

THE COUNSELOR AS A LEADER

The Counselor

Have you ever noticed that some teacher, coaches, or people who work with kids seem to do it so effortlessly? People see them and say “he/she’s a natural.” At OSC, we believe that ANYONE can be “a natural.” It’s all a matter of mastering skills that work with children, through practice and an understanding of what works with kids!

We know what works – kids like to be busy, engaged, accepted, and not bored with slow transitions, down time, or counselors who seem disorganized and not confident. **Our job is to teach you what works. Here are some proven techniques – LEARN THEM!** ☺

1. Plan a varied program – DO NOT play or do the same thing every day. NO TWO DAYS SHOULD BE ALIKE.
2. Alternate between active and semi-active games.
3. While some games become favorites with certain groups, STOP any activity when they are the most fun! Do not let your campers burn out on good activities. **If campers are upset that you are stopping a game that means you picked a great time to stop it!**
4. When a game calls for elimination, change the rules so that it doesn’t last for very long. The child who is often the first to be eliminated is the one who probably needs the opportunity to play longer!
5. Teach more than the rules of the game. Model fair play, honesty, and safety. Talk about how “those are the things you are looking for” before you start to play the game.
6. Give opportunities to individuals in the group to act in LEADERSHIP capacities (ie. Be the Jedi in Jedi Dodgeball, or help divide teams, or create rules, etc.).
7. Fill your transition time between activities (pool, lunch, etc.) with games, pretend play (ie Flying or sneaking across the field!), singing and “hip pocket” activities. This makes all the difference in the world!



LEADERSHIP TIPS

We encourage you to use this handout as a “check in” for yourself. There are SO many wonderful tips and reminders. Make sure to review before camp, and again after the first day and throughout the summer!

CAMPERS ARE YOUR FIRST CONCERN

- Know your campers; not as labels but as individuals.
- Play with your campers; don't just provide opportunities for play.
- Get on the same level as your campers; eye-level, bend your knees.
- Have open arms; sit with your campers; always have them participate with you. Your behavior lets campers know that they are your first priority.
- Stay with your campers at all times to provide supervision. Count your campers!
- Be parental—not only are you the creator/facilitator of fun and adventure, BUT ALSO make sure your camper's shoes are tied, sunscreen is on, etc.

PROVIDE SPECIFIC PRAISE

- Find opportunities to praise specific actions and responses for every camper.
- Recognize each individual camper's victories, and let it be known.
 - If you tell them they did well...good, but they will forget it.*
 - If you tell them over and over...they will resent it and it will seem insincere.*
 - If they overhear you telling others...they will remember it forever!*

HELP CAMPERS MAKE GOOD DECISIONS

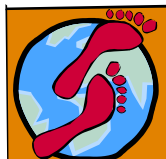
- When presented with a request/question, try to put a question mark at the end of every sentence. Instead of saying NO! or YES! (judgment statements), help campers make appropriate decisions by asking “thinking questions.”
 - “I heard...tell me about that?”*
 - “What are the ups and downs of that idea?”*
 - “What else could we try?”*
 - “How did you decide..?”*
 - “What are our options?”*
 - “How do you think we should do it?”*

USE HAZARD EYES

- Enter all situations or areas with open eyes for possible hazards to campers, other staff and self. This includes not only physical objects and behavior, but also emotional and self-esteem issues. Appropriate action in dealing with hazards is important and prevention is key. Some situations need dramatic intervention, others require educated decisions.

ENERGY & ENTHUSIASM

- The energy and involvement modeled by staff adds to a camper's experience and the camp community. Your willingness, promotion and example to try new things and have fun models this for campers. Pace of energy is important for the staff member in that it creates a healthy and obtainable high energy level.



REALIZE CAMP IS A LONG DAY

- Plan ahead for the particular needs of your campers (and your own). "How long will it take us to get to an activity or to pool?" Show responsibility to the camp community and be on time!
- Communicating plans. Know that you will not be able to do everything in a day/week...plan and pick priorities with your campers. Let staff who are counting on you know if there is a change or challenge for your group.
- Get rest. The campers need all of us at our best...alive, alert, awake and enthusiastic!

SEEK TO UNDERSTAND, BEFORE BEING UNDERSTOOD

- Approach a challenge/situation involving an individual by communicating that you understand the viewpoints and feelings of that person. Understanding them does not mean agreeing, but acknowledging their feelings and beliefs. When we feel heard and understood, we will feel more like joining together in producing a result. Joining means you share ideas in context to the situation without communicating the feeling of "I am right, you are wrong and should change!"

