

The Camp Counselor's Manual



KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION
AND COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

*I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart
to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service,
and my health to better living, for my club, my
community, my country and my world.*

– 4-H Pledge

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Policies will vary from one camping group to another. It is your responsibility to learn what the policies and procedures are for your respective camping group. Your Extension agent will be able to provide this information to you.



This is camp

1. Camp deals with the whole life of a child.
2. There is no other experience quite like the camping experience. The home comes closest.
3. The greatest need of a camper is their growth as a person.
4. Camp is an educational experience. It causes children to see right or wrong ways of dealing with themselves, or their peers' environment.
5. The personal growth and safety of campers comes first in a camp situation. They are placed ahead of programs, facilities, directors, counselors and skills.
6. Camp should provide campers with the opportunity to think, plan, choose, and make some of their own decisions.
7. Camp needs to provide for the campers' freedom to exercise their own initiative. Freedom does not mean that good organization and definite scheduling of activities are not necessary.
8. It is how the organization and scheduling are done that counts most. Camp should provide the following:
 - A happy place.
 - A friendly place.
 - An opportunity for campers to form good habits.
 - An opportunity to build self-confidence.
 - A chance to gain self-reliance.
 - A chance to develop resourcefulness.
 - A chance to discover a sense of values of right and wrong.
 - A chance to try and the opportunity to try again, again and again.
 - Fun.
 - Some adventure.
 - A sense of security.
 - Acceptance by the counselors, volunteers and paid staff.
 - Safety.
 - Good food.
 - Goals or objectives that are within the reach of the camper, not the counselors, volunteers or paid staff.
 - Mature, caring and compassionate counselors, volunteers, and paid staff.
 - A program that is child-centered and not activity-centered.
 - An opportunity to become acquainted with the great outdoors, not only for its awesomeness, but also for its wonders and simplicity.
 - A sense of stewardship as it relates to taking care of our environment.
 - Compassionate and caring counselors, volunteers and paid staff.
 - A spirit of teamwork among counselors, volunteers and paid staff.

Notes

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Why am I here?

Counselor responsibilities

1. Help campers find their cabins, get settled and become acquainted.
2. Learn the names of the campers in your cabin as quickly as possible. Get to know all of them and their interests. Make sure the campers feel welcome and part of the group the moment they arrive at camp.
3. You may have to show campers how to make a bed, sweep the floor, or clean the area outside the cabin. Inform your group where to hang their clothes, wet bathing suits and towels, and where to put trash. Remember, you are setting the example.
4. Be sure your campers know the location of the dining hall, recreation areas, craft facilities, flagpole, health center and camp boundary lines.
5. As soon as your campers arrive, have the cabin group do something together, such as a hike or tour of the campground to develop a group feeling.
6. Help the campers in your cabin adjust to a “new” way of life—it includes new routines in living and learning together as a group. Discuss with the campers the camp schedule, rules, and traditions plus why they are important.
7. Inform your campers what to expect for assemblies, meals, flag ceremonies, lights out and quiet. Tell them that attendance and appropriate personal behavior is expected at each event.
8. Be aware of the health and safety of the campers in your group. Include enough rest and sleep, and make sure they are eating properly. Watch for signs of sickness, suggest clean and appropriate clothing, and promote personal cleanliness. Check for illnesses and injury, but don’t make a big deal over minor scratches. Report all illnesses and injuries to the camp medical staff.
9. Help campers, especially the quiet youngster, enjoy camp activities. Some campers will shy away from new experiences and will want to stay with a familiar routine.
10. Help campers enjoy the meal experience. Encourage them to try new or different foods.
11. Work with your group as they plan their assigned jobs which may include a campfire program, talent shows, or other ceremonies. Don’t do this for them—let ideas and leadership come from the group.
12. Stay with your group at bedtime. This is an excellent time to get to know your campers, their concerns, their reactions to the camp program, and to provide them with support. Understand that some campers will have fears, perhaps of the dark, water, bugs, or of new situations.
13. The counselor should also recognize his or her own need for rest.
14. Practice good risk management strategies. These strategies will help prevent or reduce the likelihood of something happening that could cause physical, mental, or emotional harm to a camper. Remember, your goal is to provide a safe, positive, caring and nurturing environment. A camper will not have fun if they do not feel safe.

Notes

Who are my campers? What are their basic needs?

Sometimes, people can be pretty hard to figure out. Why do our brothers and sisters, friends, or parents behave the way they do? What makes us do the things we do?

Almost anything a person does can be understood when we picture it as an attempt to meet one of five basic needs. These five fundamental human needs are present in every person. They vary in intensity and importance for each of us, and their importance may change from time to time. Still, every human being needs: (1) affection, (2) power, (3) security, (4) new experiences, and (5) recognition.

Affection: Our need for affection is more than just a need for love, although that's part of it. Affection includes being accepted by a group, feeling that others care about us and understand us. Our need for affection involves seeking friendships and social relationships. We want to know we are needed by the group and missed when we are absent.

The camper who says, "I don't want to go on their cookout because I don't like them!" may be telling you something about their need for affection.

Power: The need for power sounds bad to most of us. We might picture a power-hungry general trying to take over the world. Power for most people, however, is simply the need to show control over oneself or things. We need to know we have the power or ability to master new things. We need to feel we can be successful in doing a certain task. The need for power is the need to feel competent, capable and a little invincible.

