

## Section 3

# Caring For Campers

# Cabin Management

Updated May 14, 2008

- **Be clear with your expectations to campers from the start.** Go over the rules. Tell them the limits. They will test you right away and you must be ready to show them that you are in control. It's much easier to take a firm stance at the beginning of the week, and relax later when things are going smoothly, than it is to try and regain control after you have lost it.
- **Establish routines for wake-up, clean-up, and bedtime.** If you put procedures in place the first day it will help make the entire session, and in fact, the entire summer go smoother for everyone.
- **Set up a system for rotating the various jobs that need to get done.** Two campers can be waiters for each meal. Different campers can be in charge of sweeping, trash pickup, and the daily service task. Post a list of who is doing what and remind campers the night before.
- **Be sure the SC and AC are in agreement on things** before you tell your campers. There is nothing worse for the SC/AC relationship than to have two different sets of rules within the same cabin. When in doubt tell them, "I'll have to check with – before I answer that."
- **Stay on top of things.** Know your service task the day before. Know if your cabin has flag raising or has signed up for Chapel the day before. Stay in touch with your campers and know their favorite activities. Know what the evening programs are for the next few days. Be sure your overnight, nights out, and program responsibilities don't conflict. A clipboard or a notebook will help you stay organized.
- **Enforce the camp Code of Conduct and follow it yourself.** If staff don't follow the Code of Conduct, campers won't. This goes for things that you may *think* have exceptions for staff, but they don't! (e.g. No gum, no bare feet, no food in the cabins, no radios outside the cabins, no swearing.) Think how angry *you* get when you observe a double standard in operation!
- **Be particularly vigilant during meals.** The SC or AC must sit where s/he can see the stage. Make sure food is passed and that campers use manners. Regulate trips for fruit, salad, PB&J, or veggie options. Initiate and manage cleanup. Save cheers and frivolity until cleanup has started. Watch for the person in charge to approach the stage and warn campers to get ready to put their hands up. Keep your kids quiet during announcements. Participate in songs! Meals will always end with the phrase, "Counselors, identify your waiters; campers, turn towards your counselors." Good reminders!
- **Spend time thinking about the dynamics of your group.** Is there a friendship "clique" that is excluding others? Who is left out? Who is homesick? Who is picking on others? Who is getting picked on? If you talk with your SC or AC about what you observe, you can make a plan and attack the problems together. This is perhaps the most rewarding aspect of working as a cabin counselor.
- **Deal with behavior problems yourself first.** There should be enough steps in the process so that by the time a camper sees the Camp Director the camper knows he or she is *really in trouble*. This does not mean that you should not mention problems to the Program Manager and Head Counselor. They really do want to know about the problems you are dealing with. All it means is that you don't send a camper to the Camp Director right away. When a parent calls, it is helpful if the Program Manager and Head Counselor have already heard about a potential problem, even if they have not yet dealt with it. The Head Counselor is your first source for advice or assistance. **Exception:** Any camper who is making life miserable for other campers must be dealt with immediately. Report the problem to the Program Manager ASAP. Bullies need to know we are serious about, and have zero tolerance for, this behavior.
- **Plan ahead and ask questions.** These are perhaps the most important keys to having a good experience as a cabin counselor. You can't manage a group unless you have confidence and you are organized. The campers will sense it when you don't know what is going on, and they will take advantage of the situation. Remember, you are the adult! Take charge!

# The Task and Role of the Counselor

Reviewed May 14, 2008

When you became a Camp Echo counselor you accepted one of the greatest responsibilities there is in life. You will be entrusted with the health, well-being and education of a group of young people.

Your role will be complex. You will be teacher, friend, disciplinarian, mentor, coach and protector to each of them in turn and, sometimes, to all at once. As you play each of these roles, you have the tremendous power to make a positive impact on a camper's life.

Parents' willingness to place the life, limb and spirit of their child in the sole care of Camp Echo and its counselors is an expression of trust that you as a counselor must accept with reverence.

The task of incorporating Echo's goals in each child's camp experience rests almost completely with you. To do this you must accept the campers as you find them and recognize their worth as individuals. The measure of the success of our camping program is not in what we do, but in how we affect the lives of our campers.

Being a sensitive, effective counselor is more art than science. If you approach your job with a true love for kids, a firm sense of responsibility, a willingness to work hard and a commitment that will allow you to accept nothing but the best from yourself, then you will have the job you have undertaken well begun.

## How to Talk Effectively With a Camper

Reviewed May 22, 2002

The most important part of counseling is not the fun, food, or fashion. It's listening, listening, and more listening to your campers. In fact you may never know how great it feels to some campers just to have someone listen to them. Lending an ear is probably the best way to help some campers get out their frustrations and discover themselves.

It is also a good way to keep campers in control and on your side. However, many counselors have trouble getting through to their campers because they make the mistake of talking to them instead of with them. There is a difference – a huge one.

***Here are some tips for getting the most out of a good, personal conversation with a camper:***

- The most important thing is that you listen! It is amazing how much better a camper feels when he or she knows someone is not only listening to them, but hearing them. Don't interrupt or interject your own opinion. If you're talking, you're not listening or learning about your camper and their feelings.
- If you have a limited time for a conversation with your camper, warn them in advance as to how much time you have to talk. Be careful! Don't make it sound cold, as if the camper were on a timer: "Go ahead, you've got five minutes." Instead, say something like: "I wish we had more time to talk, but remember in ten minutes we've got to go to lunch. Will that be enough time, or would you rather wait until afterwards when we can really get into it? It's up to you." Try to schedule a time where you know the two of you won't have to stop in the middle of the discussion.
- Never cut a camper off before they are finished! It hurts their feelings. If you really have to get going, say something like: "I really want to finish this conversation, but I didn't realize how much time has passed – it's almost time for dinner! Tell you what: Let's eat, and continue the talk afterwards. OK?"
- Make eye contact! Don't just sit there taking in the scenery. You've got to let that camper know they have your undivided attention! Don't let your mind wander or drift from the conversation.
- Ask questions to show you're interested. The camper will feel like they really have a friend.

- Some campers make small problems out to be catastrophic! But to them they may very well be. Understand this and sympathize with it. If a camper comes to you for help, try to see the problem through their eyes, not your own. Everybody looks at things differently, but in counseling, a camper's problem should be as important to you as it is to the camper!
- Don't think you can handle the same problem with a different camper in the same way. Tim isn't going to see the same problem as Ralph sees it, nor Peggy like Betty. One camper may look at a problem as being "no big deal" while another one sees it as "life and death." Feel each camper out and think about how you would handle things according to the feelings of each individual.
- When you're having a discussion with a camper, try to remain calm, rational and logical. If the camper wants to get out their frustrations by screaming, yelling, and jumping up and down, let them. Don't say anything to them until they realize they are not getting anywhere (although there's nothing wrong with releasing tension), and then say something like: Do you feel better now? Good. Then let's calm down now and see if we can come up with a plan to help you."
- Try not to give too much advice if you can help it. Instead, let the camper do most of the talking and working out their own problem (teach them to think for himself or herself). If they ask you a question as to what they should do about their problem, you should reply with: What do you think?"
- Most people (campers included) already know the solution to their problems. Sometimes they just want to hear it from someone else to justify their own thinking. Help them to say what they think is the solution and then tell if you agree with it or not by giving your own opinion. But then you may want to ask the camper (depending on the case) : "If I agree with you, does that make it so? " Or: "If I disagree with you, does that make you wrong?" Again, this teaches the camper to stand on their own, think for himself or herself, and work out their own problems.
- If ever you feel the need to change a campers point of view, just inject several other ways of looking at the situation. Open up different perspectives and "steer" the camper in the right direction. Don't command what's right and wrong. You may just want to try asking them to give your way a shot because you think it's best. Give them the pro's and con's of whatever they are doing and whatever they decide.
- It's always nice to end a discussion with a handshake or a good hug!

## The “SMILE” Method

Added May 20, 2004

SMILE on the first day ...

- S** Smile a lot.
- M** Make eye contact.
- I** Introduce campers to you and to each other.
- L** Learn names.
- E** Enthusiasm.

SMILE all session long ...

- S** Smile a lot.
- M** Move towards your campers.
- I** Include them in activities.
- L** Learn about your campers.
- E** Encourage campers to make new friends.

# Child Growth and Development: Age Group Characteristics

## **About Age Eight**

### ***Physical Development***

- Growth still slow and steady -- arms lengthening, hands growing.
- Eyes ready for both near and far vision. Near-sightedness may develop this year.
- Permanent teeth continuing to appear.
- Large muscles still developing. Small muscles better developed too.
- Manipulative skills increasing.
- Attention span getting longer.
- Poor posture may develop.

