found that students who have a growth mindset achieve more in terms of grades, test scores, and the desire to go to college. She states that mindset is people's belief about basic abilities and talents. People with a fixed mindset believe their basic abilities are traits that they have from the beginning and they only possess a certain amount. Those who support growth mindset think individuals can develop their talents and abilities over time (Dweck, 2018).

What can a growth mindset do for you? It fosters a desire to learn and embrace change while finding inspiration in the success of others. It allows

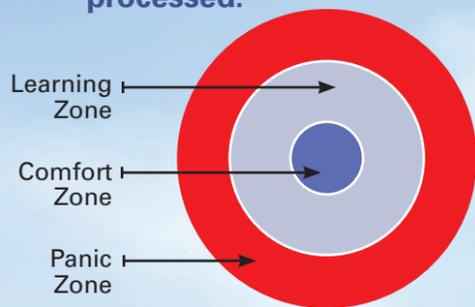
you to learn from constructive criticism and see effort as a path to skill mastery. When you work on developing these traits, you will learn to persist in the face of setbacks instead of staying in your safe place.

So, what happens if you decide not to come out of your comfort zone? Why would you intentionally risk your safe space by taking chances in front of campers or other staff? The answer to these questions lies in the power of personal change.

Getting out of your comfort zone actually creates good stress. It helps you to focus on dealing with the pace of camp, being creative, developing skills, and increasing social interaction. The payoff for expanding your comfort zone is having additional potential responses to life pressures when unexpended circumstances arise.



Here's a diagram to help you understand how situational reactions are processed.



At the center of the diagram is your comfort zone. It is a safe and secure place that is unchallenged and stable. Decisions here are easy and often routine. The learning or growth zone is where risk-taking occurs. Issues or actions are tested by perceived threat. They can be personal, environmental, or physical in origin, but this zone is where you learn how to respond. The panic zone is a sort of fight or flight mode in which no learning is taking place because you are exhausted, afraid, or overwhelmed. It is a state of terror and uncontrolled anxiety.

The panic zone is not productive. Try to not spend too much time here, because your decision-making abilities may be compromised. The stress of daily camp life produces a wide range of challenges, and eventually you will end up experiencing short visits to this zone. Fortunately for you, the periods of anxiety will decrease with the addition of knowledge and situational awareness. Your goal is to minimize time in the panic zone and increase time in the learning zone.

The structure of camp will help you to expand your comfort zone. Because each person has different tolerance parameters, there is no one formula for getting you safely out of your comfort zone. You should find a mentor and intentionally work with that person to identify areas of personal or social development you need help with during program time, downtime, mealtime, or any time that allows you to safely try new growth strategies.

Here are some benefits for getting out of your comfort zone:

1. Just beyond your comfort zone is your real self. Remember, your life is made up of all the experiences you have had, not just those you categorize as safe.
2. Taking risks makes it possible to grow. The camp experience is not just for campers. It is designed to help you develop different aspects of your personality, skill set, and decision-making ability.
3. Challenging yourself within the safe confines of camp will help you to identify undiscovered talents and abilities.
4. It helps you to recognize that some campers are struggling to define their comfort zones. To avoid a stalemate in group or personal development, take small steps to promote the action needed for situational success. Do not settle for mediocre because it's safe.
5. While you are pushing yourself past your perceived limits, expect a little struggle as you master a new skill. Do not get too frustrated, and know you are making positive change.
6. Ask to do something new; venture into the unknown. This is where the impossible becomes possible. It is the payoff for spending time in the learning zone. You get to create your own version of who you become.

Without the skill and courage to take action, significant growth opportunities can be missed. Michael Jordan said, "I have failed over and over and over again, and that is why I succeed" (Robert Goldman, 1998).

When you feel yourself struggling to push your limits, take a minute to do a quick inventory of excuses you make to avoid situations. Then ask yourself if your reasons are legitimate. If a fellow counselor offered the same excuse to the same situation, how would you react?

While there are no easy answers, it is important to determine what your motivation is for being at camp and how your reactions are affecting possible outcomes.

It takes courage to advance yourself as a developing staff member. Regardless of what your comfort zone consists of, you need to be prepared to face situations that cause a little discomfort or even pronounced stress. Remember, you are promoting life skills through community living, so look at your default behaviors and determine where you can make a difference. For example, refusing to step out of your comfort zone to set and maintain appropriate group limits means it's likely you will soon lose your campers' respect.

Regardless of your personal comfort zone parameters, you can successfully meet and exceed camp expectations by doing these 10 things:

1. Be on time (or early) for work.
2. Be ready to work (work ethic).
3. Give effort (even if it's outside your comfort zone).
4. Demonstrate engaged body language.
5. Approach each day with consistent energy.
6. Display a positive attitude.
7. Develop a passion for camp life.
8. Be an active listener.
9. Do extra whether you're asked or not.
10. Be prepared to put campers first.

Your ultimate goal is to take something out of your panic zone and put it in the learning zone. This will increase your personal growth and decrease things that bother you. Transformation will happen as you gain skills and confidence. Try to combine something you know with an aspect of what is causing you to panic. Work on it in small steps until you no longer feel distressed. You may surprise yourself by being able to positively affect circumstances that used to cause you anxious moments.

Consider the following situations:

1. Your group arrives at a high element on the ropes course and Steve, one of your co-counselors, does not want to step off the ground. In fact, he uncharacteristically breaks down and decides not to participate without even trying. He typically tries everything along with the campers, but his inability to help on this initiative is affecting some of the campers' desire to get in a harness.

Given the information you just learned, what strategies would you use to work with Steve?

2. Sue is walking across camp to meet her group at dance. Along the way she runs into her friend Tina. While they are walking, Sue admits she likes camp but is not sure if her campers like her. When Tina asks some follow-up questions, Sue describes herself as shy and not much of a risk-taker. She feels her lack of initiative often holds the group back from reaching their potential.

What do you think is the origin of Sue's concerns, and how would you work with her to improve the situation?

3. You are in the dining hall finishing breakfast when Jason, a co-counselor, expresses he is dreading being in charge of today's special event. It starts in an hour and he does not feel confident because it is his first time leading the event.

Given the short time frame, what advice or action can you give Jason that might help him be successful?

Deciding to work at camp is a big commitment. To be an effective leader in multiple situations, you need to understand how your comfort zone affects your ability to make decisions. While staying in your comfort zone is safe, it does not allow for healthy risk-taking that can turn into leadership opportunities for growth-minded staff. If you understand comfort zone levels, know the benefits of being in the learning zone, and use the success criteria as a framework for expanding your comfort zone, you will be a very valuable addition to your camp staff.

Greg Cronin, MPA, CCD, of GC Training Solutions, is a certified camp director, former ACA National Board Member, 29-year ACA section board member, and author. With more than 35 years of staff training experience, he works with camps, schools, churches, and businesses nationwide. To book Greg for staff trainings or to get more information on his catalog of 50+ camp workshops, please contact Greg at gregcroninva@gmail.com.

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Develop Your Skills at Camp

JOLLY CORLEY, MS

I am going to take a stab in the dark and guess that you are not planning on becoming a professional camp counselor. True, some of you will fall in love with camp this summer and may end up changing your major so that camp becomes your career path. And for those of you who grew up going to camp, perhaps you are already on this professional summer camp path. After all, the owner of Camp Robindel, where I work, knew as a 12-year-old camper he wanted to be a camp director, so certainly that is possible. On the other hand, I know most of you are not planning on a career in summer camp at this point. So, why did you choose to be a camp counselor this summer?

Most of us make this decision for one of the following reasons:

- You consider this to be the last summer to have fun before having to get a “real job.” (We can talk about this later, or, better yet, you can take a look at [Project Real Job](#) on the ACAcamps.org site.)
- You love working with kids and may be planning to be a teacher, go into youth development, etc.
- Someone told you about the opportunity and you didn’t have anything else lined up.
- You love the movie *The Parent Trap*. (I can’t be the only one who loved that movie and came to the obvious conclusion that working at summer camp would be a good idea.)

Regardless of your reason for deciding to be a camp counselor, you are among the lucky few for whom the stars have aligned perfectly for this to be a life-changing summer. You may have already been told that you will make lifelong friends, that you won’t understand how camp will

change your life until the end of the summer, or that you will change the campers’ lives forever. In my camp experience, these statements have proven to be completely true. But I want to encourage you to go even further with your camp experience. Since you are not going into the summer with the intention of being the worst staff member, so why not try being the best? Not in a competitive way of being better than everyone else, but by being the best possible version of yourself. Take advantage of this time to focus on growing as an individual. Take hold of this experience and use it to be the person you want to be. That may sound cheesy, but if you are anything like the counselors I work with, you have big dreams of making a positive impact in the world. Cheesy or not, to make a difference, it is incredibly helpful to be aware of what you are good at and what you need to work on. Whether or not you did it intentionally, you now have a job that can help you identify and practice your skills while also working on certain challenges.

The skills I am referring to are soft skills and emotional intelligence (EQ). Do you feel like your teachers, parents, and the media are all harping on these? Well, as annoying as that probably is, in this case, they’re right. There is a saying out there that goes, “IQ gets you hired, EQ gets you promoted.” Soft skills and EQ help you positively impact and influence the community you choose to engage with; these skills help you get things done in a way that makes others want to join you and be on your team. Whether that is a specific career choice, a social or political issue you support, or even

the interactions you have with your family and friends, such skills are essential in life.