A camper who announces that they are not going to play volleyball because it's a "dumb" game may be telling you something about their skills and their need for power.

Security: Every person wants to feel safe and secure in their surroundings and with their peers. We need physical security in the form of material things like food, shelter and clothing. We need emotional security in the form of acceptance and understanding from our families and friends. We need to feel we can have confidence in these people and they will support us.

Campers, particularly when away from home for the first time, miss their familiar routines and ways of life. They worry about finding their cabin, locating the swimming pool, and getting to know cabin mates.

Campers who need security may be frightened by the new settings, and homesickness can result.

New Experiences: To do something different, or try one's wings, is the opposite of the need for security. We all need to be challenged to try new things. These challenges can be as simple as learning a new craft or as difficult as climbing a mountain. New experiences allow us to explore our own abilities. They provide excitement and prevent boredom.

Camp is an excellent place for new experiences. Campers who are bored and restless are not being challenged by new experiences.

Recognition: Everyone has a desire to stand out as an individual, to do at least one thing better than everyone else. This is our need for recognition at work. We need approval and recognition from others that we have done something well. This recognition helps build our self-confidence and self-esteem.

Most campers will seek recognition by pleasing you, the counselor. Remember, if their need for recognition can't be met in a positive way, they may look for less acceptable ways to get recognition.

If a camper constantly disrupts the group by yelling, "Hey, look at me" they may be trying to tell you something.

Understanding the Camper

Who are they? What will the campers be like? What does it mean to you? How do you use your understanding of them so you can be an effective camp counselor?

Ages 7 to 8

What are they like?

- Strong attachment to home and family environment.
- Very dependent upon adults for meeting physical and emotional needs.
- Need patient understanding and close supervision.
- Have short interest span.
- Aware mainly of self and own desires.
- Prefer highly imaginative make-believe play.
- Like to explore their expanding world.
- Desire repetition of enjoyable experiences.
- Easily upset by change in routines or environment.
- Need and seek the approval of adults because they are not yet confident enough to set their own standards.
- Boys and girls readily play together.
- Peer opinion becomes very important.
- Small motor skills are not developed.
- Do not always recognize right and wrong.

Meaning to Counselor

- Beginning to move away from dependence on parents and the counselor may become someone very important in their eyes.
- They respond affectionately to counselors who look after their needs, who show an interest in them, and who are fair and capable of humor and imagination.
- Mastering physical skills is important to self-concept. Activities need to be ACTIVE! Provide opportunities for them to practice their skills, but use activities or projects that can be completed successfully and quickly. A variety of several activities will be needed within the class period
- They think in concrete terms. If they have never seen it, heard it, felt it, tasted it, or smelled it, they have a hard time thinking of it. SHOW and TELL rather than giving verbal instructions.
- Play or make believe is one way they increase their ability to imagine what other people think and feel.
- Rules and rituals are important, but it is very hard for children this age to lose.
- Cooperative games and activities are especially enjoyable. Minimize or avoid awarding competitive ribbons at this age.
- They are more interested in the process (what, why, how) than in the end product.

- Avoid signing up the camper for classes (i.e. certain crafts) that use small motor skills.
- Encourage them to keep their valuable items in a safe, covered space. A camper may take an item (i.e. money) off of another camper's bed and say "finders keepers, losers weepers."

Ages 9 to 11

What are they like?

- They are anything but still and quiet. They have no fear.
- They do not like to stay confined and do one thing for a long period of time.
- Some are still concrete thinkers; others are beginning to think logically and symbolically, beginning to understand abstract ideas.
- They have a desire for acceptance from their own age group. Have a need for close friendships with their playmates.
- They have strong identification with their own sex and age group.
- Growing desire for better performance in skills. They look to counselors for approval and follow rules primarily out of respect for the counselor.
- Have a strong need to feel accepted and worthwhile.
- Enjoy being mischievous and daring.

Meaning to Counselor

- Activities should encourage physical involvement. However, guide them to appropriate and safe activities (i.e. jumping off of a cliff would be neat, but it would not be a safe challenge).
- Hands-on involvement with objects is very helpful. Will pay more attention if they are seeing and doing things.
- As they consider an idea, they think it is either right or wrong, great or disgusting, fun or boring. There is very little middle ground.
- This is the age of the "joiners." They like to be in organized groups of others similar to themselves.
- Small group work is best done in same-sex groups.
- Encouragement from the counselor can have remarkable results. They want to know how much they have improved and what they should do to be better next time.
- Comparison with the success of others is difficult for them—it erodes their self-confidence.
- They respond enthusiastically to counselors who can understand and guide their tremendous energy and mischievousness; tend to idolize the counselor if they measure up to this task



Ages 12 to 14

What are they like?

- Uneven and rapid physical growth. Girls usually develop sooner than boys. Bones develop faster than muscles and internal organs.
- Beginning to develop independence by growing away from family ties and influence. However, they still want reassurance of counselor supervision and attention to daily needs.
- Make selective friendships. Have two or three best friends. Younger ones prefer friends of own sex. Girls are more interested in boys than boys in girls.
- Close friendships begin to develop.
- Puberty approaches and emotions begin a roller coaster ride.
- Enjoy practical jokes. Display mannerisms of giggling, squirming and horseplay.

