

Magnificent Camp Staff Motivation

Realize a Proven Strategy for a 70 - 90% Staff Return Rate



Get More From Your Staff Without Even Asking!

Randall Grayson, Ph.D.

Advance Praise

Randy's book gives a smorgasbord of creative ideas to choose from that will motivate staff from their first contact with your camp all the way through the closing days of the summer season. It is a great resource you can use year after year!

– Kim (Wenzl) Aycock, Assistant Director, Camp Illahee, Brevard, NC

Randy presents a HIGHLY informative read – chock FULL OF EXAMPLES AND TOOLS! His presentation style is well organized and affords an easy to read / easy to navigate book. The brilliance here is in his demystification of motivation as a whole, and particularly of the effects of praise and perks. His shift towards the bigger picture that is behind staff motivation and performance will serve camps well. A “how to” manual on walking your talk and living out your (program) mission!

– Tracy Hans, LCSW, Experiential Education Consultant, NY

Ah, what a delight to read your work! As usual, I found that your writing reflects what I see "in the field." It's grounded in reality. And the way you use examples to illustrate points -- thus modeling what you write about in the section about stories -- is keenly interesting. I remain impressed.

– Linda Erceg, RN, MS, PHN, Health & Safety Coordinator, Concordia Language Villages, MN

I learned a lot about things that I had not even considered trying in my camp programs. Camp directors from all types of camps will benefit from this. In some ways this forced me to think out of the box, which is what is needed to keep our program innovative and our staff coming back.

– Kim Shafer, Director, Camp Black Hawk, WI

Loads of information that I think most Camp Directors can relate to, and often have thought about, but not necessarily implemented. Good tools & examples included to help put into practice what the research is suggesting!

– Michael Peters, Camping Services, YMCA Greater NY

I think that too often we look for the quick fix when staff moral is going down hill, and you really set the idea that the whole issue of staff motivation starts before you hire staff, and continues throughout the season (or year), and beyond. It also helped me to understand that it is more of a system rather than individual pieces (without fitting together). I have read in *Camping Magazine* (and other places) pieces of bits of insight into staff motivation, but they don't offer the critical framework and ideas, and thus do not hold up for more than a few days.

– Rev. Robert Vodra, Director, Camp Greenwood, MI

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VERSION 2.2

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 - Gossip and politics
 - Disorganization
 - Asking people to do things you wouldn’t do
 - Doing someone else’s job for them

Freely Available Resources

All of the below resources can be downloaded free from www.visionrealization.com. In addition to these resources, you'll find more on evaluation, what it takes to go from good to great, finding and implementing best practices, information about at-risk youth, uncommon knowledge about self-esteem, and program knowledge ranging from pick-up games to archery to special days. Free.

Title	Description
360 degree evaluation	Follow the Fortune 1000 in using this tool to develop your staff. You will get an overview of 360 degree evaluation, understand why it is so beneficial, understand how to conduct them, and become aware of the pitfalls and stumbling blocks.
Behavior management	This resource is an extensive behavior management plan that is firmly rooted in developmental and counseling psychology. Elements of plans that work and don't, bases of power, 5 approaches to counseling, parenting styles, and a full description of a systematic plan for working with children are all included.
Believing and doubting game	Play this useful "game" when you are having almost any kind of controversial discussion, or are trying to increase creativity. Place the one-page description in front of everyone at the meeting, allow everyone to read it, and get ready to have a more open, creative, and, ultimately more productive discussion/meeting.
Emotional intelligence	Brief information in presentation format on what Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is, why it is so important, and how to develop it. Also includes information on how to measure EQ in a valid and reliable way.
Knowledge management	Knowledge management will save you time, money, be a staff perk, and help you achieve your mission much more effectively. Simple idea, difficult to implement well, profound results. More specific implementation advice and lists are provided as well as models to help organize efforts. Once you engage this tool, you'll wonder how you ever did without it!
Organizational culture at camps	From a fuzzy and nebulous concept to a concrete, useful framework. Understand clearly what makes a camp culture and how far reaching it is. Determine how yours rates. Discover best practices in creating an exceptional culture. Learn how to develop or change your current culture without hitting the land mines. Understand why Bob Ditter called this approach "the next level" in camp performance.
Organizational factors	The topics presented here are definitely considered by camps, and often agonized about at length. The goal is to hopefully offer a nugget or two of new information, or new lines of thought. Addressed are camper return rates and session length, staff return rates, appropriate staffing levels, and staff quality.
Process maps	Utilizing this knowledge will help you understand and communicate what your camp does in an unprecedented way. The staff and campers will benefit enormously from this knowledge. Reach a new plateau of understanding and effectiveness about your mission, and how to achieve it.
Staff training best practices	Learn how to take your camp training from good to best practice. Understand how to convey information so that it will be remembered and used. Learn how to capture the heart in addition to the mind. Understand how to make in-the-trenches training as effective as possible - includes guidelines for supervisors. Fortune 500 leadership training, Parent Effectiveness Training, and camp orientations don't achieve their objectives at an alarming rate. Learn why orientations, special trainings, and in-services fail and what to do about it.
The art and science of mistakes	Directors, staff, and campers all make plenty of slip-ups. Learn the differences between mistakes and failure and how to find the humor and wisdom in life's disappointments. Teach children, staff, and your organization how to "fail forward." There isn't a single aspect of organizations or personal life this doesn't apply to!
The learning camp	The book "The Fifth Discipline" made learning organizations popular, but a lot has happened in the decade since that research was done. There are eight pillars of a learning organization. Understand what they are and how to assess where you stand on each pillar by using an administrator and counselor survey - provided.