USE "I" MESSAGES

- Use "I" messages as an effective way to communicate your feelings and needs without causing defensiveness and placing blame. ex. *"I feel ___ when ___ because ___. I want ___."*
- Avoid using **you** when making this statement (it creates defensiveness).
- Use "I" messages for positive interactions too! It is important to notice when our campers do well and to share this with them and others.

HOW AM I DOING?

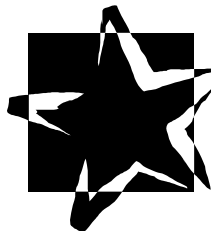
- Take time each day and evaluate your behavior and accomplishments. Set challenges to do better and grow, personally and with your camp family.
- Try new things, take a risk. This sometimes means failing. Know you're imperfect, and it's not a fault. It proves you're human and not mythical. Use imperfection as an opportunity to grow.
- Ask questions. Ask for advice and help...it means you're thinking about challenges and wanting to grow, not just completing the task.
- Ask "How am I doing?" Seek out evaluation. Ask those around you and identify areas to grow. By doing this, you increase chances that you will.

LEADERSHIP MISTAKES

- Arguing, sarcasm, and personal attacks instead of listening
- Trying to use embarrassment as peer pressure to change behavior
- Not thinking in advance about what is and what is not acceptable behavior
- Failing to respond (a) the first time and (b) every time to undesired behavior
- Yelling or barking orders in an attempt to appear in control
- Making campers believe we expect bad behavior from them by outlining in advance all anticipated horrors and negative consequences and not outlining any encouraged behavior and positive consequences
- Jumping to impulsive conclusions about causes for behavior instead of listening and observing for further facts
- Failing to admit error
- Not asking for help! It's a sign of strength to seek help and use your support system!

EXPECTATIONS OF A SUCCESSFUL CAMP COUNSELOR

- 1) **Be Professional:** Opinions and concerns never should be discussed in front of campers. Discuss with administration when necessary.
- 2) **Use Good Judgment:** Follow camp policies and procedures to help provide for the safety of campers/staff.
- 3) **Be On Time and Alert:** Arrive promptly to camp, pool, nature, other activities, and staff meetings.
- 4) **Set a Positive Example:** Campers learn more by what you do than what you say. They watch!
- 5) **Be Positive:** Questionable jokes and any references that may be degrading is inappropriate. Avoid any use of profanity or inappropriate references.
- 6) **Be a Team Member:** Work together with entire staff to create a positive environment!
- 7) **Be Responsible:** Maintain direct supervision of your campers. Notify a director of any incident out of the ordinary (accident, injury, Fight, illness, etc.) and fill out an incident report.
- 8) **Respect...**yourself, camp and others.
- 9) **Use Praise:** Use positive comments to encourage your campers and co-staff.
- 10) **Create Camp Spirit and Unity:** Participate in everything (activities, songs, games, etc.)
- 11) **Use enthusiasm**
- 12) **Try new off-the-wall things**
- 13) **Have fun and be playful**
- 14) **PLAY WITH THE CAMPERS AND KNOW WHERE THEY ARE AT ALL TIMES!**



GOOD COUNSELORS MAKE GOOD CAMPS

***The success or failure of a camp depends on the camp staff;
In order to have a good camp, we must have good counselors.***

The good counselor is a mature person.

She is sincerely interested in all campers and staff ... rather than giving her attention to those persons she enjoys most.

He is cheerful ... rather than giving in to his moods.

She is an adult friend ... she is responsible and supportive.

He is consistently dependable ... rather than lapsing into periodic irresponsibility.

She uses initiative... rather than waiting for someone to start things and tell her what to do.

He uses tact ... rather than saying what he thinks regardless of who gets hurt.

She is patient ... she does not lose her self-control nor does she take over the camper's part of planning and doing rather than waiting for them.

He is cooperative ... he does not withhold his support of staff or camper projects.

She is enthusiastic and positive in her approach ... she does not gripe in front of campers.

He is courteous ... he is never rude in manner or speech.

She has a good sense of humor ... she does not get unduly upset over minor catastrophes.

He has a true appreciation of people ... and the out-of-doors.

She has a philosophy of life worth sharing.

He is loyal to the camp: its aims, its staff, its administration.

*If we take the time to think about the impact our actions
have on children, every camper will leave OSC wanting to
return!*