### ***Characteristic Behavior***

- Often careless, noisy, argumentative, but also alert, friendly, interested in people.
- More dependent on mother again, less so on teacher. Sensitive to criticism.
- New awareness of individual differences.
- Eager, more enthusiastic than cautious. Higher accident rate.
- Gangs beginning. Best friends of same sex.
- Allegiance to other children instead of to an adult in case of conflict.
- Greater capacity for self-evaluation.
- Much spontaneous dramatization, ready for simple classroom dramatics.
- Understanding of time and use of money.
- Responsive to group activities, both spontaneous and adult-supervised.
- Fond of team games, comics, television, movies, adventure stories, collections.

### ***Special Needs***

- Praise and encouragement from adults.
- Reminders of responsibilities.
- Wise guidance and channeling of interests and enthusiasm, rather than domination or unreasonable standards.
- A best friend.
- Experience of belonging to peer group – opportunity to identify with others of same age and sex.
- Adult-supervised groups and planned after school activities.
- Exercise of both large and small muscles.

## **About Age Nine or Ten**

### ***Physical Development***

- Slow, steady growth continues – girls forge further ahead.
- Some children reach the plateau preceding the preadolescent growth spurts.
- Lungs as well as digestive and circulatory systems almost mature. Heart especially subject to strain.
- Teeth may need straightening. First and second bicuspid appearing.
- Eye-hand coordination good. Ready for crafts and shop work.
- Eyes almost adult size. Ready for close work with less strain.

### ***Characteristic Behavior***

- Decisive, responsible, dependable, reasonable, strong sense of right and wrong.
- Individual differences distinct, abilities now apparent.
- Capable of prolonged interest. Often makes plans and goes ahead on own.
- Gangs strong and of one sex only, of short duration and changing membership.
- Perfectionist – wants to do well, but loses interest if discouraged or pressured.
- Interested less in fairy tales and fantasy, more in community and country and in other countries and peoples.
- Loyal to country and proud of it.
- Spends a great deal of time in talk and discussion. Often critical of adults, although still dependent on adult approval.
- Frequently argues over fairness in games.
- Wide discrepancies in reading ability.

### ***Special Needs***

- Active, rough and tumble in play.
- Friends and membership in a group.

- Training in skills, but without pressure.
- Books of many kinds, depending on individual reading level and interest.
- Reasonable explanations without talking down.
- Definite responsibility.
- Frank answers to questions about coming physiological changes.

### **The Pre-Adolescent**

#### ***Physical Development***

- A "resting period" followed by a "growth spurt" anytime between age 9 and 13.
- Boys may mature as much as two years later than girls.
- Girls are usually taller and heavier than boys.
- Reproductive organs maturing. Secondary sex characteristics developing.
- Rapid muscular growth.
- Uneven growth of different parts of the body.
- Enormous but often capricious appetite.

#### ***Characteristic Behavior***

- Wide range of individual differences in maturity level.
- Gangs continue, though loyalty to the gang is stronger in boys than in girls.
- Interest in team games, pets, television, radio, movies, comics. Marked interest differences between boys and girls.
- Teasing and seeming antagonism between boys' and girls' groups.
- Awkwardness, restlessness, and laziness common as a result of rapid and uneven growth.
- Opinion of own group beginning to be valued more highly than that of adults.
- Often becomes overcritical, changeable, rebellious, uncooperative
- Self-conscious about physical changes.
- Interested in earning money.

#### ***Special Needs***

- Understanding of the physical and emotional changes about to come.
- Skillfully planned school/recreation programs to meet needs of those approaching puberty as well as those who are not.
- Opportunities for greater independence and for carrying more responsibility without pressure.
- Warm affection and sense of humor in adults.
- No nagging, condemnation, or talking down.
- Sense of belonging, acceptance by peer group.

### **The Adolescent**

#### ***Physical Development***

- Rapid weight gain at beginning of adolescence. Enormous appetite.
- Sexual maturity, with accompanying physical and emotional changes. Girls are usually about two years ahead of boys.
- Sometimes a period of glandular imbalance.
- Skeletal growth completed, adult height reached, muscular coordination improved.
- Heart growing rapidly at beginning of period.

#### ***Characteristic Behavior***

- Going to extremes, emotional instability with "know-it-all" attitude.
- Return of habits of younger child - nail biting, tricks, impudence, day-dreaming.
- High interest in philosophical, ethical, and religious problems. Search for ideals.
- Preoccupation with acceptance by the social group. Fear of ridicule and of being unpopular. Oversensitive and self-pity.
- Strong identification with an admired adult.
- Assertion of independence from family as a step towards adulthood.
- Responds well to group responsibility and participation. Groups may form cliques.
- High interest in physical attractiveness.
- Girls usually more interested in boys than boys in girls, resulting from earlier maturing of girls.

#### ***Special Needs***

- Acceptance by and conformity with others of own age.
- Adequate understanding of sexual relationships and attitudes.
- Kind, unobtrusive, adult guidance which does not threaten the adolescent's feeling of freedom.
- Assurance of security. Adolescents seek both dependence and independence.
- Opportunities to make decisions and to earn and save money.
- Provision for constructive recreation. Some cause, idea, or issue to work for.

# Working With Boys in a Summer Camp Setting

Michael Thompson, Ph.D. – Reprinted from Camping Magazine, May/June 2007

## Six Tips for Working with Boys

- 1. Remember that boys value choice and control.** To the extent that you can give boys choices about when and how they enter the water, for instance, or in which order they take a swim test, you will elicit their cooperation. One of the most important aspects of the scene I described is that the boys were able to pick the counselor with whom they wanted to work during that activity period.
- 2. Avoid power struggles.** Because issues of hierarchy and dominance are so salient for boys, it is best if you can finesse the power issues much of the time. (This is difficult for college-age counselors who are just feeling their own adult power.) In the essay, one counselor did it by “playing” at being powerful; the other counselor did it by understating her power.
- 3. Silently accept boys’ fears or acknowledge them light-heartedly.** Boys are often humiliated by being afraid; it offends their sense of masculinity, so do not spend a lot of time talking about their fears. Either accommodate them silently, as the swim instructor did, or acknowledge them lightly and provide a boy with a way out. One former camper told me that once when he climbed up a high diving tower at his camp, and was not “supposed” to climb down, he froze in fear at the top. A counselor climbed up, stood beside him, held out his hand and said, “Let’s jump together.” That generous act turned a moment of terror into triumph.
- 4. Throw yourself into an activity with “boyish” enthusiasm.** Boys respond to the energy of their fathers from early in life. If you are excited about an activity, your enthusiasm will serve as a form of leadership, and they will respond to it, as long as it is not false or manufactured.
- 5. Boys respond to the quiet confidence of their counselors.** One of the most important things that mothers provide for little boys who are playing or taking risks is confidence in them. A mother’s silent trust supports them. You do not have to constantly coach, encourage or cheer on boys when they are confronting a task. Your silent confidence is enormously helpful to them. Too much booster-ism can turn them off.
- 6. Peer pressure is one of the most powerful forces in the life of boys.** Let the presence and example of other boys do its work. As a counselor, you do not have to run everything with your instructions and your direction. As long as you have some camp “veterans” among a group of boys, other boys will key on them and follow them. Save your precious ammunition for groups made up of new campers or times when the leader boys have collapsed into giggles or an oppositional stance. Boys appreciate it when they are not being led all of the time.

## Self-Evaluation and Peer Evaluation

1. If you are an experienced counselor, sit down and make a list of the three things you did best with boys and the things you have tried with boys that have bombed. Be honest with yourself and after you have listed them try to analyze why some work and some do not.
2. If you are a first-time counselor, make the list two weeks into the camp session. Gender matters. It is worthwhile focusing on the techniques you use both with boys and girls.
3. Whether you are experienced or inexperienced, ask a colleague to observe you working with boys and give you feedback about what you did right and what did not work well.