Meaning to Counselor

- Campers may be self-conscious or very modest about their changing bodies. Some are developing quickly and others not at all; either way, they are uncomfortable.
- Girls may have more physical strength and coordination in sports than boys. Arms and legs are pretty awkward on the ball diamond and at the dining table until the muscles catch up.

- Bigger campers cannot be expected to act older than smaller ones of the same age.
- Their bodies are changing every day, so they don't even know themselves anymore.
- Like to argue, but will compromise. Will test the rule to see how far it "bends." Will put up an argument where they feel it is traditionally expected—dining hall clean up, lights out, etc. Ready-made decisions from adults often are rejected.
- "Buddies" want to bunk together, eat together and dress alike.
- Younger boys prefer to do camp activities with other boys. They will tolerate girls in camp, but do not want to be paired off with them. They do not want to touch or be touched by a girl.
- Intensity of emotions and feelings can sometimes be extreme. Best friends can become worst enemies in less than a minute. They can be wickedly cruel, with words and actions, to each other.
- They enjoy corny jokes in the cabin and at the campfire. Counselors often are a favorite target. Horseplay can easily go from play to a situation where a camper feels unsafe or out-of-control.

Notes



Things to keep in mind when working with the camp-age youth

In general,

- They will be action oriented.
- Keep them busy and make it fun.
- They have a limited attention span.
- Encourage them to make things they can take home from camp.
- Let them assist in deciding what is done by the group.
- Let them know what is expected of them.
- Praise them individually and as a group for the task completed.
- Be sincerely interested in them as individuals at all times.
- Get involved in their activities and they will be more likely to listen to you.
- All campers will have individual abilities or resources. Seek them out in each child.
- Children need to feel a sense of belonging.
- Children need affection, recognition and success.

Establishing a team or group among boys . . .

Think of ways to break the ice and start your campers off on a friendly basis; see that all are drawn into the conversation, giving extra encouragement to any who seem shy. Ask timid campers to do some little task for you to make them feel needed or ask an older camper to take them to see the council circle, or the spring, or the rifle range, or to fasten up the cabin flaps.

As soon as most of your group has arrived, start the important process of weaving them into a congenial group by doing fun things together. Have young children pair off into buddies who do everything together; in this way each gets the feeling they already have at least one good friend.

Hold a brief, informal discussion in the cabin or under a shady tree and plan some of the things you are going to do; ask the children for suggestions. It will be helpful for you to know in advance what activities are available at the camp so this time can be used to stimulate interest in trying new experiences while at camp.

Play a get-acquainted game; select a cabin name and yell, or go on a tour of the camp. Plan something specific and mutually exciting to look forward to the next day or that

afternoon, if there is still time, so no one would even think of going home.

Establishing a team or group among girls . . .

Nearly every comment on forming a group of boys holds true here, but there are some differences which will be helpful to point out.

As girls approach puberty, they place a greater importance on social activity in their groups. The things they do are not active or physical, but conversational. The topics of conversation will usually focus on boys and girls who are excluded from the group.

Feelings of girls will be just below the surface and very easily brought forth. This new sensitivity can be due to their being in a new situation and feeling the pressures of loneliness while desperately wanting to belong. They know how it feels to be a member of an exclusive group and the sense of utter defeat when they are on the outside looking in.

The exclusive group orientation of junior high (and sometimes older girls) seems to be tied in closely with persuasive negative attitudes, both about others and themselves. The self concept at this age is very tenuous, and they are desperately searching.

They will more actively seek to try out a new personality at camp than boys this age. This means if you know any of the campers before camp, and she is in a group that does not include others who know her, you very possibly will observe her acting differently than she does at home. This is her way of finding out how others will react toward her as she shops around for the “real her” (the personality she wants).

Ground rules become important in establishing group rapport among girls. They are important because they need to know that someone is in charge. They need to have someone more powerful than they to set limits and maintain them.

Ground rules may be simple but must be consistent. They might include the daily activity schedule, which should include a rest time and a time for personal grooming. The social emphasis of the group can be reduced by rules such as: (1) Say something positive about the person before you say something negative; (2) Repeat what the other person says to you before you react; or (3) Acknowledge the feelings you have because of what is said to you before you react. (“You’re saying that makes me angry because . . .”)

An activity that appeals to girls this age is doing exercises to music. It is a socially acceptable way to be active. It is an opportunity to be creative and to explore the body through movement, and in many cases is a good emotional release. This would seem to tie in with why popular dancing is so important to junior high girls.

Grade school and junior high girls will place a great importance in having group identity so it will be helpful to place some importance on naming the group.

Grade School and Junior High

The first few hours you are with the campers is a good time to let them know all of the activities will be done as a group, including you as their leader. This should include all scheduled activities (meals and other activities) plus what they decide to do during free time. This will require some group decisions and some “give and take” which will strengthen group rapport. When it is handled so the group understands the ways groups make decisions, it should be a good learning experience. You are in the position to make helpful suggestions which will lead them to that decision.

From time to time, it will be necessary for one or two individuals to do something different from the rest, and that is all right. This may include extra rest or going to the health center. The important thing is to let the individual go, but let them know they will be missed.

For older boys it is helpful to have them do a physical activity to help use up energy and to equalize group members. Using the arms, legs, or balance to “wrestle” is an excellent activity at which even the smallest boy can be successful. Point out, as you go through a round robin contest, how well each boy is doing. Following this activity with one which requires the entire group to work together should help cement a strong foundation for your group to build on during camp.