There are a million reasons to work on your soft/EQ skills, but I want to focus on one. Camp is the place you can practice the skills that employers look for when hiring. According to LinkedIn’s 2020 survey of the most in-demand soft skills, creativity, persuasion, collaboration, adaptability, and emotional intelligence (which includes empathy, self-awareness, motivation, social skills, and emotional regulation) rank at the top (Van Nuys, 2019). Lucky for campers everywhere (and for your own growth), these are the very skills you can strengthen this summer as a counselor. Camp is a leadership internship — and as with every internship and experience, what you put in determines what you will get out.

Training Ground

Camp is one of the few places where the people with the least amount of experience have the greatest amount of work and direct influence. Camp is an intense experience of building and growing a community. You are going to be leading young people who are looking for someone who cares, listens, includes them, and understands them. In other words, thousands of campers are waiting to meet a role model like you who will help them become the best version of themselves. There is no better way to be that role model than to commit to waking up each day this summer to practice being the best version of yourself.

If you are looking for some ideas on how to begin or continue your own growth, here’s what I’ve learned in working with other emerging leaders like you.

Somewhere to Start

Knowing yourself is important if you're going to lead others, and the following steps can help make sure you truly recognize the person staring back at you in the mirror.

1. Engage in Self-Reflection

Take an honest look at yourself and evaluate where your skills are now. This is a practice of being self-aware (an EQ skill). Answer these questions:

- How do you cope when you are overwhelmed? Annoyed? Upset? Hungry? Tired?
- Can people trust you? Do you ever tell other people about something you've heard? In other words, do you gossip?
- When someone disagrees with you what is your go-to mode of communication?
- Think about a time you were part of a group that didn't accomplish their goals. What emotions did you have when things didn't go as planned? What was your reaction to feedback? Did it depend on who provided the information?

A note about being honest with yourself: I find that it can be challenging to accurately pinpoint where we are in our soft skill/ EQ growth. After all, who wants

to admit that empathy can be challenging? That makes us sound mean or awful. Who wants to say they struggle to adapt when things don't go as originally planned? But if we aren't honest and don't intentionally work on our challenges, they come out anyway. They come out in conflict or drama, which leads to dysfunctional teamwork and doesn't provide great role-modeling for your campers.

2. Set Goals

From your self-reflection, set three to five goals for the summer. Use a system that works for you, but consider the following suggestions:

1. Write them down. They can be bullet points, doodle drawings, a full novella — whatever format works for you.
2. Share your goals with someone else. If you are like me, the only way I make it to the gym regularly is if I am meeting a friend. For many of us, the same principle holds true for goals. When someone is helping to hold us accountable, we tend to be better about doing it.
3. Set goals that motivate you. If your goal is to have a fun summer job, great! I promise if you set a few goals to be

your best self by practicing a few soft skills, it will make for a fun summer.

3. Find a Mentor

If possible, find a mentor both within camp and outside of camp. Ask specifically for what you want from the relationship — situational advice, someone to listen, someone who will hold you accountable, someone who can meet regularly, etc. If you've never had a mentor, or the process of finding the right one just feels awkward, google the *Forbes* article "40 Questions to Ask a Mentor" (Miller, 2018).

4. Practice

Commit to striving for excellence. Remind yourself each morning what your goals are. Have the courage to look yourself in the eye each night and ask, "Where did I nail it, and where did I fall flat?" Then get up the next morning and practice again. A quote that motivates me to keep trying comes from artist Mary Anne Radmacher, who said, "Courage does not always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, 'I will try again tomorrow.'" And there is nothing more courageous than being purposeful in living as your best self.

Adaptability

When it rains, it pours. Weather can seriously impact regular outdoor activities. This can be challenging for you and the campers. Pull up your EQ skills boots and be ready to adapt.

Originally you were going to have five campers at your activity, and now there are 15. Instead of flipping out, recognize the opportunity to build your adaptability muscle.

Creativity

This skill reigns supreme at camp. Not just in creating a fun evening activity or special event for your campers. Or making creative welcome signs or decorating the recreation hall for a crazy camp celebration. But camp is a terrific place to use creativity in problem-solving. I love the practice of 5 Whys (see mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_5W.htm) in thinking creatively about challenges we face. Also look at creative suggestions for handling camper behaviors from camp experts. They provide excellent

foundation that will enhance your ability to be a creative problem solver.

This summer let camp be the place to strengthen these skills I've been yammering on about. Use empathy to determine how best to motivate someone who doesn't want to do something (by the way, that someone might be you). Be self-aware of how you react to adverse situations such as collaborating with a co-counselor who comes across as a know-it-all or slacker. Practice your social skills by not gossiping and vent up rather than out (in other words, vent to a supervisor to solve the issue). You can spend a lot of energy getting frustrated and complaining about the challenges that are bound to come up this summer. Or you can remind yourself that only we lucky few land this incredible skill/EQ internship and can work on becoming a stronger, better equipped version of ourselves.

Have fun. Be intentional. Grow strong. And don't forget to share any cool growth opportunity you have this summer @acacamps #bestself2020.

Additional Resources

- Project Real Job: ACAcamps.org/resource-library/jobs-recruitment/project-real-job
- Self-reflection: inc.com/justin-bariso/ask-yourself-these-5-questions-daily-your-emotional-intelligence-will-skyrocket.html
- Creative problem-solving: innovationmanagement.se/imtool-articles/the-basics-of-creative-problem-solving-cps/
- Emotional intelligence:
 - > hbr.org/2004/01/what-makes-a-leader
 - > online.hbs.edu/blog/post/emotional-intelligence-in-leadership
- Goal setting: varsitytutors.com/blog/3+methods+for+setting+goals
- Venting: thoughtfulleader.com/vent-frustration
- Experts in camping:
 - > ACAcamps.org/resource-library/camping-magazine/trenches-camper-behavior-%E2%80%94-growth-without-shame
 - > ACAcamps.org/resource-library/camping-magazine/confessions-disciplinarian-how-managing-camper-behavior-can-save-summer

Ways You Can Practice

You will find countless ways to practice and improve on your soft skills at camp this summer.

Persuasion

There are going to be times when your campers (or even your coworkers) aren't going to want to do something. At our camp, those times tend to be waking up, going to bed, and cleanup. Troubles may also arise if it is too cold, too rainy, too hot — you get the point. Regardless of how fun camp is, there will be a time when someone doesn't want to do

what is planned or expected.

Some days will be magic, and you'll be able to persuade a hesitant kid to hop in the water with a little pep talk. Other days you will fail, and it will seem like nothing you do helps the situation. Instead of insisting you have to be the one to solve the problem, move on to collaboration. Let a co-counselor take the handoff; it's great practice.

Collaboration

Collaborating with people who agree with you and have similar energy and ideas is easy. The

challenge and growth opportunity is in learning how to collaborate with those whom you may not find it so easy to work with. The wide variety of people you will meet at camp is an excellent way to build your collaboration skills.

The way you go about motivating campers or engaging in your work as a counselor may vary vastly compared to other camp staff. How do you collaborate to achieve common goals? Can you keep your frustration or annoyance from controlling you, or will you allow your emotions to take over in communicating and making decisions?

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Jolly Corley, MS, is a leadership coach who is passionate about experiential learning as a tool for growth and development. She cultivates leadership skills using practical strategies for self-evaluation and goal setting. Jolly encourages participants to consider challenges an opportunity for growing into their best selves. During the summer she works with 130 university students at Camp Robindel in New Hampshire, where she has spent 20 years developing emerging leaders. In the fall and winter she spends time traveling around the globe training and speaking about EQ and leadership development. Learn more about Jolly at jollycorley.com or connect at jollycorley@gmail.com.

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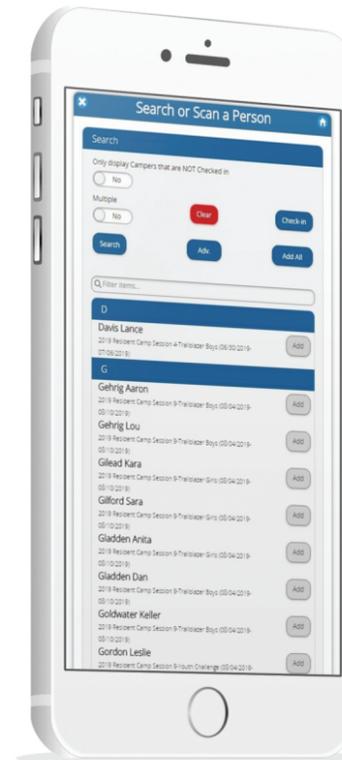
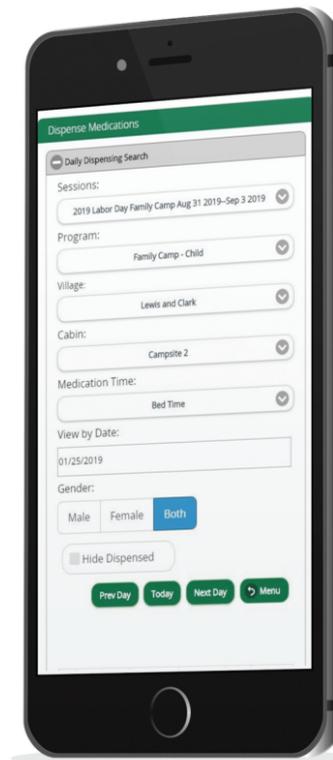
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A Different Kind of Mentor



What Type Will You Be?

STEPHEN GRAY WALLACE, MS ED

Mentors come in all types, shapes, and sizes. There are loud ones, quiet ones; short ones, tall ones; young ones, old ones.