# Tips for Good Health

Updated May 14, 2008

- Although Camp Echo's Health Officer is ultimately responsible for the health of all campers, counselors and staff members must act as the Health Officer's eyes and ears around camp. Problems should be reported to the Health Officer when they are small, not after they have become significant.
- Sick call is held after breakfast and dinner (**not lunch!**) and should be used for routine problems such as sore throats, earaches, and bug bites. The Health Officer is always available to handle emergencies.
- There are many things a counselor can do to help ensure that the campers remain healthy. The following list contains some good preventative measures:
  - See that clothes are changed daily.
  - See that campers are dressed properly for the weather.
  - Make sure proper footwear is worn. Shoes are required; socks are recommended. Both should be dry!
  - Hands should be washed\* with soap and water, or Purell sanitizer, for 15 seconds before every meal.
  - People with runny noses should use tissues.
  - Campers and staff must get proper rest. **Saska is important.**
  - See that your campers are protected from sunburn, poison ivy, and bug bites.
  - Campers must brush their teeth and wash faces daily.
  - Campers should shower regularly. Daily swimming is not a substitute for bathing.
  - Be aware of eating habits and make sure children are eating properly.
  - Regular use of the Kybo is important for good health. Encourage these practices.
  - Campers should drink plenty of water! Encourage a glass of water before they have bug juice.
  - Always choose "safety" over "fun" when campers are engaged in physical activities.
  - Know the special needs and limitations of the campers in your cabin and watch out for them.
- Counselors are expected to set a good example with their own behavior in matters concerning health. Not getting enough rest is a sure way to get sick. Counselors can encourage good health in their campers by making things like washing hands and brushing teeth cabin activities.
- With regard to health and safety, an ounce of prevention is definitely worth a pound of cure. Good judgement on the part of the staff is vital to maintaining proper health standards. You need to act in a way that a parent would act if he or she were present. **Do not overlook your own health!**
- **Campers come to camp healthy and we want to send them home healthy.** Sending campers home with poison ivy or sore throats does not generate goodwill. Part of our job is to run the camp in a way that promotes good health. We can't do this unless every staff member does his or her share.
- When, in your judgment, a camper should see the Health Officer, **do not** prescribe what action the Health Officer should take. Do not say, "Go to the nurse and get some aspirin." Simply tell the camper to see the Health Officer. Remember to save routine problems for sick call after breakfast or dinner.

## \* Hand Washing is Extremely Important!

Hand washing is the single most important measure one can take to prevent illness. Many people, including adults, do not wash their hands as often or as well as needed. Hand washing is a key, often-overlooked behavior important for food safety, disease prevention, and personal health. Wash hands:

- After using the bathroom. (95% report doing so; only 68% are observed doing so.)
- After blowing your nose, sneezing, or coughing. Hand washing prevents the spread of disease.
- Before eating or handling food. Waiters **must** wash hands before performing duties!
- After taking out the trash, picking up litter, or sweeping and using a dustpan.
- After engaging in outdoor land-based activities like playing sports, or petting animals.

# Health Concerns for Campers and Staff

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As a counselor, you may be the first person a camper will come to with a complaint, or you may be the first to notice a particular problem. Please follow up with the Health Officer any time you suspect a camper or a staff member has a health-related problem. Here are some specific things to be on the lookout for.

## *Be on the lookout for the following things:*

**Poison Ivy:** starts as a blotchy red rash that really itches. Some kids are really sensitive to it and can pick it up and spread it around in no time. Other kids have less sensitivity but can get a really bad rash if left untreated. Therefore, it is important that the rash is treated as soon as possible. Send camper to clinic with a clean set of clothes so they can take a shower in special soap and not have to re-contaminate themselves with their old clothes. If the camper has had the rash for more than one day, the sleeping bag or blankets must be laundered to avoid recontamination. Bring bedding to the clinic to be sent into town.

**Mosquito Bites:** A very common occurrence at camp. Encourage campers to wear bug spray, especially on over night camp outs. Keep an eye on campers who scratch their bites, infection is common and needs to be treated by the Health Officer. Some kids will have an allergic reaction to mosquito bites. This reaction is characterized by excessive swelling or itching at the site of the bite. Any child with an over reaction to a bite should be seen by the Health Officer. Any child with an excessive number of bites should be seen as well.

**Bedwetting or Clothes Soiling:** Campers can have a hard time getting to the bathroom in time at camp. Any time you find soiled bedding or clothing, discretely remove the items from the cabin and bring them to the clinic to be laundered. Camper should be seen by Health Officer to rule out bladder infection and a plan must be developed to avoid continuation of the problem.

**Lice Infestation:** Lice are tiny but visible insects that live in human hair close to the scalp. They feed on blood from the scalp and cause itching. Although lice are not really a health concern they are problematic and must be dealt with as soon as they are discovered or suspected. Lice pass easily from person to person through direct contact. Therefore it is important to remind campers *not* to share hairbrushes, combs, accessories, bandanas or hats. Signs of lice include itching on the head or hairline and actually seeing lice or nits (eggs) in the hair. If you see evidence of lice on one of your campers alert the Health Officer right away. If the Health Officer confirms the presence of lice, the camper will be treated immediately in the clinic. Counselor should return to cabin and bag all of that camper's clothes and bedding to be laundered. Other campers and counselors in the cabin should be checked for lice. Counselors will need to wash all mattresses with a bleach-and-water solution obtained from the clinic or from the Property Manager.

**Impetigo:** A bacterial infection that appears most frequently around the nose and mouth. It can be very contagious and needs to be treated with antibiotics right away. It first shows up as a small group of blisters. Later the blisters burst and form a yellowish-brown crust. The skin beneath the crust is red and weeping. If not treated the infection can spread. Alert the Health Officer to any mysterious rashes.

**Athlete's Foot:** An irritating but harmless condition that is caused by a fungal infection. It can be slightly contagious and very uncomfortable. Remind campers to wear flip-flops in the showers to avoid catching or spreading the fungus. If a camper complains of itching feet send them to the clinic at sick call for a footbath and fungal spray. Remind campers to dry carefully between their toes after swimming or bathing. Clean cotton socks help to keep the area dry if closed-toe shoes must be worn. Sandals are a much better choice because they allow toes to breathe and may feel better than gym shoes.

**Lake Rash and Swimsuit Itch:** Some folks are sensitive to our lake water and break out in a flat red itchy rash usually on the trunk of their bodies. Taking a warm soapy shower immediately after swimming is the best way to avoid lake rash. If the rash is itchy, send them to the Health Officer for some anti-itch cream. Do not allow campers or staff members to wear their wet bathing suits all day long. Tight fitting suits and high humidity can create terrible rashes where they don't belong. Never let a camper sleep in his or her bathing suit. Dinner is a good time to check with your campers to be sure they have changed out of their suits. If for some reason they are still wearing suits, other than for the across the lake swim, be sure they go back to the cabin and change right after the meal.

**Swimmer's Ear:** Is an infection of the external ear canal due to excessive wetness or dryness. You can determine whether an ear ache is Swimmers ear by asking the patient to pull on their ear lobe. If this causes more pain the chances are good that they have swimmer's ear as opposed to an infection of the middle ear. In either event the person should see the Health Officer to get help with the pain and treatment for the infection. Campers who are prone to swimmer's ear should wear ear plugs when swimming and thoroughly dry their ears after swimming.

**Cuts and Scrapes:** During their stay at camp most of us have the misfortune of needing a Band Aid for a cut or scrape. Counselors will have simple first aid kits in their cabin with cleaning supplies, topical antiseptic and Band Aids. If you clean a wound and bandage it, be sure to send the camper to the Health Officer at the next sick call so that we can keep an eye on the wound and be sure it does not get infected. If Band Aids get wet or dirty please re-clean the wound and replace them.

**Foot Problems:** Camp is a terrible place to have feet that hurt. Be sure you and your campers observe the shoe-wearing rule. If you or your campers develop cuts or blisters on your feet be sure to see the Health Officer at the next sick call to be examined. Feet can get infected so easily and a sore foot ruins a day at camp.

**Falls:** Falls account for more than one third of childhood injuries requiring medical attention. The camper aged child is most often involved in a fall related to a sports or recreational activity such as tree climbing, bicycling and organized sports. The injuries most related to sports include extremity injuries, head trauma, abdominal injury and spinal cord or vertebral column injury. Be sure to alert the Health Officer to any serious falls suffered by a camper or a staff member. Injured person must be observed for a period of time to rule out head trauma and serious internal injury as a result of a fall.

**Falls from the Top Bunk:** If a camper falls out of one of the top bunks treat them as you would a traumatic head or spine injury. A CPR/First Aid certified staff member should hold c-spine stabilization. Patient should not be moved. Send someone immediately to get the Health Officer who will assess the situation and decide how to proceed.

**Allergies:** Some kids will have a long history of allergies and some will have their first allergic symptoms at camp. Symptoms include runny nose, itchy, watery eyes, and constant bouts of sneezing. As a counselor remember that your camper may be miserable with their allergy symptoms. Encourage them to see the Health Officer for symptom relief. Here are some tips on how to distinguish allergies from the common cold. Kids with colds often run temperatures. Allergies do not cause fever. Allergies tend to cause itching of the nose and eyes. Colds do not. Allergies tend to cause constant bouts of sneezing. Colds are characterized by sporadic sneezing. Colds tend to last only 3 to 5 days typically. Allergies last as long as the allergen is present.