From time to time, it will appear like the group isn’t holding together. Cliques will seem to split the group. Don’t worry, that’s natural. Remind them, when necessary, that the group decides and does things together. This usually will assure them the rule still stands and you are still in charge.

The younger the group, the more decisions you as their counselor will have to make for them. From about age 10 to 11, boys and girls will be more willing to make decisions, stay as a group and work together. If you are working with older adolescents, there will be greater freedom in group structure. But rules should be imposed and they should be expected to keep them!

The key to having a successful group is to think positive about what you are doing, even though the feeling in the pit of your stomach keeps arguing with you.

Notes



Dealing with camper behavior

The best way to handle most problems is to keep them from happening. The more you know about each camper, such as family situation, school background, abilities, disabilities, and general social adjustment, the easier it is to help the camper meet his or her needs without getting into trouble.

Yet despite your best efforts, sometimes there will be camper behaviors you must deal with. (That's why we have counselors!) Here's a simple outline for dealing with them:

1. Define the behavior. How important is it? Must it be dealt with right now or will it go away by itself?
2. Determine possible causes or reasons for the behavior. Is it a lack of recognition? Too much energy? Feelings of inferiority? Resentment against discipline? Others?
3. How can I handle it? Should staff or Extension agents be involved? Is it my responsibility?
4. What should I avoid? Disciplining in anger, public condemnation, derogatory terms, attacking, blaming approach, loss of community with camper, and driving camper away from the group, should be avoided.
5. How can I keep it from happening again? It depends on the behavior and circumstances. What did I learn from this that was important? Why is that of importance to me? As a result of this experience, what will I do differently in the future?

Dealing with behavior problems

1. **Reinforce desirable behavior.** This should be done consistently from the very outset of camp. If staff members behave positively and encouragingly through smiles, gestures, or brief words of support, campers will be motivated to maintain or even increase acceptable behavior.
2. **Clearly state privileges as well as rules.** Whenever possible, present rules and regulations in terms of what campers can do, rather than as a set of restrictions and "don'ts." Let campers share in developing and discussing rules and regulations.

3. **Tolerate some undesirable behavior.** Recognize that some annoying or undesirable behavior may be typical of a given age level or falls within a reasonable range of acceptability, and do not confront the child with constant criticism and negative comments. Some patterns of negative behavior should be permitted to build up before being challenged, so the child can see the consequences of his or her behavior. This does not apply to the direct infraction of rules or to serious or dangerous forms of misbehavior.
4. **When correcting campers, use nonverbal cues.** As a counselor develops a relationship with campers, it often is possible to use eye contact, accompanied by frowns, gestures, or other forms of body language, to indicate disapproval. This may help control a camper's negative behavior without embarrassing the youngster in front of peers.
5. **Consider redirecting children to different tasks or activities.** Anti-social behavior sometimes stems from boredom or dissatisfaction with an activity, or from a feeling of frustration at not being able to carry it out successfully. Frequently, counselors may intervene by having a child shift to another activity or group setting which may meet his or her psychological or social needs more directly, or which may provide a higher level of success and satisfaction.
6. **Clarify consequences of unacceptable behavior.** A camper should clearly understand the potential consequences of continued undesirable behavior, such as the anger or disapproval of other group members, isolation within the cabin group, withdrawal of privileges, or other forms of disciplinary action. The counselor should be specific about the action he or she will be forced to take if such behavior continues.
7. **Clarify consequences of acceptable behavior.** At the same time, the camper should understand what the benefits of changed or improved behavior will be. This will be most effective immediately after desirable behavior is shown.
8. **Use the "temporary removal" procedure.** If a camper is excessively disruptive and cannot be controlled on the spot, it may be necessary to remove him or her to another location where they can be calmed down. The camper should be allowed to return after a short period of time, contingent on willingness to behave properly.

9. **Punishment, if used, as a last resort.** Punishment, in the form of deprivation of privileges or other penalties, should be applied only when other attempts to influence the child have failed. It should be appropriate to the situation and must conform to camp policies.

10. **If in doubt, seek help.** This should be done whenever the counselor feels incapable of dealing with a particular situation or camper and wishes to confirm whether his or her responses and actions were appropriate. Counselors should know whom to consult for assistance with camper behavior problems. Seeking help is not a sign of defeat or inadequacy; no counselor, no matter how experienced, has all of the answers in dealing with behavior difficulties.

So discipline—but how?

Here are some guidelines:

1. Try to be reasonable in demands, consistent in enforcement, and fair in judgment.
2. Don't expect campers to be better than their stage of development allows them to be, but do have faith they will grow physically, mentally, emotionally and socially in due time.
3. Be sure children understand the reason behind the rules from their point of view, not yours. Otherwise, they can't learn that being good is the natural and easy way to behave. Don't be afraid of a quick, firm "NO" when long explanations would just confuse them, or if you already clearly explained it to them—they'll always be ready to test you. **REMEMBER** how you used to feel when the situation was reversed.
4. Concentrate on praise and rewards rather than having to worry so much about criticism and discipline—both you and your campers will have a happier time at camp.
5. Use both praise and criticism. The need for liberal praise is obvious (we all need it). Constructive criticism (not nagging) provides the child a guideline as to what is good and what is bad for him or her.

6. A word of approval or a pat on the back is reward enough for most things done well. Never use bribes.

7. Despite everything, you may have to discipline your campers. Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when you reach this point!