The common denominator is “one” — as in “Be one!” While there are many things each of us cannot do, there is one thing we *must* do: mentor our youth.

Mentoring Defined

For sure, we all may describe “mentoring” somewhat differently. An article published by Health Services Research poses some relevant questions: “Although mentoring is something most of us talk about doing and needing on a regular basis, it isn’t obvious what being a mentor means, precisely, or what the process of mentoring entails. Is it the same as training? Teaching? Advising? Is being a mentor the same as being a good role model? Are these all labels for the same thing?” (McLaughlin, 2010)

Perhaps an easier route is to define, or identify, the traits young people ascribe to those they consider to be their mentors. According to more than 3,000 youth surveyed, mentors are trustworthy, caring, understanding, respectful, helpful, dependable, fun, compassionate, and responsible (Wallace, 2008). So, do these attributes apply to you?

TRAITS	YES	NO	WORKING ON IT
TRUSTWORTHY			
CARING			
UNDERSTANDING			
RESPECTFUL			
HELPFUL			
DEPENDABLE			
FUN			
COMPASSIONATE			
RESPONSIBLE			



How to Be a Mentor — and Why It Matters

An article in *Houston Family Magazine*, “Need a Mentor? Go to Camp!” crystallizes the importance of your role as a counselor and offers tips on how to be good at it.

The idea of a mentor is an ancient one. In Greek mythology, when Odysseus, King of Ithaca, went to battle in the Trojan War, he placed his friend, Mentor, in charge of his son and his kingdom. Today, Mentor has become synonymous with someone who imparts wisdom to and shares knowledge with a less experienced person. Mentoring relationships are special and often life-changing.

The camp experience is uniquely designed to foster these relationships. When counselors and camp staff engage with campers, they are not just teaching — they are using the core elements of positive mentoring relationships.

- Camp counselors **share** and teach through stories and anecdotes. They impart wisdom from their own successes and failures, and offer the insight that comes from experience.
- Camp counselors **model** appropriate behaviors. They show campers how to play fairly, show empathy, and win and lose gracefully.
- Camp counselors **guide** campers through the learning landscape of life. They teach the things that cannot be taught in school — how to live with others, how to build friendships, how to lead, and how to work as a team.
- Camp counselors **support** campers emotionally. They offer reassurance when situations become difficult or overwhelming. Counselors are there to not only lend a hand but to help campers work through difficult moments and feel the sense of accomplishment that comes from conquering obstacles.

These relationships aren’t just a nice addition to childhood and young adult development; they are essential elements. Children need nurturing mentors, people outside of their families who take an interest in who they are, root for their successes, and help them learn that failures are critical stepping-stones on the path to success (Wallace, 2020).

Outcomes of Mentoring

The *Psychology Today* piece “An Invisible Thread” offers insight into the fruits of your labor.

Studies of “formal” mentoring, such as the kind found in Big Brothers Big Sisters programs, show that there is significant value in such relationships and universally point to the positive outcomes they engender. According to “Mentoring Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis” from the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, “warm and close relationships with caring adults, supervision, and positive role models are the common resources and investments that mentoring interventions contribute to youth development.”

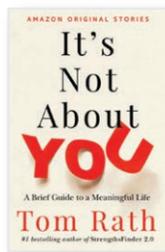
Similarly, a study by Child Trends found that youth participating in mentoring relationships experience better academic returns, hold more positive attitudes about the future, and are less likely to initiate drug use than those who aren’t.

Even “informal” mentors — such as school teachers, coaches, and counselors — hold considerable sway in the young lives they help to mold. According to research from SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions), 46 percent of teens with a mentor reported a high “sense of self,” versus 25 percent of teens without a mentor. High sense-of-self teens feel more positive about their own identity, growing independence, and relationships with peers than do teens with a low sense of self (Wallace, 2013).

Book Smart

Three recent books can also inform your work as a mentor.

Tom Rath’s ***It’s Not About You*** suggests reframing “meaningful lives” by doing your best for others — in this case, your campers. This is a critical perspective as you transition from working on yourself through education and experience to making children, however temporarily, the center of

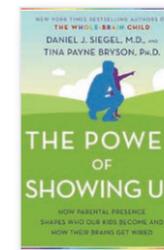


your universe. It is at camp that you will have the opportunity to become one of three caring adults, other than parents, who children need to maximize their potential, according to the Search Institute. It refers to these connections as “Developmental Relationships.”

The Search Institute says, “Relationships are critical to young people’s development. They are also ‘active ingredients’ in schools, programs, and other critical services that have an impact on young people’s lives.” These are, it submits, “trustworthy, purposeful relationships that help young people . . .

- Discover who they are;
- Cultivate the abilities needed for them to shape their own lives; and
- Learn how to engage with and contribute to the world around them” (Search Institute, 2020).

As my camp director used to say, “You will never do more important work” than that of a camp counselor. This, too, can spark a change in perspective, or mindset, from “I have to” to “I get to.”



Equally significant is a book by Daniel J. Siegel, MD, and Tina Payne Bryson, PhD, ***The Power of Showing Up***.

Indeed, being “present” in the lives of your campers is a particularly powerful concept. Siegel and Bryson say, “Showing up means offering a quality of presence. And it’s simple to provide once you understand the four building blocks of a child’s healthy development . . .” (Monke, 2020).

They argue that every child needs to feel the following (Siegel and Payne Bryson, 2020):

- **Safe:** We can’t always insulate children from injury or avoid doing something that leads to hurt feelings. But when we give children a sense of safe harbor, they will be able to take the needed risks for growth and change.
- **Seen:** Truly seeing children means we pay attention to their emotions

— both positive and negative — and strive to attune to what’s happening in their minds beneath their behavior.

- **Soothed:** Soothing isn’t about providing a life of ease; it’s about teaching children how to cope when life gets hard and showing them that you’ll be there with them along the way. Soothed children know that they’ll never have to suffer alone.

- **Secure:** When children know they can count on you, time and again, to show up — when you reliably provide safety, focus on seeing them, and soothe them in times of need, they will trust in a feeling of secure attachment. And thrive!

Similar themes can be found in an essay written by psychologist Debbie Hall for NPR (Hall, 2005).

Presence is a noun, not a verb; it is a state of being, not doing. States of being are not highly valued in a culture which places a high priority on doing. Yet, true presence or ‘being with’ another person carries with it a silent power — to bear witness to a

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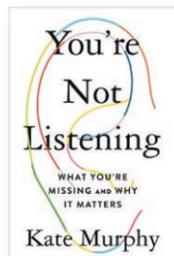


passage, to help carry an emotional burden, or to begin a healing process. In it, there is an intimate connection with another that is perhaps too seldom felt in a society that strives for ever-faster “connectivity.”

With therapy clients, I am still pulled by the need to do more than be, yet repeatedly struck by the healing power of connection created by being fully there in the quiet understanding of another. In it, none of us are truly alone.

The power of presence is not a one-way street, not only something

we give to others. It always changes me, and always for the better.



Finally, Kate Murphy's **You're Not Listening — What You're Missing and Why It Matters**, reminds us of the imperative of practicing “active listening.” How do

you do that? MindTools has some advice (2019):

There are three key active listening techniques you can use to help you become a more effective listener.

1. Pay Attention

Give the speaker your undivided attention and acknowledge the message. Recognize that nonverbal communication also “speaks” loudly.

- Look at the speaker directly.
- Put aside distracting thoughts.
- Don't mentally prepare a rebuttal!
- Avoid being distracted by environmental factors. For example, side conversations.
- “Listen” to the speaker's body language.

2. Show That You're Listening

Use your own body language and gestures to show that you are engaged.

- Nod occasionally.
- Smile and use other facial expressions.
- Make sure that your posture is open and interested.
- Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments like, yes, and “uh huh.”

3. Provide Feedback

Our personal filters, assumptions, judgments, and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect on what is being said and to ask questions.

- Reflect on what has been said by paraphrasing. “What I'm hearing is . . .” and “Sounds like you are saying . . .” are great ways to reflect.
- Ask questions to clarify certain points. “What do you mean when you say . . .” “Is this what you mean?”
- Summarize the speaker's comments periodically.

At the End of the Day

Truth be told, at the end of the proverbial day, for all the great advice out there to help you find success as a camp counselor, your best guide may, in fact, be yourself. On that point, Henry David Thoreau wrote, “My imagination, my love and reverence and admiration, my sense of miraculous, is not so excited by any event as by the remembrance of my youth.”

Remembering your own childhood experiences can be an invaluable guide to working with children. Ask yourself these questions, calibrated by the age of the campers you will lead:

1. What fears did you have?
2. How did you feel about being — or sleeping — away from home?
3. What activities did you enjoy the most?
4. What activities did you enjoy the least?
5. Who were the most important people in your life?
6. What made you laugh?
7. What made you cry?
8. What were you insecure about?
9. What were your favorite possessions?
10. Who helped you to feel safe, loved, and taken care of?

That last one is reminiscent of the charge of a camp orientation speaker Lonnie Carton, PhD, to “help make children feel lovable and capable,” something I refer to as “The Main Thing” in my book, *IMPACT — An Introduction to Counseling, Mentoring and Youth Development*.

Relational vs. Transactional Counseling

Connecting with your campers on an emotional level, letting them know you care about them as people, leading with love, and being “accessible” in terms of your own experiences, struggles, and feelings (as appropriate and in keeping with your camp's guidelines for your work), is a powerful way to positively influence youth. Counselors who focus primarily on the logistics of the job — keeping schedules and ensuring campers make it to meals and brush their teeth before bed — miss out on important opportunities to teach within and about relationships.