**Asthma:** As with allergies some kids will have a long history of asthma and come to camp with several medications and some kids will experience their first bout of asthma at camp. Asthma has become the most common childhood illness in the United States. Asthma can be triggered by a number of allergens: plant, animal, food, smoke or dust, exercise, cold air, changes in weather or temperature, strong emotions: i.e. fear, anger, laughing, or crying. Signs and symptoms can be different in each child. They can be immediate or progressive. Increased shortness of breath is the most common symptom; a night cough is common. Worsening symptoms include: Restlessness, apprehensiveness (due to air hunger), sweating, tripod position, speaking in short, broken phrases, the child may not be able to lie down. Call for Health Officer to come to camper if symptoms are such that child does not want to walk to the clinic. Campers who need short acting inhalers will be allowed to have the counselor keep the inhaler with them. If kids ask to use inhalers more than 4 times in one day they must see the Health Officer for a check up. Counselors should be aware of the signs and symptoms of asthma and have the camper visit the clinic any time asthma flares up. Be aware of triggers and try to avoid them if possible i.e.: if the camper seems to get sick when exercising or when around horses, etc.

**Respiratory Infections:** Some kids at camp are susceptible to respiratory infections due to the greater number of children living in a small space. Some suffer from lowered resistance to disease due to malnutrition, anemia, fatigue and chilling of the body. Coughing, especially at night or first thing in the morning, is a symptom of respiratory infection and/or allergy. Be sure to alert the Health Officer if any camper in your cabin has a cough. How can counselors keep campers healthy? Be sure campers are eating at meals. Be aware of children who do not seem to eat and explore reasons i.e. they don't like the food, or are they ill? Make sure your campers get enough sleep. Discourage late night fooling around and encourage sleeping at Saska. Be sure campers are wearing clothes appropriate for the weather. Are they warm enough? Did they change out of wet swim suits? Are they cool enough on hot days? Are they drinking enough water throughout the day to stay hydrated?

**Dehydration:** It is easy to become dehydrated at camp. Keep an eye on your campers and remind them to drink water often during the day. Dehydration can lead to headaches and stomachaches and can eventually bring on a fever. Encourage water intake during meals and in between.

**Choking:** Children are prone to choking on many objects. Food is especially dangerous. Observe your campers while they are eating and discourage shouting or jumping up and down during meals. If a child is choking, get help immediately. Perform abdominal thrusts if necessary. If a camper has had a choking episode but seems well afterward remember to notify the Health Officer so that she can keep an eye out for problems that may develop later.

**Sore Throats:** Most sore throats at camp are caused by viral infections that pass easily from person to person in close settings. Health Officer should see anyone complaining of a sore throat to rule out strep infection and to treat for pain.

*Always err on the side of caution. If you suspect a camper or a staff member is in need of medical attention, act on behalf of that person and report it to the Health Officer. You can never be too careful.*

# Missing Home and Homesickness

Updated May 13, 2009

*Missing home is a good thing! When people miss home, it means there's lots of love in that home.*

## **Some factors which might cause Missing Home to become Homesickness:**

- Over-attachment between camper and parent
- Attachment to friends or pets back home; lack of friends or pets at camp
- Longing for "city life" and customary amusements – TV, video games, and so on
- Lack of privacy in camp living quarters
- Being unaccustomed to doing work
- Lack of skills in doing camp activities
- Being sent to camp against the child's will
- Timidity – fear of the dark, fear of being alone
- Physical factors – indigestion, constipation, allergies
- Absence of someone to lean on
- Noticeable physical handicaps – stuttering, crossed eyes, other

## **What to look for – Be alert to catch it early:**

- Watch for the camper who tends to "blow off" Camp activities
- Watch for the camper who has a tendency to go off by himself or herself.
- Watch especially around mealtime and bedtime.
- Frequent requests to visit the Health Officer for no obvious physical reasons.
- Avoiding use of the Kybo.

## **Don't:**

- Don't shame or publicly embarrass a homesick camper.
- Don't send the camper to the Head Counselor, Health Officer, or Camp Director right away.
- Don't tell a camper they can call home. (Although this may happen later in the process)
- Don't tell a camper they can go home early. (This is an absolute last resort)

## **Do**

- Let the camper know that everyone, even you, misses home – and that's a good thing!
- Reinforce the idea of "making it through" the session, which is an important personal goal.
- The SC and AC should discuss the problem so they are "on the same page."
- Review the Personal History Form.
- Find interests and activities that appeal to the camper and keep him or her busy.
- Make the camper feel important and needed by assigning him or her a special duty.
- Find a buddy for the camper – perhaps another staff member.
- Make sure the camper has something to do, with a friend, for Fun Swim and Twilight Fun.
- Let the Head Counselor know you have a potential homesick camper.
- Ignore hysterical behavior – it is for attention. Deal with them when it is over.

## **Additional Steps**

- Camper sees the Head Counselor; parents notified of the problem.
- Head Counselor consults with Program Manager; parents updated.
- Head Counselor consults with Program Manager & Camp Director; parents called; camper sent home.

# Behavior Management Tips

Updated May 9, 2009

Portions from "Martin and His Friends: Counseling Skills that Effect Change at Camp"  
Robert B. Ditter, M.Ed., LCSW, Camping Magazine January/February 2009

## Basic Skills for Managing Behavior

- **Validation** – Acknowledgment of feelings and opinions of others so they feel heard and respected.
  - Acknowledge *their* feelings “*I can see how hurt you feel*” not “*I know exactly how you feel*”.
  - Acknowledge the courage it took to share their feelings - even if the actions were wrong.
  - Validate any positive way they tried to handle something or positive intention.
  - Acknowledge your contribution to the issue – we misjudge or not see when others need help.
- **Listening** – Validation goes hand-in-hand with good listening skills.
  - Find some privacy - take children aside in a tactful way so they aren’t humiliated.
  - Be interested – truly try to understand, not just to let them feel they had their say.
  - Get rid of distractions – stay away from background noise or remove objects from your hands.
  - Stop talking and asking too many questions - the more we talk, the less listening we do.
- **Inquiry** – Knowing how to get good information in a non-judgmental way.
  - Assume the role of investigator or scientist.
    - Get a clear picture of things in a way that is free from your own bias as is humanly possible.
    - Before you make any plan or response to a child’s behavior, you must get good information.
  - Go easy – most children do not like to be drilled into!
  - Approach children as if they were experts of their own behavior – let them educate you.
  - Ask what, not why!
    - When we ask “why” children feel pinned down and become evasive.
    - Ask clarifying questions that encourage a camper to expand or explain.
  - Find out when something first started happening.
    - Ask if it has happened before, with other kids, etc.
  - Use follow-up questions, especially if something catches your ear that you don’t get.
  - Nothing will shut a child down more quickly than when we ask a question to which we already know the answer! (Ex. “*Did I just see you do that!?!*” – you are not asking, you are testing.)

## Procedures for Managing Camper Behavior

- **Joining** – Verbal and non-verbal signaling that shows you are a friend and are there to help.
  - Ask simple, non-obtrusive questions. “*What do you like to do at camp?*”
  - Interact with the camper in a way that is low-key and low-risk
  - Use all behavior management skills: validation, listening, and inquiry
- **Setting the Table** – Explain reason for meeting in a manner that makes campers willing to cooperate.
  - Mention positive things you have observed or heard about the camper doing.
  - Matter-of-factly state the reason for the meeting – give *specific* examples of bad behavior.
  - Reassure the camper that you are here to help and support him/her.
  - Practice empathic understanding of the camper – recognize the camper’s struggle.
    - “*I am worried that other campers may think you are a poor sport.*”
    - “*I am worried that other campers may not want to be friends with you.*”

- **Behavior Planning** – Employ practical, specific strategies to shift behavior.
  - Make sure to get the camper’s input:
    - Ask what he/she does at home to manage behavior.
    - Ask what special thing he/she likes to do and of which he/she would like to do more.
  - This plan must be specific to each camper, but can include:
    - A token reminder, like a bracelet, that a counselor and camper wear together.
    - A point system in which a camper gets points for exhibiting a positive behavior.
    - A chart of reminders or strategies that a camper can use to manage or control outbursts.

**Achieving Positive Outcomes in Camper to Camper Behavior Management**

- If two campers are having differences, have them sit, face each other, and talk to each other.
- Sit or stand in a neutral position so as not to favor one camper's point of view over the other.
- Ask questions rather than providing solutions. Encourage give & take and ultimately, agreement.
- At the end of the exchange, re-state in simple terms what each camper has agreed to do/change.