- a. Make the consequences fit the crime. Lack of cooperation in cabins could mean extra clean-up. Poor table manners could mean extra dining hall clean-up, etc.
- b. Do not use an impulsive sort of discipline when you are furious and downright mad, or use discipline coldly calculated to repay the badness in kind. Campers are generally more resentful of these types, and you will end up with more trouble from them. You've worsened the situation—not improved it.
- c. **STOP** and **THINK** before passing judgement. **YOU** should be sure what you use is something you'll be able to make certain is carried out.
- d. Strike a camper? **NO! NEVER!** For your own liability and the camp program's liability, keep in mind a **HANDS OFF POLICY!** When you are that mad, you hit or grab harder than you think.
- e. Watch your temper—and vocabulary! At these times your actions are still part of your example—often one of the biggest parts.
- f. Deprivation—on occasion, but not food or desserts in the dining hall. Also, be careful about snack bar privileges. Part of their free time is one thing, but only if you are willing and able to enforce it. Knowing each of your campers' individual likes and dislikes will help in this matter.
- g. Campers should be aware of reasons for discipline and the fairness of any discipline.

Problem situations in camp

Brace yourself . . . here come the problems . . . It's true that camp is a wonderful world all its own. It is the perfect environment for building strong friendships and indestructible bonds between campers and counselors alike. There is no place or time in life that can compare with the unique "seemingly perfect" environment of camp.

Problems in camp can range from bed-wetting to personality conflicts, fights, homesickness, etc. The following section is extremely important. It deals with some of the common problems in camp and how you can deal with them. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the following information.

1. Make sure your actions dealing with problems are sound. Be sure they conform with 4-H and camp philosophy.
2. Talk to your Extension agent. Be sure he or she is aware of all problems and can support you.
3. Never make a statement or inform a camper of consequences that have not been approved by the agent. Don't threaten campers, or tell them you are sending them home (or "one more time and you will go home"). Only the agents can send a camper home.

Stealing (or unexplainable loss of personal belongings)

Stealing, like homesickness, has a way of being a part of nearly every camp. Whenever a large number of people get together, certain situational elements exist that seem to be a part of this problem, whether at camp, a residential hospital or an Army barracks. In group living, campers need to be more careful about keeping their possessions together. Greater care needs to be taken to make sure valuables are not left unattended and in a way that would tempt another child.

A youngster who is still developing a standard of moral behavior will easily yield to the temptation of money left openly on another's bed, without feeling it is wrong. "Borrowing" another person's radio, camera, or watch falls into the same category for the younger camper. The sense of separate ownership or "what's mine is mine and what's yours is yours and not mine," is slow to develop and a difficult concept for some youngsters to grasp.

If a camper reports a missing or "stolen" item to you, do a search of the cabin before you submit the report to an adult. Often times, the missing/stolen item is under a pile of clothes or still in the camper's suitcase.

Older youth who are in junior high and high school who "borrow" or take willfully usually recognize the wrongfulness of their actions. The sad and unfortunate fact is that once something has been stolen, very little can be done about it. In fact, two people have suffered—the victim and the victimizer.

Preventive measures are the only obvious solution to any ugly problem. Several actions can be taken, starting with a pre-camp letter to the camper specifically stating a reasonable amount of money to bring and some estimated costs of the item it could be spent on. Other common sense guidelines concerning the bringing of other valuables also would be helpful.

Once at camp, the counselor can set up some ground rules and a bank in which to keep valuables. (Be sure to check with your camp group regarding the keeping of valuables.) The bank consists of the counselor taking deposits of money, radios, cameras, etc., and keeping them in a safe place. This could be in your car or the agent's car. Set up banking hours so campers can get to their possessions (just before the snack bar opens). Ground rules should consist of rules similar to: (1) If the camper decides to keep valuables in the bandages box tucked in the pouch of an unlocked suitcase, then he or she is responsible for its safety. (2) If the camper deposits money in your bank, then you will replace anything that you lose.

Small, valuable items are so "loseable" at camp that generally campers should be discouraged from bringing them. If they assume responsibility for their possessions and something happens to them, then you, as the counselor, are faced with using the situation as a good learning tool for responsibility, trust and honesty.

Homesickness

First impressions are lasting and what happens during the first few hours at camp is important for the inexperienced camper. When they get to camp, it's like going into a foreign territory. Everyone they know and really depend on are someplace else, especially mom and dad. The new, older camper and new, younger camper will react the same ways, with the same trouble signs. Experienced campers sometimes have similar reactions.

The homesick camper generally will behave in one of two ways.

The first way is when they withdraw from other campers and want to be by themselves. They might be a little edgy or sensitive to the others laughing and joking around, especially when they try to include them. If there is a group activity planned, like swimming, they will no doubt want to stay in the cabin or watch from the sideline.

Food will be of little interest. In fact, they may try to convince you that they should stay in the cabin or tent and miss supper. Finally, the homesick campers will want to talk about good experiences they have had at home or what their families have been doing.

The second way homesick campers will behave is to be overly outgoing, sometimes to the point that they are hardly bearable. They, too, will talk or brag about the great things they can do at home or great successes they have had. They will want you to think they are outstanding so they will be accepted in the group and not feel lonely any more.