Unconditional personal support can go a long way toward fulfilling the promise of camp as a game changer in the grand scheme of healthy youth development.

That is what makes for a different kind of mentor. What kind will you be?

Stephen Gray Wallace, MS Ed, is president/director of the Center for Adolescent Research and Education (CARE), a national collaborative of institutions and organizations committed to increasing favorable youth outcomes and reducing risk. He is a consultant to camps on staff training, teen leadership programming, and outcomes measurement, and has broad experience as a camp director, school psychologist and adolescent/family counselor. Stephen is a member of the professional development faculty at the American Academy of Family Physicians and American Camp Association and a parenting expert at *kidsinthehouse.com*, *NBC News Learn*, and *WebMD*. He is also an expert partner at RANE (Risk Assistance Network & Exchange) and was national chairman and chief executive officer at SADD for more than 15 years. Stephen is author of the books, *Reality Gap* and *IMPACT*. Additional information about Stephen's work can be found at StephenGrayWallace.com.

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Influencing GREEN Behavior at Your Camp

DANNY SUDMAN

TWO SUMMERS AGO,

I led a staff training workshop with 180 camp staff from Blue Star Camps in Hendersonville, North Carolina. They had recently spent around \$30,000 to replace their lights with more energy-efficient LED bulbs and fixtures. But while these kinds of upgrades can make a huge impact on reducing energy consumption, camp leaders found that the lights were being left on in unoccupied buildings.

Camp staff are the front line for setting expectations and modeling

the behaviors they'd like to see from their campers. So, I brought the staff together to find solutions that would encourage campers and staff to turn lights off when leaving a room.

I started the workshop with a game to highlight the impact our actions have on others. The game we played was called "Equidistance" and was easy to set up and a lot of fun. Here's how to run it: Have each staff member (or camper) secretly choose two people in the group. Explain that when the game starts, they are to

place themselves an equal distance between their two choices. This could be in a straight line or a triangle. Start the activity. Can you guess what happens next? Give it a try with other staff members and consider how this activity can promote discussion around how our actions influence others.

After the workshop, a staff member asked me if turning the lights off would really make an impact on the bigger picture of what needs to be done to reduce our environmental impact.

"Don't we need larger systemic change to really have a global impact on environmental issues? How can my actions really have a meaningful impact on an issue that is so much bigger than any of us individually?" My answer was that to create systemic change, we need a collective voice to advocate for a world that makes sustainable living more accessible for everyone.

As a camp staff member, you can model green behaviors to demonstrate how accessible sustainability really is. You were hired because of your ability to be

a role model for your campers and facilitate growth through the camp experience. Regardless of your prior knowledge of sustainability, you can take many simple actions to model and inspire green behavior change in your campers.

It's easy to get overwhelmed trying to implement green actions that reduce water consumption, increase energy efficiency, or divert waste from the landfill. My advice is to keep it simple. I love that Blue Star Camps had a very specific and measurable goal of getting campers and staff to turn off the lights that

summer. Choose an action that all of camp can get behind, and begin to build a culture of sustainability that will continue to grow year after year.

You might start by asking your campers what they know about sustainability. Many schools have gardens, compost systems, and other education programs that teach their students how to be better stewards of the environment.

As you read the following examples, facts, and resources, consider which of the behaviors you already practice and which you'd like to try this summer with your campers.

Picking up Trash

As you walk around camp, one green behavior you can always be modeling is picking up trash.

Every year, eight million tons of garbage are added to our oceans, 80 percent of it from mainland waste. That's like dumping more than 112,123 Boeing 737-ER900 airplanes into the ocean each year.

Consider implementing a 10-pieces-of-trash-a-day initiative for your cabin. If you have 10 campers in your cabin, that's 100 pieces of trash every day! Picking up trash helps keep your camp beautiful and keeps trash from entering waterways and eventually finding its way to the ocean.

Thrift Store Shopping

The environmental impact of the clothing industry is staggering. Check out a few facts:

- Americans alone throw away about 10.5 million tons of clothing every year (Cline, 2014).
- The pair of jeans you may be wearing right now took roughly 1,800 gallons of water to make (Leon, 2019).
- Almost 20 percent of pesticide use worldwide is for use on cotton plants (Leon, 2019).

Yikes! This doesn't mean we shouldn't enjoy looking nice in our sweet threads, but you can do a lot to reduce the impact of your choices.

Like buying organic cotton, sewing patches on worn areas of clothes, or shopping at a thrift store.

One of my favorite games to play with campers is called, "Guess what I'm wearing that came from a thrift store." It's a fun way to open a dialogue about a simple action we can take while also showing off your favorite thrift store finds.

Turn out the Lights

There's no need to leave lights on in unoccupied buildings, and during the day you probably don't even need to turn them on if there's enough natural light.

Many camps have a clean cabin award to encourage campers to keep their cabins clean throughout the session. On my clean cabin inspection sheet, we had a spot to make note of lights left on, which would result in losing valuable points toward winning the clean cabin award that day.

You can also use signs to encourage campers to turn off the lights or practice other green behaviors. In my opinion, signage is one of the most powerful education tools.

In a workshop I facilitated with a group of Girl Scouts, I asked them to make signs that would encourage

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“Your actions, even the small ones, can make a huge difference in the health of our one and only planet. Remember that you aren’t alone. I encourage you to start a green team to model sustainability if your camp doesn’t already have one.”

a green behavior that was important to them. I gave them some ideas like using quotes, drawing pictures, or cutting images out of magazines. The signs they came up with were very creative and gave them an opportunity to express themselves. The more you can involve campers in the process, the more buy-in they will have in supporting the action.

Turn off the Water When You Brush Your Teeth

It’s estimated that each person uses between 80 and 100 gallons of water each day. If you have 10 campers in your cabin, that could be up to 1,000 gallons of water a day!

Water is a valuable resource, and so much of it runs down the drain every day. Turning off the water while

you brush your teeth can save up to four gallons. We often take water and other resources we use every day for granted. Being able to quantify those resources can go a long way in helping campers understand the impact of reducing our consumption.

Here’s a fun way to help your campers quantify the amount of water they use when showering or running a faucet.

Grab a timer and a gallon jug and take your campers into a shower stall to time how long it takes to fill the jug with water. To determine the flow rate (gallons/minute), divide one (number of gallons) by the time it takes to fill the jug (minutes). You can then multiply the total shower time by the flow rate to determine how many gallons each shower

uses. Ask your campers how long their showers are on average at home. Use that number to calculate how much water they use when showering.

Many camps have a five-minute shower policy. I’m sure this is partially to save water, but also to help get a bunch of campers showered efficiently. Whatever the reason, your campers might be more cooperative if they understand how much water is being used to take a shower.

Remember the importance of modeling behavior as a staff member. If you’re going to ask campers to take a five-minute shower or turn off the water when brushing their teeth, you should adhere to the same expectations you’re asking of them.



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Clean Plate Club

Food is a valuable resource, and it takes a lot of energy to produce what we eat. Produce from the local grocery store travels on average 1,500 miles from the farm to your plate (Black, 2008). Consider everything that goes into growing, harvesting, packaging, and transporting each item of food you consume. A fun thought activity is to brainstorm every step of this journey with an item of food.

The clean plate club encourages campers to reduce the amount of food left on their plates. The goal is to ask campers to only take what they can eat and eat what they take. They can always go back for more, but sometimes our eyes are bigger than our stomachs, which leads kids to waste. Like anything at camp, if you express enthusiasm, your campers will likely be into it too.

Water Bottles and Mugs

Do you have a favorite water bottle or travel coffee mug? The behavior of using your own liquid-consuming vessel makes a big impact on reducing waste. How many cups of coffee/tea do you have each day? Week? Month? Year?

It’s estimated that 50 billion paper coffee cups are being thrown away in the United States every day. What would it take to get more people to stop using paper cups? You can start by making your coffee mug and/or water bottle a fixture in your daily life.

My coffee mug and water bottle are covered in cool stickers that I’ve collected from my travels, along with cool logos from companies I support like Patagonia and Green Camps. You can also use the stickers as a great conversation starter. “Pick a sticker and I’ll tell you about why I chose to put it on my water bottle.”

Sustainability is a broad and often overwhelming subject, so it’s important to take small, practical steps to build the culture of sustainability at your camp.

My challenge to you is to start a conversation and invite campers to participate in supporting conservation efforts while at camp. Your influence can also span beyond camp when campers return home with new green behaviors to share with their families and friends.

Your actions, even the small ones, can make a huge difference in the health of our one and only planet. Remember that you aren’t alone. I encourage you to start a green team

to model sustainability if your camp doesn’t already have one. As a team, each member brings experiences, ideas, and energy to take small steps that can lead to huge results. Your camp leadership may also have other resources and ideas to support your efforts.

Building buy-in and a culture of sustainability at any organization is a challenging and sometimes long journey. That’s why modeling green behavior is a great place to

start. Doing so is relatively easy, and these actions can have far-reaching consequences. Over time, as campers return year after year, it will become habit to pick up trash, waste less food, put recyclables in the right place, and turn off the water when they brush their teeth.

Please consider the following notes before you dive headfirst into helping your camp model sustainability.

Don't Shame Anyone, Including Yourself and Your Camp

It's easy to look around and see things that are "not environmentally friendly," both at your camp facility and in the behaviors of other staff and campers. Shaming someone for wasting food or not turning off the lights isn't going to inspire anyone to change their behaviors. Instead, focus on the positive things you and your camp are already doing. You should also focus on solutions instead of dwelling on the problems.