**Problems which may confront the counselor:**

- conduct during meals
- noise after taps
- cooperation during service tasks or cabin cleanup
- following rules at activity areas
- willingness to participate in cabin group or evening program activities
- proper use of Saska
- personal hygiene – face, hands, bathing
- peer relationships

**Reasons for misbehavior and some possible responses to it:**

• **Attention**

Faulty belief:	<b><i>I am important only when I am being noticed.</i></b>
Your first reaction:	Annoyance, tendency to remind or coax, giving "warnings"
Alternatives:	Give attention for positive behavior at every possible opportunity Stop, Move towards, Eye contact, Low posture, Low voice, Slowly

• **Power**

Faulty belief:	<b><i>I am important when I am the boss and no one is bossing me.</i></b>
Your first reaction:	Anger, tendency to fight or even give in to the camper's demands
Alternatives:	Calm down, count to ten, appeal for camper's help and cooperation Realize that fighting or giving in only reinforces the behavior

• **Revenge**

Faulty belief:	<b><i>I am important only if I hurt others, since I have been hurt myself.</i></b>
Your first reaction:	Deeply hurt, tendency to retaliate yourself and "get even"
Alternatives:	Distance yourself to avoid feeling hurt – don't take it personally Build trust and convince the child that you care about them.

# Bullying

Updated May 15, 2007

A lot of young people have a good idea of what bullying is because they see it every day. Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose and the person being bullied has a hard time defending himself or herself. Usually, bullying happens over and over. Bullying is ...

- Punching, shoving and other acts that hurt people physically
- Spreading bad rumors about people
- Keeping certain people out of a “group”
- Teasing people in a mean way
- Getting certain people to “gang up” on others, known as scapegoating

There are many ways that young people bully each other, even if they don't realize it at the time. The behavior is insidious; it spreads harmfully in a subtle or stealthy manner during times when campers are unsupervised; and often the counselor is not aware that it is taking place until things get out of control.

## ***So what's wrong with bullying?***

- It makes the person being bullied feel miserable.
- Bullies are more likely to drop out of school and get into other trouble.
- It's guaranteed to ruin the camp experience for the victim, who will never want to return.
- It happens a lot more than some people think!

All Camp Echo staff must be on the lookout for bullying and its effects. We teach our campers to always be sensitive to the feelings of others. Bullying will not be tolerated. Bullies will be dealt with in a serious manner. ***Bullies must be given the message that such behavior is not allowed at Camp Echo.***

***Scapegoating***, a variant of bullying, is the process of singling out one camper that all others persecute. It often occurs when campers are frustrated or angry or when the group is composed of campers with differences they have not yet learned to accept. Although those who participate in scapegoating are always in the wrong, there is often some behavior or idiosyncrasy that the victim exhibits which initiates the process. Sometimes, the victim is not even aware that what they are doing is the trigger.

## **Techniques for Dealing with Bullying and Scapegoating**

***"Infinite patience for kids who make mistakes; zero tolerance for behavior that is hurtful to others."***

- Pairing**: A buddy system. Enlist a more mature cabin mate to befriend the camper being bullied.
- Giving Information**: Explaining in private how the victim comes across to other campers and how their behaviors, idiosyncrasies and attitudes are projected to others.
- Diversion and Ego Support**: Helping bullies to find other outlets or alternative ways to express themselves, allowing the bully to feel more secure and less dependent on making others feel inferior.
- Cabin Discussion**: Involving all of the campers in a possible solution. Bullying at times may be avoided if feelings can be expressed and problems addressed through open communication.
- Counseling**: One-on-one with the bully and the victim. Both must examine their own feelings, attitudes, and behaviors to gain insight into themselves and make a change for the better.
- In-Camp Help**: Seek it from members of the leadership staff, the Camp Director, Program Manager, Head Counselor, Health Officer, and others who have experience and training in this area.

***If these techniques do not “nip bullying in the bud” the bully must be disciplined by a higher camp authority and removed from the cabin for a period of time. Parents will be called and enlisted in the process of stopping the behavior. If this does not solve the problem, the bully must be sent home.***

# Discussing Sexual Behavior With Campers

## Guidelines for Staff

Robert B. Ditter, M.Ed., LCSW [bobditter1@aol.com](mailto:bobditter1@aol.com) May 20, 2004

### **Guideline #1: Staff do not *initiate* discussions of sexuality.**

Campers are stimulated enough by elements in our society without having counselors add to it. Sex is *not* a topic that counselors should bring up unless it is part of an overall, camp-sanctioned program.

### **Guideline #2: Preempt talk about sex with talk about *relationships*.**

Teens and pre-teens are almost as curious about relationships as they are about sex. Counselors could easily have informal group discussions to talk about the qualities of healthy relationships. Doing so would help set expectations about what is appropriate to talk about publicly at camp by modeling it. The following issues are usually compelling ones for teens:

- How you can tell if a girl/boy likes you.
- What it means to respect the person you care about.
- Having your own likes and dislikes separate from the one you care about. Caring about someone does not mean being joined at the hip.
- That a true loving relationship enhances the rest of your life, and does not take you away from other people or your own interests.
- That sex and love and love and affection are not synonymous.
- Seeing the person you care about for who they are, not who you want them to be.

*If some campers become provocative, which with some is always possible, see Guidelines #3 and #4.*

### **Guideline #3: Determine whether campers are being sincere or provocative.**

If campers are trying to “shock the counselor” or are getting *over-stimulated* (e.g. silly or provocative), it is important to stop the discussion immediately. The first line of defense is to say, as calmly as possible, “You know that kind of talk is not OK here at camp.” I stress the word “calmly” because the more irate or defensive a counselor is, the more satisfying it is to the camper provoking him/her and the more the camper will persist. If a camper says, as some have, that they talk this way all the time with their friends, the response should be, “What you talk about with your friends in private is your business, but here at camp it’s not OK.” If campers still cannot control their own behavior, the second step is to remove them from their audience or their audience from them. If they are still being provocative, arrange (with the Head Counselor or Camp Director) for them to call their parent or grandparent and have *them* say over the phone what it was they were doing or saying. This technique has a deeply sobering effect on most campers. The Head Counselor or Camp Director may need to prep the parents before the camper call.

### **Guideline #4: Provocative or graphic sex talk is simply unacceptable.**

Allowing campers to continue being provocative or suggestive is not good for anyone involved. The quieter, less assertive campers become embarrassed, uncomfortable, and feel unsafe in the presence of such behavior while the more provocative campers become increasingly unmanageable. Persistent provocative sexualized talk on the part of a particular camper may be a cry for help. Children who have witnessed inappropriate sexual behavior often signal their distress by being provocative themselves. Likewise, children who are in danger of acting out sexually may signal their need for help by dropping hints through explicit sexual conversation. In either case, if counselors have any concerns about a camper, they should discuss them with the Head Counselor or Camp Director.

### **Guideline #5: Counselors should not share their own experience when it comes to sex.**

When counselors live in close quarters with campers and a trusting environment is created, there is a risk that the *boundary* between counselors and campers may become blurred. One way the boundary is blurred is when counselors share details of their own private romantic exploits with campers. There have been times when campers have actually waited up for their counselor to come back from a day or night off out of sheer curiosity. In some ways, camp may be the perfect place for children to get their information about relationships, of which sex is “the icing on the cake.” Unfortunately, as Lynn Ponton points out in her book *The Sex Lives of Teenagers*, we are of two minds about sex in this country – on the one hand, it pervades our society; on the other hand, we pretend it’s not there. Neither approach is helpful to campers. At least at camp they might get to talk about it in a sensitive respectful way.

### **Facts About Teen and Pre-Teen Sexual Behavior**

- One in seven TV shows featured sexual intercourse, either depicted or strongly implied. The rate is increasing.
- Two-thirds of all shows from 7 am to 11 pm have some sexual content. Four years ago the number was half that.
- The average age of first intercourse in the US for boys is 16.6; for girls it’s 17.4
- 9% of 12-year-olds are sexually active; 16% of 13s; 23% of 14s; 30% of 15s; 42% of 16s; 69% of 17s; and 71% of 18s.
- Sexual intercourse becomes significantly more prevalent after junior year of H.S.; before that oral sex is very prevalent.

## **Discussing Substance Abuse with Campers Guidelines for Staff**

Excerpts from "Epidemic", Stephen G. Wallace, M.S. Ed., *Camping Magazine* January/February 2007

### **Guideline #1: Know the facts.**

The average age of initiation to drugs and alcohol is thirteen. Nationally, 1 in 3 middle school students have tried alcohol and 1 in 6 have smoked marijuana. 13% of high school teens have reported use of drugs such as cocaine, crack, or ecstasy.

### **Guideline #2: Know the reasons for use.**

34% of teens cite “having fun” as their primary motivation to use drugs and alcohol, while 23% cite stress, 16% depression, 14% boredom, and 13% site fitting in.

