

You As Leaders

You have been sent, by God, to make a difference in the lives of a group of campers. Your overall goal as a counselor is to give campers the best week of their life; maybe of all eternity.

To that end you must be their guide. Camp creates an ideal environment for spiritual discovery, but discoverers need guides who know where to go and how to get there. That is your assignment this week. Every counselor is called to be God's spokesperson.

Sometimes you speak through words, but often through simple kindness, openness and personal integrity. You must lead them in the ways of truth. Always keep in mind the campers' physical, emotional and spiritual safety.

Nothing can prepare a counselor for every question campers can think up. An acceptable answer to any question (spiritual or otherwise) is, "I don't know. Let's find out." Kids love counselors who know less than they do about some things. A lively imagination will help you be a great counselor, but successful counselors need not be exceptionally creative. The program is the arena of discovery for campers and counselors are the guides. Above all else you need to be a genuine Christian. You don't need to be flawless, but you need to be willing to engage people with the Gospel, listen and answer questions.

Camping's success rests primarily
in the hands of the counselor.
Lloyd Mattson

How to Be a Great Leader

KNOW YOUR CAMPERS

The teachable moment is camping's most useful principle for guiding campers toward spiritual discovery. – Lloyd Mattson

- Learn the names of the kids in your cabin as soon as possible and use their name often.
- Learn about the campers in your cabin. Ask about their family, pets, school and activities.
- Learn about your campers' personal spiritual journey. Listen closely, for you will be building a bridge of communication you will travel often.
- Prepare a cabin journal. Make a page for each camper. At the end of the day write the information you learned about each camper. Write prayers you have for them. Record achievements they've made.

Teachable Moment

A great leader is a master of the teachable moment. It is usually initiated by an experience and a revelation of how that experience reveals a truth. The teachable moment is camping's most useful principle for guiding campers toward spiritual discovery. The ideal camp counselor resolves to look for the teachable moments with his campers throughout the camp week or summer.

KNOW HOW GROUPS WORK

- Within the first hours, a hierarchy forms in the cabin. One camper, or a small alliance, may emerge as a boss.
- Look for the boss camper(s) try to guide the boss camper's energy into positive channels.
- Should any camper persist in disruptive behavior the leader should take firm action.

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KNOW HOW TO LISTEN

- The two most important parts of a leader are the heart and the ear: learn how to love and listen. Jesus lead through listening and asking questions (Luke 2:46). This allows people to discover their needs as they respond. Their answers become a confession.
- Don't try to analyze a camper's problem and tell them what to do. (Brain and Tongue) You only have one week and it seldom proves effective.
- Campers often know what to do; finding the grace and strength to take action is the real problem.

BE WORTH TALKING TO

- Campers must feel that their counselor is worth talking to. Being a good listener helps.
- Be friendly and pleasant with all campers.
- Trust binds friends together. Never betray their confidence.
- Never turn kids off, never half listen,
- Recognize the potential in every camper, even sullen, lying campers.

CABIN LIFE

HEALTH AND SAFETY

No counselor should tolerate any act or attitude that threatens the physical or moral well-being of his or her campers. If an action is on the edge of safety come down on the side of caution. The law holds the counselor and camp liable for camper safety.

ILLNESS AND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

Each week TriCounty Camp's have a medical professional in the first aid station. Please contact the First Aid station if there is a medical need among any of your campers. **Located in the Lodge.**

PRIVACY AND DIGNITY

Some campers are too shy to undress in the presence of others. They climb in bed fully clothed. Some campers are bed-wetters. Others suck thumbs, hold onto security blankets or clutch a stuffed bear at bedtime. Campers, perhaps away from home for the first time need acceptance and shelter from teasing. Thoughtless intrusion or ridicule can destroy the camper's week and he or she will be determined never to return to camp. Deal kindly with all campers. Encourage older campers to affirm kids who are less mature. Teach campers to minister to one another.

NEVER BETRAY CONFIDENCE

Only when campers fully trust their counselor will they share secrets. Sometimes you may feel that a shared problem is trivial, but treat every conversation seriously– the matter isn't trivial to the camper.

The potential for spiritual discovery lies within every moment and every relationship. – Lloyd Mattson

If the camper discloses information about physical or sexual abuse, then the law requires the camp to file a report. Explain this to the camper and assure him or her it is in their best interest. Contact the camp director and explain what the camper told you.

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AVOID FAVORITISM

Some campers are more fun than others. Some attach themselves to the leader. A leader must balance the time he or she spends with each camper, taking care not to neglect those who are unpleasant.

BE THERE

You can't spend every minute of the day with your campers, but you should try not to leave the bunkhouse untended when campers are scheduled to be there. Left alone, kids generally turn to pranks and horseplay that can wound spirits and bodies. Check the bunkhouse often for campers just hanging out; not participating in scheduled activities.