Homesickness is prone to make its unwanted appearance at camp when any camper has a chance to think about what they left behind, and when the future at camp doesn't look too exciting. One of the best ways to forestall it is to keep individuals busy every minute, plan exciting things for the future so that there is something constantly in the future to look forward to.

Stick with the children closely for the first few hours and work hard at welding them together in a feeling of "oneness," since you are laying the foundation for the success of the whole camp.

Seize opportunities for informal chats, individually, in small groups, or as a whole group so all of you become old friends and can act perfectly natural with each other. Try especially hard to draw in the "loners" and spot the mischief makers and misfits.

Don't try to tell them too much at once but gradually introduce camp events and the coming schedule. Older campers can better handle more information, and they also will profit from being given some responsibility or reason for being at the camp.

For some youngsters, simple yet direct forms of affection do much to help them through this time of discomfort. As you walk to the dining hall, put your arm around their shoulders as you talk about their interests, tussle their hair,

or if your camper wants, hold hands. There are three safe places to touch a child: on their hand, their shoulder, and their upper back. This physical contact, always with their permission, implies that they are important and that you care.

Dirty Stories

A dirty story to a 9-year-old may be vastly different from an adult's dirty story. The kinds of stories campers tell can serve as a good indication of how well they know themselves and how well they understand human sexuality. The story could create a "teachable moment," which could be used to correct misunderstandings and show the camper how open you are to discussing topics they naturally want to know more about.

So, you need to consider: (1) Is the story dirty? Could it be stopped or ignored? (2) Can it be used to stimulate a sharing of information through answering questions? (3) How open and comfortable can I be talking out their concerns and interests?

As the counselor, you should never tell dirty stories or jokes to your campers. Remember, you are to serve as a positive role model for the campers.

Swearing

Swearing is usually one of two things. It can be a habit or done as a form of bragging. In either case it doesn't seem to lead anywhere, and should be discouraged. You, as counselor, should decide why it is being done and react accordingly. If the camper is "bragging," find things that you can compliment him or her on and praise the goodness, while playing down this socially unacceptable behavior.

Menstruation

Girls might begin menstruation at camp. It is important to handle the situation in a positive and straightforward way.

The camper may (or may not) have been prepared for this to happen and will be greatly influenced by how it is treated the first time. Other campers in the group also will gain much from observing how you behave and participate in an open, mature discussion about menstruation, whether or not they have started having periods.

This is one of their concerns as maturing girls and will relish another chance to discuss it in a wholesome fashion. Other topics that may lead into the discussion or be a spin-off from it include modesty, personal grooming, masturbation, appropriate sexual relations and venereal disease.

Fatigue

As Sancho Panza said, “God bless the man who first invented sleep.” Busy camp life makes campers and counselors breathe a sigh of thankfulness for the rest hour which usually comes right after lunch to rejuvenate them for the remainder of the day. It is a siesta when everyone either sleeps or engages in some quiet activity so others may sleep.

There is no reason why either counselors or campers should object, for it is permissible to read, write letters, or go out under a tree to tell stories, play quiet games, or work on a craft project. Stay with your campers to see they observe this period and set an example by observing it properly yourself since you need to recharge your own batteries. Your camp may choose an individual name for the rest hour, such as siesta or FOB (Feet on Bed and Flat on Back).

When signs of fatigue like restlessness, irritability, excitable talking, undue noise, and paleness are rather widespread in a group, it indicates an over strenuousness of the whole tempo of life, and a light schedule is advisable for a few days with extra time provided for rest and sleep. Prevent fatigue by alternating quiet and active pursuits, seeing that competition is not carried to the point of overstimulation, and insisting on proper observance of hours for rest and sleep.

Much of this problem can be minimized if, as you have your counselors’ meeting, you schedule your next day’s activities accordingly. This is especially important for the young camper but holds true for all ages. Campers who are tired should forego swimming and no one should go in the water immediately after eating.

When boys and girls are excited, they will require you as counselor to be more sure of how to contain them as a group. You will need to be more strict in making sure they do what is expected of them, whether it is to follow the activity supervisor’s instructions on how to handle a gun or stay together as a group on their way to the canoeing pond.

Friends in the Health Center

Most camps send a camper home or to the hospital if the illness is likely to last more than a few days or if it is of a serious nature. However, minor illness may detain a youngster in the health center for what may seem like wearisome hours.

Thoughtful friends can make the time pass faster by such little remembrances as a round-robin letter, a diary or account of what they are doing, a poem, a handmade gift from the arts and crafts shop (particularly one with his or her name on it), or a serenade. A visit is welcome if the nurse or medical officer permits it; if not, just waving through the window helps.

With the approval of the nurse, keep the patient supplied with puzzles, radio, light reading material or come in and tell or read a story. If able, the patient will enjoy working on a crafts project, a scrapbook, making favors for a group party, or labels for the nature trail. Keep reminding the patient that all of you miss the person and are anxious to have him or her back again.

Bed Wetting

Some children and adults suffer from this affliction for a number of reasons. The basic problem is a lack of bladder control while sleeping. This is an extremely embarrassing situation. It requires sensitive and confidential help from the counselor. First and foremost, do not embarrass bed wetters by letting the whole cabin in on the problem.

Check all health forms for advanced warning. Be sure all bed wetters (sleepwalkers also) take a bottom bunk. You may want to reserve a bottom bunk close to the window or door before campers arrive. Discreetly remove wet bedding and take it to the Extension agent early in the day for washing. Bedding should be replaced discreetly as well.