### **Guideline #3: Your influential role is a key in preventing drug use among young people.**

Talk to your teens about the choices they face. Lay down your expectations for them (zero tolerance at camp). Hold them accountable for their decisions and actions. Keep them active in fun environments that present positive risk-taking to counter reasons stated above for use.

### **Guideline #4: Talk to teen about their choices, not yours.**

Do not talk about your decisions to use or not use alcohol or drugs. Staff members must simply say, “that is not an appropriate topic, but are you asking because you are facing these types of pressures?” Talk about several facts: 1) there are dangerous effects from use; 2) drugs and alcohol can hamper their brain development (especially in those crucial growing teen years); 3) it can adversely effect their goal achievement (jeopardize academic and athletic performance); and 4) a teenager that drinks alcohol before they are 21 is *four* times more likely to develop an alcohol dependency and one that smokes marijuana is *likely* to use another illegal substance.

### **Guideline #5: Things you can do.**

Pay attention to how your campers are feeling. Watch especially for anxiety, depression, and stress; but also for boredom. Encourage friend making with peer groups that don’t use drugs. Be a good role model.

# Risk-Taking and Summer Camp

Added May 15, 2007 – Research and Theory by Joshua Stern, Camp Echo Teen Adventure Coordinator

## Ways of Thinking About Risk-Taking

1. Risk-taking is a tool in a child/teen's life for discovering, developing, and consolidating their identity.
2. There is healthy and unhealthy risk-taking:
  - **Reasonable (Healthy) Risk-Taking**
    - I could gain something positive
    - I will lose little or nothing of value
    - I will cause little or no harm to myself or others
  - **Unreasonable (Unhealthy) Risk-Taking**
    - I will gain nothing positive
    - I could lose something of value
    - I could cause harm to myself or others
3. Learning how to assess risks is a process that we work on throughout our lives, often through experimentation in both healthy and unhealthy realms. Children and teens need support, tools, and practice.
4. Kids and teens who take no or minimal risks are often fearful, overly shy, suffer from developmental delays, and have a low opinion of themselves. Those who engage in successful, healthy risk-taking are the ones whose self-esteem tends to be strongest and most resilient.
5. Although there are many styles, certain patterns can be seen, such as the cautious risk-taker, the middle-of-the-roader, the adventurer or high-end risk-taker, the person whose risk-taking increases when he or she is with friends.
6. Camp rules and regulations are there to help govern what is reasonable or unreasonable risk.

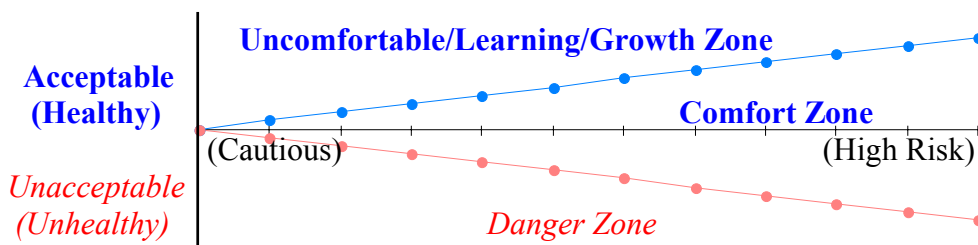
## How to Deal with Campers and Risk-Taking

### *Staff must understand ...*

1. ... their own risk-taking behaviors and where they fall on the cautious to high risk spectrum.
2. ... that they are employees of Camp Echo, and thus expected to uphold camp's policies concerning risk-taking (which may conflict with their own personal behaviors and beliefs).
3. ... they are role-modeling risk-taking behavior at all times.

### *Staff members should help campers ...*

1. ... understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy risk-taking.
2. ... practice risk assessment.
3. ... realize where they fall on the cautious to high risk spectrum and what factors (like peer pressure) change their location on this spectrum.
4. ... find healthy expression of inherent developmental need to take risk.
5. ... challenge themselves to step out of their comfort zone into healthy risk areas.



### ***Staff should try to ...***

1. ... talk about healthy/unhealthy risk-taking and use the definitions/graph above as a model to distinguish between the two.
2. ... teach that camp rules are there to help campers and staff members navigate the territory.
3. ... understand that the older the child, the increase in their own ability to problem-solve.
4. ... remember that you are “cool” so campers will watch what you do and how you navigate risk.
5. ... listen to campers opinions and risk-assessment insights and work *with* them in their development.
6. ... use moments of unhealthy risk-taking to teach valuable risk-assessing skills. This can be done through proper consequences, *and* taking a moment to listen to their assessment to help them form a more complete assessment.

#### *Things that may affect judgment:*

Time Frame: is negative consequence immediate (fall out of tree) or in distant future (kill brain cells)

Perceived vs. Actual Risk: Do they see the action from all possible angles?

Pros/Cons: Do the pros outweigh the cons? Is the list exhaustive?

Level of Risk Comfort: high risk taker or cautious risk taker

7. ... use a child or teen’s hesitation to leave their comfort zone as an opportunity to teach valuable risk-assessing skills, where the rewards from leaving one’s comfort zone are explained, and help the camper understand the successes that come with entering the uncomfortable/learning/growth zone.

### **Why Camp is Great for Kids and Teens (Concerning Risk-Taking)**

1. It presents tons of healthy risk-taking opportunities in a well-managed and supervised setting, which minimizes the need for attempting unhealthy choices in less controlled circumstances.
2. It presents healthy risk-taking in many realms (social, physical, intellectual, artistic, etc.) and in its foundation is a healthy risk- a camper separates from his/her family, goes to a new place, finds new friends, and becomes a part of a new community.
3. It allows practice and learning that becomes applicable to choices outside of camp life.

### **Concrete Examples and Discussion Starters**

#### ***Promoting positive risk-taking***

1. Getting a first-timer on the bus to camp and getting them home a week later saying they had fun.
2. Getting the quiet kid in your cabin to ask a fellow cabin mate to borrow a CD.
3. Getting a camper to share something personal with their cabin mates and counselors.
4. Water skiing, horseback riding, sailing, basketball, a skit in front of all of camp, high-ropes, camping in the woods, etc.

#### ***Countering negative risk-taking***

1. Talking to the camper about their choices and helping them see all possible consequences.
2. Having a fair consequence for inappropriate behavior.
3. Promoting positive risk-taking opportunities that are new and challenging.

# The "Spirit" in Spirit, Mind, and Body

Excerpts from "Camps & Spirituality", Nancy Ferguson, M. Div., M.A., Ed.S., Camping Magazine March/April 2007

Often we hear that the 'spirit' of camp is in the songs we sing, the cheers for olympic teams, and the fun we have all day at camp. We tend to equate 'camp spirit' with what we know as 'school spirit'. There's another aspect of 'spirit', and that is 'spirituality' – which is not the same as 'religion'. Spirituality is the intrinsic capacity of the human for self-transcendence, and recognizes that each of us is rooted in something larger than just ourselves.

Spirituality is part of the human creature. Camps are places where the spiritual nature of campers is already recognized. It is at camp that campers are invited and encouraged to use creativity and imagination, to dream dreams, to wonder, to ask hard questions, and to reach for the best in themselves. Spirituality is firmly planted in relationships and within community experiences. Camps are by their very nature a place where relationships are nurtured and nourished. A sense of community is built which draws campers back year after year to reestablish relationships and to recapture that sense of belonging. Spirituality is expressed in ethical behavior. Camps are committed to creating an environment for ethical behavior that is based on a sense of responsibility to others within the camp community and beyond.

Spirituality leads to growth and change. In addition to the activity skills they learn while at camp, we want campers to grow in positive self-image, in confidence, in their sense of independence, in their ability to make friendships, and in leadership abilities. Here are some ways to develop spirituality:

1. **Encourage wonder** – Children are naturally filled with wonder and excited about exploring their worlds. Instead of a hike to some place and back, stop along the way and encourage campers to listen and look and feel the natural world around them.
2. **Slow down** – One of the greatest gifts camp has to offer children and youth is the opportunity to step away from the hectic, often chaotic lives they live. Sometimes camps feel compelled to recreate that busyness with schedules full of activities. Instead, give campers the chance for some "time off" to talk to each other, to sit by the lake, to ask questions, or to write or draw his or her thoughts.
3. **Promote creativity** – Give campers a chance to express their creativity. Arts and crafts at camps sometimes depend on prepackaged kits or the "old faithful" camp crafts. Provide time and supplies for children and youth to create something new and original. Take campers and watercolors or pastels down by the river and invite them to draw, encourage them to write songs or new verses to camp favorites, provide paper and pencils for story writing or poetry, and promote movement.
4. **Invite questions** – Campers of all ages are filled with questions from the everyday to the esoteric. What are we going to do next? What is the meaning of life? Who am I? Camps can become places where it is safe to ask any question. There are few places and people in the lives of our children and youth where they can safely ask questions. There is so little time in their lives to explore possibilities together in community.
5. **Tell stories** – Include time for storytelling in your camp schedule. As campers tell each other their own stories they build relationships. As campers hear stories of courageous and compassionate actions they are inspired to act in the same way. Stories help all of us understand who we are and where we have come from and to make sense out of life experiences.
6. **Repeat traditions** – Campfires, flag-raising ceremonies, special songs, and camp traditions are all containers of that which is bigger than any one person and point toward transcendence. Familiar and repeated activities provide a place of safety within the unknown. Welcome new campers into the camp community by introducing the practices and equipping them to participate.