Create a Green Proposal

Camp program staff and directors have a lot of responsibilities to ensure camp is running smoothly and safely and that campers are having fun. Create a proposal that outlines your ideas and answers questions or challenges that will inevitably come up should they try to make the idea a reality. Consider the following questions to include in your proposal:

1. How did you come up with the idea?
2. How will your idea benefit the campers, staff, and facility?
3. Who needs to be involved to make the idea happen?
4. How much will it cost?
5. What resources will be needed to make this happen?
6. How will this idea continue at camp in the future?

Join the Conversation

I hope you see the opportunity for the camp community to lead the nation in modeling sustainability and inspiring green behavior change. It's no easy task, but as camps around the country begin to take action and see the benefits, the sustainable camps movement will continue to grow.

Together we can work to find practical and engaging experiences to inspire green behavior change in the millions of youth and adults the camp experience impacts each year.

Join the conversation to share your successes and challenges, learn from other camps, and find answers to support your efforts: #gogreencamps.

Discussion Questions

1. What does "being green" mean to you?
2. What does "quality of life" really mean? Would a sustainable lifestyle affect our quality of life? What might you be able to give up without jeopardizing your quality of life?
3. What, in your opinion, is the biggest obstacle to a move toward sustainability, and how might modeling sustainability at camp help overcome that obstacle?
4. What green pledge would you be willing to make for the summer to inspire green behavior change in your campers and fellow staff members?

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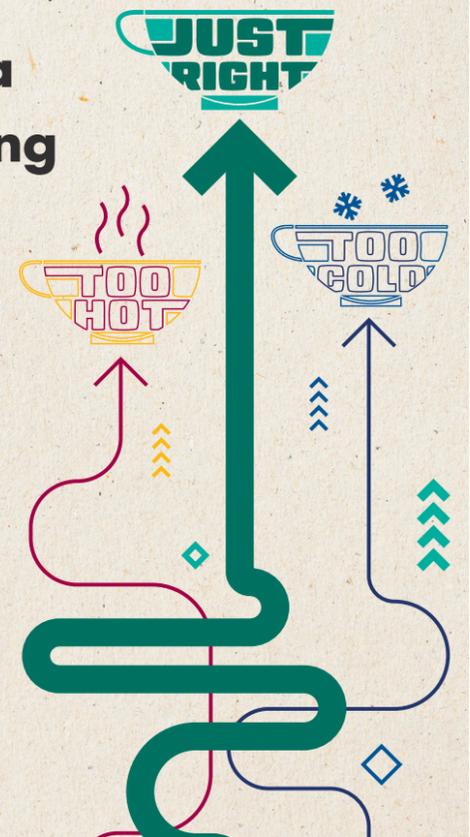
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WORKING AT CAMP: *IT'S A MARATHON NOT A SPRINT*

BY DEB JORDAN, RED, KIM AYCOCK, MST, AND LAURIE BROWNE, PHD

You may be reading this before you arrive at camp or within the first few days of making your way to your (new) summer home. Regardless, at this moment you are most likely not thinking about a few weeks, months, or even years from now in terms of your camp path. Your focus is probably on getting adjusted and learning as much about your camp role as possible, so you feel equipped to provide the best possible experience for the campers in your care.

This training time at the beginning of the season in many ways parallels the training an athlete does to prepare for a race. You will do some stretching, conditioning, workouts,

and recovery to get yourself in optimal shape for the summer ahead. You will stretch outside of your comfort zone as you embark on your journey for the first time or as a veteran camp staffer. Committing to this job may be a stretch from your typical summer activities; taking on a new role or leadership position may be a stretch into uncharted territory as you supervise or manage others.

When training for a race, conditioning and workouts are calibrated so that an athlete can build up to a desired performance level over time and work through moments of exertion and fatigue. In a similar vein, you will want to gauge your energy and enthusiasm levels to

take into consideration what a given situation calls for whether it be at the beginning, middle, or end of the day, week, session, or summer.

As with anything, it is important to aim for moderation versus the extreme. Dedicated athletes train over a period of time and build in opportunities for rest and recovery to allow for peak performance come race day. Effort is given to avoid completely depleting reserves and maintaining a certain level of fitness for future events. You, too, will want to take advantage of times in your schedule for taking a breather and recharging so you don't wear yourself to exhaustion. This will enable you to work with the next group of campers

or continue the session at hand at your full potential.

At the starting line of the summer, we suggest that you think of the race ahead as a marathon and not a sprint. It will be important to avoid expending all your energy in the initial burst of opening weekend, but rather that you pace yourself for the miles ahead. Using various research-based suggestions given here, you will be on your way to establishing habits that will afford you an enjoyable camp experience for this and possibly many summers to come.

We know that working at camp — both day and overnight camp — leads to anticipating an exciting, fun, and intense summer. You are undoubtedly looking forward to making new friends, connecting with old friends,

and working with campers while helping them to grow and have fun in the process. You'll likely even learn new skills while at camp.

You will help campers to become members of the camp family, feel loved, grow, and learn — up to 24 hours a day, seven days a week. During the camp session you will be expected to be “on,” with high energy, focus, and service to campers and your peers. Maintaining a level of enthusiasm and your own desire to ensure a powerful experience for campers requires physical stamina, mental health, and emotional regulation — being able to manage your own emotions in light of all that camp demands.

At day camps, staff go home at the end of the day and have weekends to

engage in a range of behaviors that allow for real rest before returning to camp and the responsibility of campers in their care. At overnight camps, the situation is different. Staff are on 24 hours of the day every day that camp is in session. In the midst of camp, however, you will be scheduled to have days off — just for yourself and away from camp. Regardless of being at a day or overnight camp, the intent of time away from camp and campers is to enable you to recharge and rejuvenate in time for the next day or week of camp activities and/or new campers.

Like many staff, you may use your time off to engage in adult activities, perhaps going to a pub or party; or perhaps you'll meet up with friends for a high-energy gathering. The

chosen activities are often a way to release the stresses of the camp week. We've discovered, however, that the day off can be just as exhausting as the previous week of camp and that staff sometimes return to camp not rested and relaxed, but simply moving from one state of tiredness to another (Dubin and Garst, 2020). All levels of staff — counselors, administrators, medical staff, and others — can feel this sense of weariness. And, it's important to remember that when you return to camp feeling tired, that lack of energy affects the entire camp community.

with peers and journaling can help staff to articulate personal needs (Ellis, Jiang, Locke, Woosley, Co, & Snider, 2020).

Emotional needs are often overlooked by camp staff. Yet, as Baker (2020) tells us, "Camp counselors' employment experiences are full of emotional highs and lows; the thrill of connecting with campers to the fatigue of long hours and physical activity." Camp life demands a lot of emotional commitment and expenditures, which can lead to weariness. Baker noted that the majority of counselors do not take purposeful time to process

It is during or after their race assessment that marathoners decide if they want to run another marathon. And many runners suggest that after running one marathon people will want to do it again. In camp, as staff, you will assess yourselves and your experiences over the summer and decide if you want to return to camp next year. Such a decision can be a challenge as you weigh the pros and cons of returning. Most likely, your camp directors want you to return — it's an opportunity to share your newly learned skills, energy, commitment, and whole self to engage with campers for a subsequent summer. How do you decide?

Another team of researchers, Warner, Richmond, and Sibthorp (2020), also looked at staff retention. Not surprisingly, staff decided to return to camp because they felt like they were making a difference, they enjoyed the work, and/or had an emotional attachment to camp (felt like they belonged). If this is your second, third, or fourth year of working at camp, you likely agree with these findings. Camp does make a difference in the lives of staff as well as campers!

On the other hand, staff were found to not return for subsequent summers because of poor pay, better job opportunities, and educational opportunities. While this may make sense, it is important to put things into perspective. Consider that while the money earned while working at camp may not seem like a lot when looking at the actual paycheck, the free meals, lodging (utilities included), laundry, little or no need for a car and gas, and other living requirements taken care of can actually result in more take home pay than if you worked in a more traditional job and those expenses had to be covered.

If you are in college, you are likely aware that at some point someone is going to tell you that you need to complete an internship or work in a field related to your college education. The good news is that, even if working at camp is not related to your career goals, jobs at camp can be designed to meet those goals. This is called job-crafting, and many camps can help match camp work with careers for a range of college majors. Be sure to ask your director about these types of opportunities as you are looking to return to camp for future summers.

In addition to helping to job-craft camp positions for college, the vast majority of skills learned at camp translate directly to the workforce. Skills such as collaboration, a strong work ethic, communication, creativity, and critical thinking are all highly desirable by employers in any field (Richmond, Sibthorp, & Bialeschki, 2020). By highlighting these (and

other similar skills) on your resume, you can demonstrate that your camp employment has positioned you for success regardless of your career path.

Working at camp is a marathon, not a sprint. Take each mile in stride. Walk if you need to. Pay attention to your ups and downs. Make use of breaks to refresh and recharge. Cheer on your fellow teammates. Enjoy the experience. Be proud of crossing the finish line. The medal you earn is the satisfaction of knowing you made a difference in the lives of your campers. We hope to see you back at the summer camp starting line next year!

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some options for time off that will allow you to return to camp rested and ready to be at your best with campers and for camp duties?
2. When feeling emotionally drained at home or school, what strategies help you bounce back? How can those same approaches be used or adapted while at camp?
3. How can you utilize your skills and interests to job-craft your role for future summers at camp that align with career requirements and aspirations?

