

AMERICAN CAMP ASSOCIATION NATIONAL CONFERENCE NASHVILLE ,TN 2008

Building Quality Relationships With Campers

Opening Day Jitters

1. The opening day fears, what are they?

- I am _____
- What is nobody likes me
- I don't have any _____
- Saying goodbye to parents
- Don't want to be here
- Think of two more:

2. What can you do to have an immediate impact on this situation?

Level 1-

- Be prepared with as much pre-first day i_____ as possible
- Equip your counselors with rosters, schedules, and any relevant personal information
- Review with your staff what the actual day will look like
- Have _____ personnel ready to help in difficult transitions

Level 2-

- Be a _____
- Smile
- Make a personal comment. Make sure it is age-appropriate.
Examples:
 - Make _____ contact on same level
 - Introduce them to the rest of the group
 - Learning names is a priority

3. Why is this so important?

To be effective in establishing a healthy relationship, staff must quickly _____ each camper by learning names, defining the group or cabin (this should include a cheer, song or group name), talking about the schedule, discussing expectations, and what is going to happen now.

By the end of the day, especially in day camp, each camper must feel _____, know your name, your group name, have something with them they can show from the first day, and have made a _____.

In all cases, both day and resident, can each camper answer one simple question: was my counselor nice to me?

4. What makes this so difficult?
 - a. Kids carry two kinds of baggage to camp
 - b. Saying _____
 - c. Differentiating between who the campers are as individuals and their behavior
 - d. Regressive Pull
 - e. Very difficult for some counselors to be patient, outgoing, or understanding.
 - f. Often what you ____ is more important than what you say.

5. So what can I do to make this work?
 - a. Make sure staff knows what to expect from each age group they are working with. Separate e_____ f_____ pages are critical!!
 - b. Pay attention to the little things- “a person is never so tall as when they stoop down to help a child.”
 - c. Listen to them!!!!
 - d. Enforce the expectations as set down on the first day.
 - e. Make decisions based on _____, not _____.
 - f. Be human- speak up when you have made a mistake

6. How do I decide what techniques to use?
 - a. Some you already know. Use names, smile, be approachable. Let's name some others:
 - b. Have you heard yourself talk? Bring your voice level down.
 - c. Use s_____ to get your point across.
 - d. Remind them of group rules- if age applicable, let them tell you what they want.
 - e. Ask experienced counselors
 - f. Each supervisor needs to meet with staff during the summer to evaluate how the counselors are doing and to re-establish the group's goals. Staff will stay energized if they are faced with new challenges.
 - g. Watch out for the bungee bounce

→ What will a camper describe to a friend or parent about their camp experience? Step 1. Take a picture. Step 2. Make a video then pause.

7. What about group or cabin meetings?

Like any meeting, try to start on time. Have a pre-determined purpose and let everybody who is affected know how long you will be. If another staff member is present (supervisor, specialist) strategically place them away from you as you form your c_____. Always use a circle for group formations. Sometimes in the heat of the moment, the kids will all want to talk at one time- teach them to use an object. Important: the staff member in charge should c_____ after every camper has spoken.

Big Picture

1. Designing your camp to change the lives of children- According to the ACA
 - a. **What is youth development? A process to enhance adolescent experience and promote the successful transition from childhood to adulthood.
 - b. For youth development to be positive, it must produce in youth:
 1. a sense of competency
 2. a feeling of connectedness
 3. a stable identity
 - c. Youth development is:
 1. age specific- obviously development will change as the campers get older
 2. process of building competencies
 3. purposeful in building attitudes, behaviors, and skills
 - ▶ At your camp, what are the campers skilled at doing and does it matter?
2. What will this process allow you to do?
 - a. Keep a safe environment
 - b. Set up an expectation for staff to comment on what the campers are doing r_____ away (what you asked for and what was not done)
 - c. Put self monitoring expectations into place
 - d. Keep morale up on extremely difficult days
 - e. Create an understanding of always being with you
 - f. Help you to c_____ in a language they understand-
Who is number one on the billboard chart? Hip Hop?
3. When building strong relationships, make sure you are:
 - a. Genuine. The campers will find out who you are in a hurry. Remember your substitute teachers in high school. How long did it take for you to decide what they were going to be like?
 - b. Mindful of your actions. Campers are going to observe everything you do and say.
 - c. Aware of your own personal habits. Campers will emulate actions, gestures, expressions, and speech patterns.
 - d. Remembering that nothing on your schedule is more important than stopping to help a child.
 - e. Supporting the camp's mission by everything you do
 - f. That one word can significantly alter a camper's entire summer.