CABIN INSPECTION

Campers need to work to keep the cabin clean. We encourage this in a fun way through daily cabin inspections. Your enthusiasm (or lack thereof) for winning cabin inspection will be contagious for your campers. On the last day of camp encourage your campers to take responsibility for the cabin by removing all personal belongings, throwing away all trash, sweeping the floors, checking clotheslines, and setting out the garbage.

INITIATIONS AND PRANKS

The single greatest fear among children is being humiliated. As a leader you must never foster an initiation or prank that aims to humiliate an individual camper. If campers are devising pranks that embarrass an individual camper then you must step in to alter plans. Removal of clothing or nakedness must never be involved in an initiation or prank. An initiation or prank that is in direct violation of camp rules should never be encouraged by a leader as it shows a lack of respect for the authority parents have given the camp over their children.

CABIN DEVOTIONS / "REFLECTIONS"

Traditionally cabin devotions have been scheduled just before – or after- lights out. At the close of an action packed day, kids don't need a sermon. A Bible verse, brief thought and prayer will do. Try to relate the verse and thought to a memorable part of the day; a game, campfire story, perhaps the speaker's message. *Neither the campers nor leader should find bunkhouse devotions a burden.*

All staff and counselors hold equal responsibility for the campers' well being and share equally in camp victories.
Lloyd Mattson

LIGHTS OUT

How do you put 24 campers to sleep? Make them sleepy. The program is designed to wear kids out. Quiet conversation is harmless, with occasional reminders to consider campers who want to sleep. The best sleep inducing plan ever invented is a story, preferably a continued story. The story might suit the age of the campers and be interesting enough to hold attention, but not too dramatic. Spooky stories are not for bed-time. The leader may read or tell a story. A well-read story is better than a poorly told one.

CAMPER DISCIPLINE

Every part of camp life, including discipline, should point the camper to God's purpose for life. The goal of discipline is not punishment but guidance. Here are some things to remember when you need to address a behavioral issue with a camper.

The leader who makes a silence contest between him/herself and the campers will lose. Lloyd Mattson

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- A request is always better than an order, and your example carries far more weight than your words.
- Never discipline a camper in the presence of other campers.
- Leaders should never get into a shouting match – not even a mild argument – with a camper. When a leader gets angry, the camper gains an advantage. Never discipline campers by depriving them of meals or subjecting them to physical discomfort. You may withdraw privileges and activities.
- Never touch a camper when disciplining, unless the safety of others requires it.
- Always deal with campers in view of other adults.
- Male leader should never discipline female campers.
- Discipline of campers by a leader should never go beyond a verbal reprimand. If a camper continues to be a problem, it may help to send the camper to the Camp Director. A neutral person can deal more objectively with an offender than a leader can. When the matter is resolved, then the counselor can lend what comfort is appropriate.
- Removing a camper from camp should be a last resort and discussed with the Camp Director.

PERSONAL PROBLEMS AND SPECIAL NEEDS

Allergies

Campers with allergies or special dietary needs must provide supplementary meals or snacks. The camp kitchen is not set up to prepare allergy-free meals for individual campers. If a camper has a severe environmental allergy then they may need to have their EpiPen with them.

Medicine

All medications must be dispensed by the camp nurse during meal times. Cuts, scrapes, sprains and other injuries can be dealt with at the First Aid Station. Medicine should be placed in a Zip-lock bag with the campers name and church written upon it and turned in to the first aid station. Night medications will be given to the counselors at dinner for bed-time dispensing.

Bed-wetting

Older children who wet a bed at night are embarrassed by this behavior since they recognize that it is not acceptable among their peers. For youngsters, then, bed wetting can be highly charged and potentially shameful. Work with the camp nurse on ways to discreetly handle a camper who wets the bed. Reducing beverage intake in the evening may help. Waking a camper in the night may help, but most importantly the camper should know you understand and care.

Deviant Behavior

Older campers may bring greater challenges. Campers come with all the social problems of our day and time – sexual predation, promiscuity, homosexuality, drugs, tobacco, alcohol and pornography. In a counseling situation don't reject campers who are caught up in these sins. If you are not a trained leader, you may want to seek help from camp administration. Camp administration will address the issue with the camper and seek to connect the camper with a professional Christian counselor near their home.

Homesickness

Homesickness is common for younger campers. Aim to treat it accordingly. It can take a variety of forms. Campers can appear sad or despondent. Other times, they will complain of illness. And even still, some campers might straight out and tell you "I'm homesick!" There is no benefit in keeping kids at camp if they are miserable. However, a leader should do everything he or she can to encourage a camper to stay at camp. Here are some key tips to helping a camper endure and overcome homesickness:

Change the Channel: This is your most effective technique. It is best to not get a camper to focus on their sadness. Try and engage the camper immediately in a fun activity.