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Additional Resources

Project Real Job Resources to help translate camp on your resume (and more) can be found at [ACAcamps.org/resource-library/jobs-recruitment/project-real-job](https://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/jobs-recruitment/project-real-job).

👉 **It will be important to avoid expending all your energy in the initial burst of opening weekend, but rather that you pace yourself for the miles ahead.** 👈

We know that at overnight camps it can be fatiguing to live in close proximity to others, sharing bathrooms, sleeping quarters, meals, and all aspects of daily life. So, what's a staff member to do? How and when do you engage in self-care? And what is involved in self-care? How do you take care of your own physical, mental, and emotional needs? What do these processes look like? What do they feel like? How can you recognize the need for such rest, and what can you do about it?

First, it is important to work to recognize your need for real rest throughout the week — during camp day downtime as well as on time off. This requires a level of self-awareness and drive to make choices that lead to real rest during discretionary time. Ask your camp director for suggestions about how to get effective rest during the camp day. Take opportunities during quiet times during the day to reflect on or manage your own fatigue — physical, mental, and emotional. Take needed actions to get that rest. Research shows us that having conversations

their emotions or to recover from the intensity of emotions felt at camp. Yet, this is an important component to taking care of oneself. As everyone is different from everyone else, what processing one's emotions looks like will depend on each individual. Thus, when you are feeling emotionally drained, it is important to first recognize those feelings, then address them in a way that helps you and fits within the camp culture.

In preparing for a marathon, acknowledging and confronting your feelings of fatigue are necessary steps to maintain physical and mental well-being. Runners, if they feel a drop in energy coming on, work to find ways to rest and recover before the next training day. It is common practice to taper training and physical activity leading up to race day. Then race day arrives, and the runners are off! At the end of the marathon they assess the run, the training that built up to the run, and the impact of the run on their bodies and minds. Something similar occurs in camp as well.

A group of researchers discovered that when staff purposely reflect on what they learned about themselves during the summer they were more likely to return for another summer (Ellis et al., 2020). Staff often don't recognize the personal growth they experience while working at camp until long after their camp employment has ended (Mateer, Taff, Allison, Hunt, & Will, 2020). However, Ellis et al. found that one way to help staff articulate that growth was for them to engage in focused discussions with other staff and to do some journaling.

Talking about the day's highlights where staff felt they worked independently, did something particularly well, and felt a sense of connectedness with others helped them to see how working at camp was helping them to grow and make a difference in the lives of others. If you can find time to have similar conversations and talk about successes with your peers, you might very well use that assessment in determining whether to return to camp the next summer.

Deb Jordan, ReD, is a professor at East Carolina University and speaks and writes about topics of interest to camps and other entities on a wide range of topics. She also serves as the Standards Co-Chair for the Southeast Local Council of Leaders, contributes to Camping Magazine, presents webinars, and is co-chair of the ACA Project Real Job Committee.

Kim Aycock, MST, has 30+ years of experience developing young people with skills robots are unable to do. Blending the talent of a master teacher with the knowledge of a seasoned camp expert, Kim ignites learning for varying levels of campers and staff worldwide. She speaks professionally at conferences, presents webinars, contributes regularly to Camping Magazine and ACA blogs, and serves as co-chair of ACA's Project Real Job Committee. More information can be found at [kimaycock.com](https://www.kimaycock.com).

Laurie Browne, PhD, is ACA's director of research. She specializes in ACA's Youth Outcomes Battery and supporting camps in their research and evaluation efforts. Prior to joining ACA, Laurie was an assistant professor in the Department of Recreation, Hospitality, and Parks Management at California State University-Chico. Laurie received her PhD from the University of Utah, where she studied youth development and research methods.



Learning To SUPERVISE

What Light Do You See Yourself In?

LIGHT SHED ON ANY SITUATION

makes it look different. It follows that the tone we set, both internally and externally, casts shadows and highlights different points of view. As a new supervisor, the most important “lights” to shine allow us to know self (to understand our reaction to circumstances), to be able to separate self-worth from the work produced (because work will not always go smoothly), and to foster self-development in the workplace (by reaching out to role models while not mimicking them). Concerns and challenges about being in a new position are valid, *But* it is important to remain confident in your own capabilities (they did hire me!).

As new emerging professionals in the industry, the torch is passed to you, and you must step up to shed light on the gifts and areas of growth for camps, as well as yourselves, in the field. The kind of light you choose to shed on yourself will affect how you view yourself. Just as warm, dimly lit campfires seem to inspire healthy reflection and fluorescent lights seem to inspire sharp clarity, we need to learn how to manufacture the clarity of these fluorescents to give us an accurate view of ourselves as supervisors, when considering our identity and value, without losing the comforting amber glow of the campfire.



WILLIAM C. LOGAN, III
GWYNN M. POWELL, PHD
MARY KATHERINE KING

The light by which we view ourselves as leaders will influence how we view others and can have a drastic effect on those around us. There is a mindset characterized by the sharp brightness of our office fluorescents that, while different for every individual, I believe all leaders experience (yes, even the most accomplished, healthy, and composed) — the “Am I Good

Stories to Consider as a First-Time Supervisor

As you read, take stock of the feelings, emotions, and actions you would have in the following scenarios:

Consider this: In a moment of vulnerability, a peer shares with you that they are having severe anxiety attacks*. You try your best to comfort and affirm them, but before you can respond with any sage wisdom, your peer interrupts. “But I know why this is happening,” they almost shout with tears in their eyes. They describe to you, with flawless self-awareness, the thoughts, emotions, actions, and circumstances that they have allowed to slowly diminish their view of themselves. Then they shamefully put their hands in their pockets and say, “But I don’t know, I should be better than this.” I know the lessons learned as a peer leader serve as a steppingstone to where I am now.

Consider this: You are running an event on your own for the first time. After a quick description of what your responsibilities will be, you stop your supervisor and blurt, “Are you sure I am ready for this?” And you wonder if that question invalidates your potential success. In return your supervisor asks if you are nervous. And though you are wildly aware that you are, in fact, very nervous and more confident in your inevitable embarrassment than your ability to succeed, you don’t feel free to say so. Instead you say, “I’m ready.”

Enough? Can I Do This?” mindset. I have heard this mindset echoed through college classrooms filled with anxious students, offices filled with hardworking adults, and gyms filled with playful children. This mindset hides itself well in ambition, hard work, and humility, yet rears its sharp teeth most often to the campers, staff, and leaders who are genuinely

pursuing excellence in themselves and others. Let’s recognize this mindset and determine strategies for a successful launch into the realm of supervisor. We want you, the leaders of today and tomorrow, to view yourselves by the brightness and long-lasting light of LEDs as well as the comforting amber glow of a campfire flame.

“The light by which we view ourselves as leaders will influence how we view others and can have a drastic effect on those around us.”

Start with the “Self”

If you are supervising or mentoring anyone this summer, I encourage you to do the following:

- Step away from any group settings or environments of responsibility and take these steps:
 1. Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and count to 60, being diligent to not try to clear your mind or get control of your thoughts, emotions, or your body’s actions. Just experience what you are experiencing.
 2. Open your eyes and recognize your ability to be independent of your thoughts, emotions, and actions when you do not try to control them.
- Do both steps at least two more times before you finish reading this article, because this is a simple exercise in establishing your “self.” The pause helps you be more aware of your thoughts, emotions, and actions so you can establish your own identity (not be a copy of someone else) and make the distinction between looking up to someone and trying to become someone. Better knowing self brings about conviction to make tough decisions (and you will have them).

As a supervisor, you will be thrown curve balls multiple times during the day. How you choose to respond will set the tone for your problem-solving process and how the person you are working with perceives your level of belief and support for them.

SOCKS

Because leaders are often driven to be catalysts for change, we are challenged to validate our “self” if we do not see what we had in mind come to fruition. In Spanish, “Eso sí que es” (phonetically in English SOCKS) means “It is what it is.” This is a phrase we can use every day when we do not see things go the way we envisioned them, despite giving our best effort. When we internalize this phrase as a mindset, it becomes more than a reaction to negative circumstances. “It is what it is” becomes a reminder for us that our expectations may not match our present reality, even when we have given our best effort — and that is OK.

It Is All about the Choices

A goal for any supervisor, especially a new one, is to be open to multiple options rather than thinking only one solution exists. We want to build on our own healthy self-reflection to see our thoughts, emotions, and actions independently of a situation and to understand our own reactions, so we can place them in context with our organization and see options.

1. Issue of Control

When we lose control of our thoughts, emotions, or actions, we sometimes revert to subconscious defense mechanisms or conscious coping mechanisms that help us regain control but may not help us establish a healthy manifestation of who we are. Too often, strong critical thinkers, ambitious dreamers, dedicated hard workers, and humble servant leaders are unable to separate “self” from their ideas, job performances, roles, and responsibilities. We can be too hard on ourselves as we push to grow and improve. We cannot control situations and want to be open to alternative resolutions.

2. A Level of Separation

We must meet our own job responsibilities. However, there is a difference between investing in the job and allowing identity, value, and self to *become* the power trip. When we can be vulnerable (about what we know and don’t), self-reflective (about strengths

and growing edges), and humble (about wanting to learn and share) without compromising the value of our identity and personality, we can begin to learn that balancing act.

3. Proactive Skill Acquisition

Expand your toolbox. Healthy introspection is an important way to build your skills as an effective leader. Whether or not you have been trained in active listening, conflict resolution, and other important interpersonal tools, at the core it is being able to convey your thoughts, emotions, and actions without attaching your identity to them. Knowing that feedback, openness to new ideas, and truly hearing others is key to seeing areas to build skills. Ask to sit in on a few conversations (they might say “no,” but you won’t know unless you ask), ask for feedback on a conversation you just had (from the peer or from your supervisor), and really reflect on the feedback offered. Look for role models and actively participate in conversations.

