

RESPECT U- DISRESPECTFUL CAMPERS

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There is a growing trend in this country towards a greater degree of incivility and disrespect. This growing trend is evident in our campers and parents. There are many reasons for this including the breakdown of the “nuclear family” which used to put the raising of one’s children in front of the pursuit of one’s own needs. Now, the pursuit of one’s self has created a new generation of campers who are used to an overscheduled life and little ability to delay gratification.

Parents have less time for their children today and use TV as their rallying point for the family. The “reality” shows that families watch and laud a new generation of negative role models. The result: A greater level of disrespect in our heroes and the role modeling that takes place from our children teaching them to be disrespectful themselves.

Parents feel the need to compete in ways they never experienced before, creating a mindset of parents needing to give their children everything to beat their neighborhood foe in this competitive world. The result: Less loyalty to the traditions we value, and kids who have little limit setting in their own lives.

Kids who grow up in this over-indulged world, have little time to learn how to delay gratification and cope with disappointment. As limit setting is decreased by parents and parents have a hard time saying “no”, parenting is replaced with friendship and kids grow up with a greater sense of entitlement. Entitled kids are more concerned with themselves than with others.

So what are we to do as Camp Directors and Staff to help provide the key core values that are needed for campers and staff to thrive: We have to learn to make our camps successful at providing Nurture, Boundaries and Latitude.

Nurture when provided correctly allows kids to build confidence, express their feelings and know how to behave around others. Boundaries helps kids know where they stand, and learn the lines of acceptable vs. unacceptable behavior. Teaching kids about clear boundaries helps them make good choices when relating to other people and treating others with respect. It also helps campers feel a sense of predictability and learn how to delay gratification so they can manage with less disrespect when they don’t get what they want. Boundaries also allow campers to be more considerate of others, and act out less

frequently. Latitude allows kids to be good “problem solvers” and take healthy “risk”. This allows them to feel good about themselves and learn to accept that sometimes they make mistakes which are part of a healthy image of one’s self. Camps that can allow kids to make mistakes, grow from them, and learn from these mistakes in a healthy environment provide ability for children to manage disappointment and learn empathy- a cornerstone of healthy relationships.

In this session, we’ll focus on the ways in which camps can build the three core issues needed for healthy social development in their campers and staff, and provide the kinds of tools that parents are seeking from a successful camp experience for their child.