# Promoting Social Competence

With excerpts from “Avoiding the Pinball Machine Approach’ to Promoting Social Competence”

By Barbara Gilmour, and Wendy McDermott, PhD

Camping Magazine, May/June 2008 Issue

## What is Social Competence?

Social competence is not about snobbery, exclusivity, or elitism, and it's not simply another word for table manners. Social skills are about getting along with other people and knowing what kinds of behaviors are acceptable in various places so that you don't embarrass yourself or make others feel uncomfortable. *The more we invest in our campers' social competence, the stronger and healthier relationships they will be able to build throughout their lives.*

Studies show that kids with strong social competence and character do well in school and go on to be well-adjusted, contributing adults. Poll after poll indicates integrity and social competence count in the real world. There is a saying in business: “Hire for character; train for competence,” meaning you can train people to do the job more easily than you can give them character.

## Some Important Aspects of Social Skills Include:

- **Self-concept, self-confidence:** Your actions communicate how you feel about yourself. With high self-confidence, you are able to withstand insults and show others your inner strength.
- **First impressions:** A good first impression creates a lasting impact on those who meet you and is something under your control.
- **Living, playing, and working in a community:** Members of a community must take turns and share, make compromises and reach consensus, and take on responsibilities that better the entire community.
- **Compassion, empathy, and “other-focus”:** The ability to see another person’s needs and understand what he might be feeling, for example, knowing what to do when meeting someone new so the person feels comfortable, or knowing how to invite and include others into your group or activity.
- **Tolerance:** Recognize that others may be different from you and they have the right to be different.
- **Gentleness, courtesy:** Understand how to say what needs to be said without hurting people’s feelings.
- **Responding appropriately to authority and rules:** Rules and laws make the world a more predictable, safer place. It is an adult’s responsibility to enforce the rules and teach you how to be safe.
- **Manners, social skills, and character values benefit others and you:** When you treat someone well, there is a better chance that you will be treated well in return.

## Campers Learn Social Competence at Camp

Recent research by the YMCA of the USA and the American Camping Association has determined that one of the primary reasons campers return to camp for a second year is because they “made new friends at camp” their first year. Surprisingly, “having fun” and “learning new things” are not as important.

Appropriately, one of our stated goals for campers is ...

**5. To make new friends.** Campers will accept and include others as they learn that differences are strengths to be celebrated. To help campers achieve this goal, Camp Echo's staff will create and maintain an environment where everyone is respected and included. *We define diversity as the mosaic of people who bring with them a variety of backgrounds as assets.*

Because campers live and eat together in cabin groups, and have a specific “Cabin Group” time each afternoon, counselors have many opportunities to help campers develop socially. All camp activities, too, provide opportunities for social development. Here’s what campers learn during a camp day:

Morning Reflections: Learn community-wide values such as caring, honesty, respect, responsibility.

Meals: Learn to be polite, learn to share, learn to watch out for others, conversation with cabin mates.

Cabin Cleanup and Service Tasks: Learn shared responsibility and the importance of “giving back.”

Saska: Learn to respect others who are resting, learn to share magazines and games with cabin mates.

Cabin Group Time: Learn how to get along with cabin mates while doing fun activities as a group; learn to make group decisions; learn how to listen to other people’s opinions and reach a compromise.

Free Time: Learn to respect rules and authority by “hanging out” in appropriate ways at TP. Practice self-confidence by joining in a game, and demonstrate empathy by welcoming others into your group.

Evening Program: Learn to follow rules, watch out for others, and congratulate those who do a good job.

Taps Talk: Learn to speak up for what you believe, learn to share your feelings, learn to listen to others.

### **How Can Counselors Encourage Social Competence at Camp?**

What we talk about with each other as staff members, and with campers, is one of the most significant ways that we communicate what we value. To give a simple, specific example, if a lot of our conversation with campers is about “who won” or “who beat who,” they will believe that the outcome of competition is highly important. If, on the other hand, when listening to campers excitedly report the result of a game, one of our first questions is, “Wow, the other team must have been really crushed to lose such a close game – how did they handle it?” then we are showing that we pay a lot of attention to and care about sportsmanship, emotions, caring, friendship, and so on.

Here are some questions that encourage social development you can ask your campers at any time:

- Did you ask to hang out or do anything with someone new today? Tell me more about that.
- Did you help anyone today? What was the situation? How did you feel after helping them?
- Did you learn something new about someone today? What did you learn, about who?
- Did anyone listen to you today? What was the situation? How did they react after listening?
- Did you get to be an audience and listen to someone today? What was the situation? How did you feel?
- Did you give anyone a compliment today? What happened? Did they appreciate the compliment?
- Did you tell someone they did a good job today? Who was it, and what did you say to them?
- Did you hear or see anyone put anyone down today? What did you think about that? What did you do?
- Did you hear any gossip today? What did you think about that? What did you do?
- Did you stand up for anyone today? What was the situation? Did they appreciate your support?

### **In Summary**

Take every opportunity to foster social competence at Camp Echo. Use your own cultural competence to help your campers understand the concept of diversity and the assets that different people bring to camp. Know that your efforts will make a difference as campers learn how to make new friends.

# Experiential Learning

Added May 15, 2008

*"Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I may remember.  
Involve me and I will understand."  
- Chinese Proverb*

## **Introduction**

Experiential learning is a teaching methodology through which a teacher or a camp counselor actively engages students in an experience and then provides guidance and focused reflection on that activity. The camp setting provides a unique venue to teach important learning experiences using this methodology. By actively engaging campers in an activity, their interest is peaked and they are engrossed in the task at hand. After an activity, campers are encouraged to reflect upon both the successful and unsuccessful parts of their experience, allowing them to gain new insight. By providing engaging activities and time for reflection, campers are motivated to learn new skills, increase knowledge, and clarify their values.

## **Experiential Learning at Camp Echo**

Camp Echo is a place where children discover a joy for the outdoors, the benefits and challenges of living with others, and a sense of independence. Camp is also a place where children learn invaluable life skills: How to stretch and improve physical abilities; how to create and maintain lasting friendships; and how to live responsibly in a community. Camp Echo staff members use several aspects of the experiential learning method when preparing and implementing programming for campers:

## **Learning Zones**

The learning zone is the space in which we learn at our best. It is a space in which a camper feels safe and supported, but may be slightly uncomfortable or feel challenged by trying something new. The learning zone varies for every camper. For younger campers, being away from home places them in their learning zone because they are making independent choices without their parents. Older campers may need more intense challenges to enter into their learning zone.

Camp Echo staff members are experts in providing safe and exciting challenges that fit within each camper's learning zone. For young campers, staff members provide guidance that develop daily decision-making skills. Campers who are comfortable at camp and want a new challenge can learn to slalom ski, go on our high ropes course, or journey on an adventure to the Pacific Northwest.

## **Challenge by Choice**

Challenge by Choice offers every participant the chance to try a potentially difficult or demanding challenge in an atmosphere that is supportive and caring. Campers always have the opportunity to “back off” when the challenge becomes too difficult, knowing that an opportunity for a future attempt is always available. Within this environment, campers learn a respect for individual boundaries and a gain self-confidence by recognizing that the attempt is more significant than the results.

At Camp Echo, all activities beyond basic responsibilities are “challenge by choice.” Campers have the opportunity to do many exciting and new things at camp, but are never forced to – and are always able to modify or stop an activity. This may mean asking the boat to slow down while tubing or deciding to come down from the high ropes course. No matter what a camper chooses, we emphasize that the experience of trying something new leads to a wealth of self-confidence and there is always the option to try again later.

## **The A.P.P.L.E. Method**

The A.P.P.L.E. method is a planning tool to use when designing group activities. The leaders first assess the group dynamic and goals of the group, then they plan an engaging and fun activity that will meet the group's goals. Leaders prepare for the activity by finding a site or creating materials before they bring in the group and lead the activity. The final step is to evaluate and reflect upon the group's experience.