Your role as a new (or newer) supervisor is a gold mine to be explored and cultivated. You have the opportunity to grow and reflect as you support your staff in a parallel process.

For many, at the end of our programs, we gather around the amber glow of a campfire. We invite all to take a moment, and we ask that you do now. Reflect on which light you view yourself in. What situations have been and will be overwhelming for you as a supervisor of children this summer? How could your life

and the lives of those around you be impacted by viewing yourself in a different light? At the end of the day, this is the same dream we pass onto our campers: that the amber campfire glow, which inspires vulnerability and unity, will not be just a summer experience, but rather a mindset to take home, to school, and through the rest of their lives. We hope you will continue to pursue this dream of positive emotional and mental health for yourself with the same passion and dedication that you pursue it for your campers.

* Note from the authors: As you uncover mental health challenges within yourself or others, let someone know and partner with a mental health professional. Only you can take the first step, but others can help you find a path.

William C. Logan, III, graduated with a BS from Clemson University’s Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management program where he helped build an ongoing peer mentorship initiative. He will be excitedly navigating his first summer as a full-time camp professional as you are reading this article.

Gwynn M. Powell, PhD, is on the faculty in Park, Recreation, and Tourism Management at Clemson University and has two decades of camp experience in the USA, Russia, South Africa, and Turkey. She also volunteers with the International Camping Fellowship.

Mary Katherine King is a junior at Clemson University. She is pursuing a Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management degree, with the aspiration to establish a career in the camp industry upon graduation. This summer will be her transition into a supervisor role at camp.

Discussion Questions

1. How often do you take stock of your thoughts, emotions, and actions? If you find that you are only aware of your thoughts, emotions, and actions as reactions to your circumstances, what might you do to change that?
2. Are you in control of your thoughts, emotions, and actions, or are they in control of you? Explain.
3. Are you aware of what motivates you, or are you unable to honestly process why you do certain things? Explain.



Be a Kind Leader

ASHLEY LIN

AM 16. My peers and I have always relied on kindness and support from one another. Despite the political polarization and toxic narratives that can drive society today, kindness isn't just a buzzword. It isn't limited to kindergarteners on a playground, or even first-year campers. Kindness is a positive-sum way to live in any field of work or study, but especially in the camp world, where it allows individuals to listen to each other's truth, learn from each other's experiences, and lift each other up.

In September 2019, I became the newest kind-leader-in-training at the first-ever Riley's Way Youth Leadership Retreat at Timber Lake Camp in Shandaken, New York. This retreat convened more than 100 fellow female changemakers and their mentors for two days of resilience building through connections, skill building through relevant and timely workshops, and impact building through peer-led conversations and support. We were also able to take part in various camp electives, eat together in the dining hall, sleep (or talk all night) in the bunks, and make s'mores by the campfire. It was a weekend of fun, inspiration, and growth. I came to envision myself as a fundamentally different type of leader — a kind leader.

Riley's Way Foundation is a youth empowerment organization that works with young leaders to use kindness and empathy to create meaningful connections and positive change. They envision a future where kind leaders build a better world. Before I worked with

Riley's Way, I saw kindness as a positive trait to have in leadership (and in life), although ruthlessness and assertiveness were often valued in the spaces I work in: entrepreneurship, venture capital, re-imagining education policy, etc. Within 48 hours at the retreat, however, I realized that kindness isn't just a positive trait to have, it is a way to be. As counselors, you know that a sense of community and belonging is especially important at camp — and kindness is the foundation of building community. Kindness is key for creating effective and sustainable change. It doesn't have to be mutually exclusive with taking initiative, working hard, or making yourself heard. The girls and staff at the retreat showed me that. They showed me how to listen to, learn from, and lift up others through kindness. You can do the same with your campers this summer.

First, Listen

We often talk about creating space for other people's voices, but what good is that space if the people in it aren't respected, listened to, or taken seriously? During the retreat, participants agreed on group norms, one of which was our shared commitment to open, honest, raw, and vulnerable discussion. With such discussion comes the need for good listeners who can listen without judgment to others' brutal and beautiful (brutiful, as a fellow participant put it) stories.

I heard Ian Sandler, cofounder of Riley's Way, share about his daughter, Riley, the beautiful young girl who always had a smile on her face, who had a blast at Timber Lake during

her summer there, and who loved connecting friends from different worlds. I listened to the story of the camp nurse returning to her childhood school to support students struggling like she had struggled. And I watched kindness grow in the space between the people who so bravely shared their stories and the people who so thoughtfully listened. Be sure to listen to your campers, and encourage them to do the same.

“

Riley's Way Foundation is a youth empowerment organization that works with young leaders to use kindness and empathy to create meaningful connections and positive change.”

Second, Learn

The magical thing about listening is that you often hear things you otherwise wouldn't have known, which leads to new and more informed perspectives. Kind leaders allow themselves to simultaneously be a student and a teacher. They fully

recognize, consider, and embrace the value others bring to a conversation. The best ideas can be found in the least expected places, and kind leaders are always cognizant of that. You and your campers will experience powerful moments when you are able to temporarily suspend opinions/biases and, instead, facilitate honest and open dialogue among the campers. Accept and welcome the creativity, individualism, and unconventional stories that campers bring; see yourself as a protector of this safe space.

Share

Kind leadership also means circulating knowledge and power. This can come in the form of coaching a sport, supporting campers in their creativity, and learning how to use inclusive language. Throughout the retreat, Riley's Way staff organized a fantastic lineup of workshops, speakers, and activities that allowed participants to hear from adults. I found, however, that the most valuable part was to have space to learn from each other. Some of the deepest learning I've ever experienced came from these candid and thoughtful peer-to-peer conversations, spontaneous chats in the dinner line, and even yoga by the lake. In every moment, there are opportunities for campers to learn from each other, learn from you, and even learn from their mistakes. Encourage campers to look around and be open to learn in every experience.

Finally, Lift

Kindness is a positive-sum action with limitless power. You can create kindness from nothing, and, with kindness, you can enable others to do anything. When I was invited by a girl to sit with her girl gang at dinner, when another girl and her mom stopped to ask me how I was doing, when a camp staff member reminded me to take time for myself — I felt like I mattered. I felt like I was a part of a community with a shared vision for the future. I felt ready to tackle anything that came my way and keep climbing. I wanted to share this feeling with others too. Camp is one

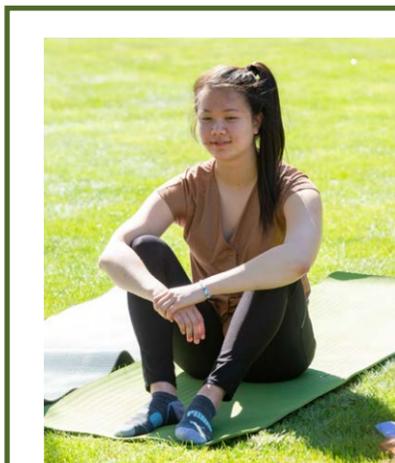


of the most formative experiences for young people because it is a dedicated space to feel empowered and empower others.

Ultimately, as a woman, a minority, and as a young person, I've often been told that there's only one seat at the table. To secure that one seat, it seemed like I would have to tear others down. Kindness shares the secret that there can be more than one seat, if the person in that seat uses their voice to create more seats at the table. Even though it

may sound sappy and Dr. Seuss-like, kindness is recognizing that we're all better off when we're all better off — and what goes around comes around. Kindness is going beyond treating others the way you would like to be treated and treating others how they would like to be treated. Kindness is being empathetic, genuine, and tenacious. Kindness is empathy and caring in the face of obstacles and discouraging odds.

Kindness is camp. And kindness can be you too.



Ashley Lin is a high school junior in Vancouver, Washington, and an intern for the Riley's Way Foundation, an organization that empowers young leaders to use kindness and empathy to create positive change in their communities. She is constantly thinking about using cross-cultural dialogue to inspire empathy in her role as the founder of Project Exchange, which designs online cultural exchange experiences for students around the world.

THE J. WENDELL AND RUTH T. HOWE AWARDS recognize those individuals who contribute their talents to *Camping Magazine*. The Golden Quill Award is presented to the authors of quality articles that promote a better understanding of the camp/outdoor education/youth development field, including current practices, critical issues, and research. The Golden Lens Award recognizes good photography that depicts the camp experience.

J. Wendell Howe was one of the early leaders in the private/independent camp movement in ACA's western region. He, along with his wife, Ruth, directed a Community Chest camp, Camp Condor, near Taft, California, in the summers of 1943 and 1944. In 1945, they bought a camp at Lake Tahoe and named it Skylake Camp for Boys. The camp is now called Skylake Yosemite Camp, which until recently was owned and directed by John T. Howe, CCD, J. Wendell and Ruth's son. Their daughter, Marian Howe Andersen Herndon, CCD, also gained recognition in the camp field as owner and director of Skylake Ranch Camp in Ahwahnee, California.

Funds for the Golden Quill and Golden Lens awards come from a memorial established in J. Wendell and Ruth T. Howe's name.