To prevent bed wetting, limit intake of liquids after dinner. Wake bed wetters and escort them to the bathroom when you are ready to retire (you may have to carry very sleepy ones!). If any complications arise, see the Extension agent.

Sleep Walking

Assign the camper a bottom bunk! Wedge the door so it will not be easily or quietly opened, (but, not so that it is a fire hazard!). Place a noisemaker of some kind in front of the door (metal garbage cans are great) so the sleepwalker will make noise and wake someone up before wandering off. Do not wake sleepwalkers. Most people who are active enough to walk in their sleep also will talk in their sleep, sometimes intelligently! Quietly ask them where they are going (if it’s to the bathroom, escort them or have someone else escort them). If their destination is anywhere else, quietly direct them back toward their bed.

Tips on working with small groups of campers

1. Provide a general atmosphere in which the focus is on understanding the camper's behavior and on attempting to prevent problems from occurring, rather than relying on punishment or emergency measures when it is too late.
2. Accept campers as they are and work to help them change in positive directions.
3. Use informal talks with campers to establish bonds of friendship and trust, and also to help them understand the causes and consequences of their behavior.
4. Make sure campers are able to express their own views and opinions, rather than simply laying down the law to them.
5. Recognize that all camper behavior has a cause, and children are trying to meet their natural human needs in ways they have learned over a period of time, or in patterns that have been "programmed for them" in their family situations.
6. Strive for individualized and constructive ways of dealing with problem situations, rather than automatic, "by the book" discipline.
7. Give children the opportunity to make conscious choices, based on full discussion of problem areas.
8. Avoid lecturing, and especially eliminate sarcasm, threats, or measures that bring shame or guilt to children.
9. Show by actions, as well as words, that you consider campers to be essentially good persons, and you have confidence in each one's ability to learn to control himself or herself and to strike out in positive new directions.
10. Promote positive group values and morale, and make full use of the group as a way of enforcing the sense of personal responsibility of individual children. In doing so, employ group discussion and tasks in which children share functions and work closely together.

Principles of working with group organization . . .

1. Bring the group close around you and ask that everyone be included. "Let's all gather around now and listen to the instructions."
2. Speak clearly—you will lose your group with slurred speech and a lot of "uhs," "ands" and "ya knows."
3. Make eye contact as you speak to the group. You will know who is listening, and they will know you are talking to them.
4. Vary your voice and project it so you are easy to hear. Speak with confidence. Sometimes lowering your voice works well.
5. Give clear and concise directions. Practice in your mind and know what you need to say.
6. Don't ask "OK?" after giving instructions; ask instead, "Does anyone have any questions?"
7. Demonstration or role playing often helps get your point across: i.e., showing how to do a craft.
8. Use your most important asset, your eyes, your eyebrows (move them), and your hands! Move your body and show some enthusiasm!
9. Summarize what you have said.
10. Remember, the key to good leadership is communication.

Keeping myself and the campers safe

The parents and guardians of campers have entrusted you, the other counselors, volunteers and paid staff with the care of their child for the next few days of their lives. They expect you to provide a safe, positive, caring and nurturing environment for their child. Anything less is not acceptable to the parent or to the 4-H program.

As a counselor, you want to have a positive and safe experience for the next few days of your life.

How can you balance and manage this heavy load of responsibility?

Let's take a quick look at what we mean by risk management.

We know that there are risks in everything we do at camp. What we must do is manage those risks to prevent or reduce the possibility that a person could be harmed—verbally, physically, mentally and sexually. At the same time, we should also take precautions to prevent or reduce the possibility that the camp property and its facilities be harmed or damaged in any way.

Listed below are some risk management strategies, which, you will want to use. Remember, it is for your protection as well as the protection of the child.

1. Avoid putting yourself in a one-on-one situation with a camper, out of sight of others. If a camper asks to tell you something in private, step away from the group so they cannot hear the conversation, but make sure they can see you and the camper.
2. If a camper needs to be taken to the health center, ask another counselor to watch over your living group. Ask two other campers to accompany you and the sick or injured camper to the health center. The extra campers can help give positive reinforcement to the sick or injured camper. More importantly, this avoids putting you in a one-on-one situation with a child out of the sight of others, on both trips to and from the health center.
3. Practice appropriate touching. The human touch is an important need for many people; it should be warm, sincere, and with consideration of the individual. There are three safe places to touch a child: on the

hand, their shoulder, and their upper back. Never touch a child against their will—ALWAYS ASK THEIR PERMISSION (i.e., “you look like you could use a hug, may I give you one?”).

4. Never touch a child in the area normally covered by a bathing suit unless for clear medical necessity and then under the supervision of an adult of the same sex as the child.
5. Stay on established trails and roads on the campgrounds. Avoid taking your living group to areas that are “off limits” to you and the campers.
6. Control the “horseplay” that takes place in free time, in the cabin, or on the campgrounds. This is when accidents are more likely to happen. If you do not control, limit, or stop the horseplay and a child is harmed (physically or emotionally), you can be found to be negligent in performing your duties.
7. Avoid creating an environment where campers can play harmful tricks or jokes on one another. Do not, under any circumstances, play a trick or joke on a camper that has potential for harm (physical, emotional, or sexual). Remember that what is considered harmful to them may be considered playful and insignificant to you. Use extremely good judgement, and make wise decisions.
8. No matter how tempting it might be, do not take your group of campers to the swimming pool unless it is your designated time to be there. For obvious reasons, there is a maximum capacity of swimmers at any given time in the pool. Honor that rule.
9. If you are certified in first aid and/or CPR, do not give medical care beyond your training and expertise. Call for the camp medical officer to handle those situations.