Camp Echo staff members use the A.P.P.L.E. method when planning teambuilding experiences on our team elements and high ropes courses. They carefully consider the dynamics of their cabin group and choose a challenge that will meet the needs of their group. After guiding campers through the activity, counselors facilitate a debriefing that helps campers reflect upon the choices made during the activity. From this discussion, campers can gain valuable insight into the personalities and leadership styles of themselves and others in the group.

## **Experiential Learning Goals for Camp Echo Campers and Teens**

*Here's a summary of the goals of Experiential Learning and how they are achieved at Camp Echo*

### **• Understand motor concepts and demonstrate motor skills**

Campers are encouraged to be active and use their bodies in new and challenging ways throughout the day. We offer a variety of engaging land-based and aquatic activities that bring out each camper's natural talents. Teens extend their physical skills on adventure trips as they bike, hike, rock climb, canoe, and kayak.

### **• Demonstrate responsible social behavior**

Cabin groups design a full value contract that defines appropriate behavior for the group. By signing the contract, members of the group commit to practicing behavior that abides by the contract. Campers also experience service tasks each day, becoming responsible members of the community.

### **• Demonstrate the ability to use effective interpersonal skills**

Campers live in a close-knit community and practice their interpersonal skills throughout the day. They experience living and eating in a shared space, work out disputes, and practice leadership and listening skills on our team elements course.

### **• Demonstrate appropriate decision-making skills**

Campers actively explore the decision making process by choosing Campactivities, what to do during free periods, or even what to eat. During taps talks and group discussions, campers reflect upon their decisions and the natural consequences that follow. Teens are allowed to have more unstructured time, but learn that with more freedom comes more responsibility. They learn that integrity means doing the right thing, even when no one watching.

### **• Understand that challenges can be life-enhancing experiences**

Campers are encouraged to challenge themselves by choosing new activities, trying new foods, and creating friendships with new people. After meeting a new challenge, campers have a feeling of empowerment and self-confidence that encourages them to try yet even more new things.

### **• Demonstrate an understanding of and respect for differences**

Campers interact with others from a variety of backgrounds throughout their stay at Echo. Their counselor may be from another country or their bunkmate may speak a second language or practice a different religion. By interacting with new and different people, campers learn the power of diversity and challenge their own stereotypes.

# What Every Camper Needs

Reviewed May 22, 2002

**Love** ... Every camper needs to feel ...

- ... that their parents love, want and enjoy them.
- ... that they matter very much to their counselor.
- ... that there are counselors near who care what happens to them.

**Acceptance** ... Every camper needs to believe ...

- ... that their counselors like them for themselves, just the way they are.
- ... that they like them all the time,  
and not only when they act according to their ideas of the way a child should act.
- ... that they always accept them, even though often they may not approve of the things they do.
- ... that they will let them grow and develop in their own way.

**Security** ... Every camper needs to know ...

- ...that their camp is a good, safe place they can feel sure about.
- ...that their counselor will always be on hand,  
especially in times of crisis when they need them the most.
- ...that they belong to the cabin; that there is a place where they fit in.

**Protection** ... Every camper needs to feel ...

- ...that their counselors will keep them safe from harm.
- ...that they will help them when they must face strange, unknown and frightening situations.

**Independence** ... Every camper needs to know ...

- ... that their counselors want them to grow; that they encourage them to try new things.
- ... that they have confidence in them and in their ability to do things for themselves and by themselves.

**Faith** ... Every camper needs to have ...

- ...a set of morals to live by.
- ...a belief in human values – kindness, courage, honesty, generosity and justice.

**Guidance** ... Every camper needs to have ...

- ... friendly help in learning how to behave towards people and things.
- ... adults around them who show them by example how to get along with others.

**Every camper needs to know ...**

- ... that there are limits to what they are permitted to do,  
and that their counselors will hold them to these limits.
- ... that although it is alright to feel jealous or angry,  
they will not be allowed to hurt themselves or others when they have those feelings.

# The 40 Developmental Assets

The Search Institute, 1997 [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)

The Search Institute's 40 developmental assets are concrete, common-sense positive experiences and qualities essential to raising successful young people. These assets have the power during critical adolescent years to influence choices young people make and help them become caring, responsible adults. The developmental assets framework is categorized into two groups of 20 assets. The **20 external assets** are the positive experiences young people receive from the world around them and identify important roles that families, schools, congregations, neighborhoods, and youth organizations can play in promoting healthy development. The **20 internal assets** identify those characteristics and behaviors that reflect positive internal growth and development of youth, which will help these youth make thoughtful and positive choices and, in turn, be better prepared for situations in life that challenge their inner strength and confidence.

**Echo is an ideal place to provide external assets and instill internal assets. See how many campers you can affect.**

## EXTERNAL ASSETS

- |                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Support</b>                       | <b>1. Family support</b> <i>Family life provides high levels of love and support.</i>   |
|                                      | <b>2. Positive family communication</b> <i>... both ways ... and young person seeks advice and counsel from parent(s).</i>    |
|                                      | <b>3. Other adult relationships</b> <i>Young person receives support from three or more non-parent adults.</i>                |
|                                      | <b>4. Caring neighborhood</b> <i>Young person experiences caring neighbors.</i>   |
|                                      | <b>5. Caring school climate</b> <i>School provides a caring, encouraging environment.</i>                                     |
|                                      | <b>6. Parent involvement in schooling</b> <i>Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.</i>   |
| <b>Empowerment</b>                   | <b>7. Community values youth</b> <i>Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.</i>                      |
|                                      | <b>8. Youth as resources</b> <i>Young people are given useful roles in the community.</i>                                     |
|                                      | <b>9. Service to others</b> <i>Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.</i>                            |
|                                      | <b>10. Safety</b> <i>Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.</i>                                 |
| <b>Boundaries &amp; Expectations</b> | <b>11. Family boundaries</b> <i>Clear rules and consequences ... parent(s) monitor the young person's whereabouts.</i>        |
|                                      | <b>12. School boundaries</b> <i>School provides clear rules and consequences.</i>   |
|                                      | <b>13. Neighborhood boundaries</b> <i>Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.</i>               |
|                                      | <b>14. Adult role models</b> <i>Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.</i>                          |
|                                      | <b>15. Positive peer influence</b> <i>Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.</i>                             |
|                                      | <b>16. High expectations</b> <i>Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.</i>                        |
| <b>Constructive Use of Time</b>      | <b>17. Creative activities</b> <i>Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons/practice in creative arts.</i>  |
|                                      | <b>18. Youth programs</b> <i>Three or more hours per week in school or community sports, clubs, or organizations.</i>         |
|                                      | <b>19. Religious community</b> <i>Young person spends one hour or more per week in activities in a religious institution.</i> |
|                                      | <b>20. Time at home</b> <i>Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.</i>    |

## INTERNAL ASSETS

- |                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Commitment to Learning</b> | <b>21. Achievement motivation</b> <i>Young person is motivated to do well in school.</i>                                      |
|                               | <b>22. School engagement</b> <i>Young person is actively engaged in learning.</i>   |
|                               | <b>23. Homework</b> <i>Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.</i>                         |
|                               | <b>24. Bonding to school</b> <i>Young person cares about his or her school.</i>   |
|                               | <b>25. Reading for pleasure</b> <i>Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.</i>                          |
| <b>Positive Values</b>        | <b>26. Caring</b> <i>Young person places high value on helping other people.</i>  |
|                               | <b>27. Equality and social justice</b> <i>Places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.</i>        |
|                               | <b>28. Integrity</b> <i>Young person acts on convictions and stands up for his or her beliefs.</i>                            |
|                               | <b>29. Honesty</b> <i>Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."</i>  |
|                               | <b>30. Responsibility</b> <i>Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.</i>                                      |
|                               | <b>31. Restraint</b> <i>Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.</i> |
| <b>Social Competencies</b>    | <b>32. Planning and decision making</b> <i>Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.</i>                         |
|                               | <b>33. Interpersonal competence</b> <i>Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.</i>                      |
|                               | <b>34. Cultural competence</b> <i>Has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/etc. backgrounds.</i>        |
|                               | <b>35. Resistance skills</b> <i>Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.</i>                  |
|                               | <b>36. Peaceful conflict resolution</b> <i>Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.</i>                           |
| <b>Positive Identity</b>      | <b>37. Personal power</b> <i>Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."</i>                    |
|                               | <b>38. Self-esteem</b> <i>Young person reports having a high self-esteem.</i>   |
|                               | <b>39. Sense of purpose</b> <i>Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."</i>   |
|                               | <b>40. Positive view of personal future</b> <i>Young person is optimistic about his/her personal future.</i>                  |