2020 GOLDEN QUILL AWARD WINNER

ELIZABETH MARABLE AND ARIELLA RANDLE ROGGE

"Where Are Their Adult Pants? Tools, Catchphrases, and Understanding for Choosing Today's Staff Members" (January/February 2019)



camp experience is helping campers and staff slow down the spin of life in order to find connections with the natural world through time shared in the out of doors climbing mountains, riding horses, and laying under the aspens. She and husband spend their spare time playing on the rivers and in the mountains of Colorado.

realized it was important for us to understand, generationally, what our staff need from us as coaches, mentors, and employers to do this work and to feel good about the work they are doing. We wanted them to understand they can do, and are already doing, hard things more often than they think. In addition,

“ The inspiration for this article came out of our desire to help staff realize they can do this job — even though it can be really, really hard. ”

Ariella Randle Rogge is co-director of High Trails Ranch, Sanborn Western Camps in Florissant, Colorado. She has spent the last 25 years working in the camping industry and in the experiential and secondary education fields. She is active in the ACA, Rocky Mountain LCOL, appreciates applied research, and believes in the restorative power of connecting children (and adults) with the natural world. She is the mom of two athletic, intelligent boys and the wife of a coach and inspiring teacher.

The inspiration for this article came out of our desire to help staff realize they can do this job — even though it can be really, really hard. We also

we want them to understand their capacity for dealing with uncertainty and discomfort is much higher than they might imagine. By providing a common language for our staff to discuss their challenges and successes at camp, we hoped to increase their sense of connection and support while also committing ourselves to our role as active, engaged coaches who are invested in the professional and personal development of each of our staff members. We also wanted to acknowledge and celebrate all of the different hats (pants) they will wear as staff members during a summer camp season.

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2020 GOLDEN QUILL AWARD HONORABLE MENTION

CHRISTOPHER OVERTREE

“Motivating Change: When Being Stuck Is the Sticking Point” (September/October 2019)

Christopher Overtree studied psychology at Princeton University and received his PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Massachusetts — Amherst. He is the executive director of the camping and innovative educational institution, the Aloha Foundation, which operates Camps Aloha, Hive, Lanakila, Horizons, Ohana, and Hulbert. He was previously a professor of clinical psychology, a child clinical psychologist, and an organizational consultant that focused on bullying prevention and promoting positive school climate. He is passionate about helping organizations transform the lives of children.

In “Motivating Change,” I adapted a highly effective clinical treatment modality to the everyday problems our campers and staff face, especially those moments when they feel “stuck.” Understanding how people approach problems and face change is crucial to being effective in our roles as counselors, coaches, teachers and parents. The best motivators facilitate those



conditions where people make empowered and autonomous choices. And when we do this successfully, the changes we help inspire are more powerful and sustainable.

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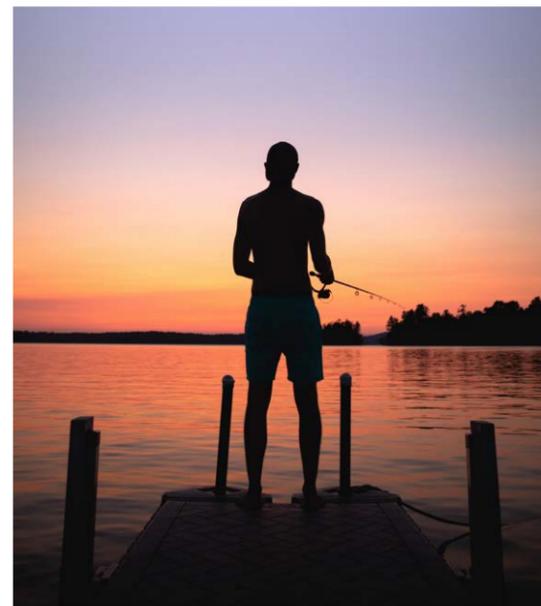
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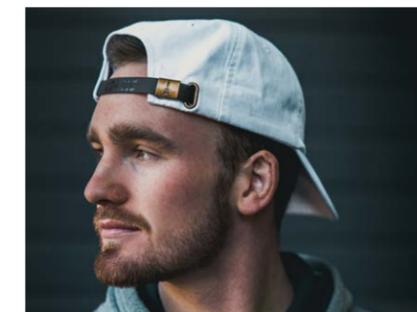
BEN COLE

“Last Light” Camp Manitou for Boys



It’s an absolute honor to receive this award, and I’d like to thank the people who saw what I saw in the capture. Growing up, I’ve always had an affinity for these golden, fleeting moments that comprise a life well lived. Finding a passion in photography allowed me a way to press pause in my life that is otherwise stuck on play. I think there’s tremendous value in being able to look back with clarity on the blissful moments we as humans are lucky enough to experience and distill the appreciation from them that they deserve.

I’d imagine most of the people reading this are familiar with the joyful chaos that is daily life at summer camp. We all know the days sure feel long, but the weeks feel short. For me, this



“ Finding a passion in photography allowed me a way to press pause in my life that is otherwise stuck on play. ”

photo represents the counterpart to that chaos, the more tranquil end to the day when the sun dips below the horizon, the lake becomes a mirror, and your new friends slowly start to feel like family.

2020 GOLDEN LENS AWARD HONORABLE MENTION

KIT KARZEN

“Guitar Heroes” Brave Trails



Kit Karzen is an LA- and NYC-based photographer and producer who specializes in documentary, outdoor, and conflict. Kit’s background stems from professional sport, where he competed as a professional cyclist for Team USA until his retirement in 2012. During his post-competition tenure of working in global marketing at Oakley Inc., a trip to Israel during the Gaza-Israeli war of 2014 exposed Kit to his first conflict zone, and left him with a sense of conviction to tell stories that focused on social justice and environmental change. Just a few months later, Oakley would be impacted by a company-wide layoff that included his entire division. Kit spent his entire severance on used camera gear and has been photographing ever since.

In 2016, I was scared out of the closet by the horrors of the Orlando massacre. I felt compelled



to recognize my community out of solidarity, but was left to my own devices when trying to understand my sexual identity, relationships, and role as a queer person. It wasn’t until my mid-20s that I eventually found a tiny, loving community of my own to help guide me through these uncharted, rainbow-tinted waters. This photograph is a sentiment to the community that Brave Trails has worked so tirelessly to cultivate through its programming and culture. It wasn’t more than a few moments of documenting camp life that I realized just how special this place was. I can only imagine what 12-year-old Kit would have been like had he been given the same safe-space to provoke the most authentic and happy version of himself.



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A Place to Grow

Sam Scott

The Princeton-Blairstown Center (PBC), a 264-acre camp in northwestern New Jersey, suggests on T-shirts, water bottles, and its website that it is “A Place to Grow.” This, despite being a concise summary of what is truly a multidimensional campus devoted to experiential education, didn’t resonate with me while I sat in my dorm common room scrolling through what felt like thousands of listings for summer internships. “A Place to Grow” wasn’t as important at the time as potential salary, living conditions, better-than-average food, and duration of work.

run in Blairstown was designed to encourage strong bonds and relationships, to facilitate teamwork, or to teach children to communicate their feelings instead of lashing out, but I hadn’t expected to be so moved myself. I’d never known anyone whose first instinct in a disagreement was to raise their fists, who truly had to worry about street violence on the walk home from fourth grade, or who’d only ever seen a lake or an unpolluted river on television.

So I had to grow. As staff, I had been taught that I should work to engage with my participants where they were, meaning I would be the

We were learning together. I lost the title of “facilitator” and became one of them, at least for those few days. We came from different places but weren’t discouraged from learning from each other, setting aside preconceived stereotypes and helping to develop a cultural understanding. We grew through interactions that would have been impossible without the Princeton-Blairstown Center.

Since that first conversation, I grew better about meeting my groups where they were, understanding their backgrounds, and helping them to develop communication, teamwork, and self-help skills they otherwise may not have had an opportunity to refine. My salary, living conditions, and better-than-average food were what they were, but more importantly, I grew with every group that visited, and I saw most of my students do the same.

“...sesame allergies have increased significantly globally, especially in the past two decades.”

I grew up in a stereotypical suburb in Northern Virginia and attend school in central Maine, so the wilds of northwestern New Jersey were a shot in the dark for me. I knew PBC sought to reach students from New Jersey’s urban areas, youth primarily from Trenton and Newark. The only prolonged contact I’d ever had with inner-city youth, challenges, or culture was through CNN, narrated by Anderson Cooper. PBC lifted that veil for me. Turns out, Anderson Cooper doesn’t follow inner-city youth around to shield soft suburbanites from their tough truths. It hit me hard. I didn’t realize how accustomed I’d grown to gated communities and golf courses; these kids were coming in with stories that made the stuff I saw on television look like an afternoon picnic.

My summer students and I were both in for the education of our lives.

Over time, I realized how comprehensive and accurate the PBC slogan really was. I wasn’t surprised to hear that every program

one who adapted to them, who understood their trials and tried to relate as well as I could. This made sense, and I thought I was prepared for it, but I struggled. I constructed great relationships with the kids, but when it came to talking about trust and respect, one of my first group members interrupted, asking, “Do you know how hard Trenton is?”

I decided to be honest. I told them that I’d done my research on the area, but I’d never lived there, so, no, I couldn’t relate firsthand. The conversation continued until we came to a mutual understanding that in a perfect (or better) world, one’s environment shouldn’t have such an impact on how respectful one is. It was a moment of realization for all of us, and it made my relationship with the kids stronger.



Sam Scott is a sophomore studying English and philosophy at Colby College in Waterville, Maine. He grew up hiking, biking, and backpacking around Virginia’s Shenandoah Mountains, and hopes to continue writing for the benefit of those less fortunate than he. He spent the summer of 2019 as a Facilitator at the Princeton-Blairstown Center’s award-winning Summer Bridge Program.

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