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Sneak Peek: Camp does its best to keep surprises in store for our campers. Sometimes, giving a homesick camper a 'preview' to what's ahead can help.

Encouragement: Encourage campers to try and enjoy the moment. Whether it's a meal, a competition or a free time activity, encourage them in their fun and their play.

Special Roles: Giving a camper a purposeful role can help them to feel needed at camp. Ask the staff if they need an assistant in the dining hall or someone to help lead an activity, giving a camper a significant role can often help them to turn the corner.

Involve a Woman: A woman's touch often helps a camper. A female leader or the medical personnel at the First Aid Station may be helpful.

Phone Calls Home: No camper should be calling home when homesick. It's typically the final straw. If you need to call home, then prepare the home first. You may suggest they call the camper later at an appointed time. This provides more time for the camper to adjust and moves going home one day closer to the end of camp.

Going Home: Home is the final option and it needs to be made with the camp administration. If the camper is to be released it should be to an approved parent or guardian and done with an affirming manner with a warm invitation to return next year.

Things not to do:

Avoiding the conversation: While we encourage 'changing the channels' and 'sneak peeks', we never want a camper's expression of feelings to be dismissed. If they feel like you don't care about their sadness, it will be very difficult for them to engage in their experience.

Hard-Nosed Refusal: Do not deal with a homesick camper with a hard-nosed refusal to consider going home. Homesickness can turn into real sickness if the hope of escape is lost.

Empty Promises: Please don't promise that a camper can go home early or that they can leave at a certain point. Typically it's the decision of the parents to determine when and if a camper goes home early.

TROUBLE WITH FACILITIES

If you have issues or needs with facilities, use Trouble Notes. The Trouble Notes clipboard is located at the Cabins. Write your facility problem or need on the clipboard for our staff to address throughout the day. Please include your name, the date, location, and details.

BEING APPROPRIATE

As we interact with campers and counselors at Camp, it is imperative that we fall on the side of safety, caution, propriety and integrity. Below are a few guidelines to help you succeed in your role as someone working directly with students and counselors this summer at Camp.

APPROPRIATE LOCATIONS

The general rule here is to always meet in open, public places with any guest at Tri-County Camp. If you are in a room with multiple people and everyone leaves but you and another person, take a moment to move the conversation to a public location. This isn't just for opposite gender interactions. As a side note, this also includes other adults. Do not put yourself in a situation where you could be accused of inappropriate behavior with another leader or staff member, especially behind closed doors.

APPROPRIATE TOUCH

We need to be very cautious regarding physical touch. Unfortunately, in our day and age, children have become prey to predatory adults who take advantage of their innocence. In addition, it is easy for innocent touch to be misconstrued and twisted against you, even by a third party. As a general rule, please try NOT to initiate any touch that might be considered

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inappropriate. (Anywhere above their knees and below their shoulders—except maybe their arms and upper back.) Err on the side of caution when touching a camper or leader.

APPROPRIATE CONVERSATIONS

Confidentiality - Campers and staff may share very personal and emotional issues with you this summer. It is important that you guard that information as a treasure. Again, be very careful not to turn someone's struggles into gossip.

Conversation Topics – Be who you say you are. While sharing your experiences and life is encouraged, sometimes details aren't always appropriate. Think before you share it, and remember who you are talking to. This is not the time to be hypocritical or to be an open book. Find a balance in the truth that lies in the middle. Unless you are a licensed counselor, please don't represent yourself as one. Who you are, is someone who can listen, offer advice along the way and point campers towards resources like their church and youth ministry as a place for long term support. Say gently: "I can be a friend and listen right now and pray..." etc. so that your role is clear.

APPROPRIATE GENDER

Again, use common sense. As an adult male or female, you should not be spending any alone time with a camper or leader. There might be occasions where a camper/leader would like alone time with you to discuss an issue or have questions about their faith. In those times, choose a public place and if possible, invite another staff member to the conversation.

APPROPRIATE PLAY

Kids love to play. When playing games with campers, especially physical ones (like dodge ball or how guys wrestle in their cabins), please use common sense and avoid playing too rough or being too competitive. Often, in those situations, someone can get injured, become embarrassed or have their feelings hurt. So, you might want to reconsider before you decide to tackle a 4-foot, 70 lb. girl.

APPROPRIATE ACCOUNTABILITY

Help other adults be appropriate. If there are only three of you left in a counseling room hang around; don't get up and leave the adult with the camper unannounced. Lastly, it is important for leader to hold one another accountable for what is appropriate. If you witness a camper, co-leader or staff member being inappropriate you have a responsibility to 1) assess the situation and the severity of the action 2) let the person know you saw the action and remind them of what is appropriate.