General Information Regarding Body Fluids

Will I catch a disease if I give first aid? How do diseases pass from one person to another? What can I do to protect myself from infection?

Diseases that can pass from one person to another are called infectious diseases. Infectious diseases develop when germs invade the body and cause illness. The most common germs are bacteria and viruses.

A memo to the counselor from the camper

1. Don't spoil me; I know quite well I ought not to have all that I ask for. I am only testing you.
2. Don't be afraid to be firm with me. I prefer it, but don't admit it. It makes me feel secure to have understandable boundaries.
3. Don't let me form bad habits. I have to rely on you to detect them in the early stages.
4. Don't make me feel smaller than I am. It only makes me feel stupidly big.
5. Don't correct me in front of people if you can help it. I'll take much more notice if you will talk quietly in private.
6. Don't always protect me from consequences. I sometimes have to learn things the hard way.
7. Don't take too much notice of my small hurts, complaints and ailments—sometimes they get me the attention I need.
8. Don't nag. If you do, I will protect myself by appearing deaf.
9. Don't forget I cannot explain myself as well as I would like. This is one reason why I am not always very accurate.
10. Don't make promises you can't keep. I feel let down and betrayed when promises are broken.
11. Don't be inconsistent—that completely confuses me and makes me lose faith in you.
12. Don't tax my honesty too much. I am basically honest and open, but I can be easily frightened into telling smaller or larger lies.
13. Don't tell me my fears are silly. They are terribly real to me, and you can do much to reassure me if you will take time to try to understand.
14. Don't put me off when I ask questions. If you do, I will stop asking and seek information from other sources.
15. Don't ever suggest to me you are perfect or infallible. It gives me too great a shock when I find out you are neither.
16. Don't think it is beneath you to apologize to me when you are wrong. An honest apology makes me feel surprisingly warm toward you.
17. Don't forget, I love to experiment with new things. I want to try new activities.
18. Don't forget, I can be grumpy and make your life miserable if I can get under your skin. I sometimes like to outsmart you for the fun of it.
19. Don't forget how quickly I am growing up and changing. It must be difficult for you to understand me when I don't even understand myself, but please try.
20. Finally, don't forget that I can't thrive without lots of understanding love. I need you to be an adult for me, a role model, someone whom I can look up to and respect. But I don't need to tell you, do I?



Are you ready?

Counselor's Checklist

Before My Campers Arrive . . .

- ___ Am I dressed appropriately? Do I look like a camp leader?
- ___ Is my cabin or tent clean and neat? Does it look like a good place to live?
- ___ Do I know the names of each of the new campers?
- ___ Have I a supply of stories, songs and games to be used at appropriate times?

When My Campers Arrive . . .

- ___ Am I wearing my name tag?
- ___ Have I greeted each new camper with a smile and a hearty handshake?
- ___ Have I greeted the parents and reassured them that their child is going to have a great camping experience?
- ___ Have I introduced each of the new campers?
- ___ Have I seen to it that each of the new campers have all of their luggage?

After My Campers Arrive . . .

- ___ Have I seen that each camper has located a bunk to their own satisfaction?
- ___ Have I helped new campers get acquainted with the physical set-up of camp, pointing out the dining hall, vesper rock, camp office, council circle and latrines?
- ___ Have I talked with my campers about the upcoming events during their stay?
- ___ Have I told them about the camp history, traditions, and customs?
- ___ Have I discussed general camp policies regarding camp limits, safety and use of the waterfront (pool, lake, stream, etc.) in order to avoid any misunderstandings among campers?
- ___ Have I made each camper feel welcome; that I am glad to see them; that he or she has status with me and in the cabin group?
- ___ Have I asked my campers what they would like to accomplish during camp? Am I getting some ideas for future program activities?
- ___ Have I been alert on this first day of camp to diagnose any causes of homesickness?
- ___ Have I taken some concrete steps to prevent and/or remedy homesickness?

Camp Counselor Crossword

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29

Across

1. a type of boat
7. wood cut for fuel
8. to swim
9. camp dwelling
11. H₂O
12. fourth "H" in 4-H
13. opposite of out
15. cooperation between individuals
16. state (abbreviation)
18. establishing goals
19. a journey
20. mischievous acts
21. an adviser or supervisor
24. water flask
26. man-made area for swimming
28. slumber
29. skill of shooting with bows and arrows

Down

2. things to do
3. trying to prevent accidents
4. reciting tales
5. small body of water
6. the state of being friends
9. one who camps
10. second "H" in 4-H
14. the outdoors
17. catching fish
19. contest where two teams pull a rope
20. a path
21. handiwork items
22. common name for equines
23. outdoor game played with rackets
25. short sleep
27. used when rowing a boat

Answers

canoe, activities, safety, storytelling, pond, friendships,
firewood, swimming, cabin, heart, water, health, in,
nature, teamwork, st., fishing, planning, tug-of-war,
tour, tricks, trail, counselor, crafts, horses, tennis,
canteen, nap, pool, oar, sleeping, archery

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