Introduction

What is motivation?

Motivation is motion. When you have cohesive motivation (most of the staff), you have uniformity of motion. Leaving Webster behind, people are motivated by reaching for and achieving their dreams for themselves and others. That's the core of it. Your staff's dreams for others should be a good match with your dreams for others . . . your vision and mission. People also want to work on their personal dreams, and being specific about and focused on their growth will serve that end.

On our way to our dreams, there are things that can either help us along, or be stumbling blocks. For example, empowering our staff by giving them the freedom to act, the security to be bold, the desire to succeed, and the opportunity to contribute will propel them along. Not setting proper expectations, not having enough staff to do the job, or doing any of the things discussed in the "10 great ways to demotivate your staff" section (page 100) will serve as stumbling blocks on their journey toward their dreams.

Using and understanding this book

Use this resource like a checklist. Most of the factors discussed contribute to staff motivation by either fostering it or not deflating it, and many or most of them are likely already in place at your camp. Some of you may feel that all of these things are self-evident and even obvious. That's fine, but do note whether or not they are in place, and *how they can be more fully implemented*. Carefully and rigorously assess your success – *do not* just take your own word for how well these elements are implemented.

I've attempted to offer an overview of a motivational system that will create a level of energy and dedication that equals best-practice camps. When most of these elements are essentially in place, the motivation the staff display is awe inspiring. They function at a level that exceeds what almost anyone would have thought possible! *You will be amazed at how much your staff will happily accomplish, even if you were already satisfied with the way things were*. This kind of staff far surpasses what the average camp experiences. This motivational system serves as a critical element in creating an exceptional camp capable of achieving its outcomes to an unprecedented degree.

"The three P's" are what lots of people consider staff motivation – pep talks, praise, and perks. Relying on those elements is like eating your salad and dessert and saying you're finished. The main course is: structures (quality, quantity, and pay), setting expectations, camp culture (including trust), empowered staff (freedom, security, desire, and opportunity), and providing value to your staff (development plans and reviews). Yes, with such a large meal, you could get by with less, but where the analogy breaks down is that when they are all present, the motivation of your staff will seem more magical than even your fanciful dreams. It is within such a comprehensive motivational system that you will be able to get more from your staff without even asking.

The blind man and the elephant

No, I don't think you're an elephant, but stick with me through this analogy. There are several blind people around an elephant, and each one is describing the elephant differently – smooth, scaly, bushy, long and tube-like, and soft and mushy. You have to put all the pieces together to understand what an elephant is, and yet they can only really examine one part at a time. You have to feel (read) each part of the elephant (sections) to get the full picture.

Since staff motivation must be viewed as a whole system (elephant), it might be a little confusing to examine each part and not understand the whole very well. After you've been through the whole book, go back to the contents at a glance page and I'll wager that a new understanding washes over you. With that, you'll be well equipped to truly motivate your staff.

A critical caveat about motivation

Remember, motivation equals motion, and uniformity of motion is great! Motivation is absolutely critical. But it doesn't necessarily mean the goal will be achieved, because the direction of the motion may not be on target. *Motivation does not equal actual performance on outcomes.* For example, D.A.R.E. programs tend to have highly motivated staff, but historically the outcomes have essentially been nil, with the exception of recent reinventions of the program. Why? Because the methods employed weren't very effective, despite well-meaning and passionate people. The recipes (methods) your cooks (staff) are using must be good ones. For camps, extrapolated research evidence suggests that a majority of camps are not very effectively meeting their mission. See the "Organizational culture at camp" book's appendices on "Issues with evidence that camps often use" for further explanation. The "Process maps" resource offers a means of creating methods or processes that are sound. Both of these resources are freely available, as I note in the next paragraph.

Noted resources

Throughout this book, I reference several of my other resources/writings. My focus here is on staff motivation, and not such topics from those sources as staff training, process modeling of outcomes, or culture. Although those are quite intertwined with staff motivation, including them here would add over 200 pages, and create extremely long tangents that would distract from the central message. All of the other resources noted throughout are freely available from my website, or on a free copy of my book, "Creating exceptional camps." A brief description of the referenced resources appears in the appendix on page 117 and on page 3 as well.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the following people for their feedback on earlier drafts. Their willingness to read over 60,000 words with a keen eye toward improving this book for the benefit of others is a remarkable contribution. It's this kind of community service that makes camping a wonderful place to be.

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Tracy Hans, LCSW, Experiential Education Consultant, NY

I'd like to acknowledge that the comments from almost every reviewer regarding the organization and style of this book were different, which highlights the diversity of perspectives. Also, content disagreements were small and rare, but know that not everyone agreed with everything. Your experience will likely be different as well, and I *enthusiastically* invite your feedback. I respond to all messages.

Structures

The elemental factors of camp staff quality, quantity, and pay are considered by all directors and staff. Staff quality matters – that is perfectly obvious. Similarly, it would be self-evident to say that all of these things influence staff motivation. In each of the following short sections, it is my goal *not* to tell you what you already probably know, but rather to give you some knowledge that may cause you to think about something more, and perhaps do something differently.

Staff quality

Camp management knows that in the end, the staff are where the rubber meets the road. They are the intervention. The full importance of quality staff is described in other resources such as “Organizational factors,” the “Organizational culture at camps” book, and “Staff training best practices.” At this point, I’ll cover just a few salient points.

There are key job knowledge, attitude, and behavior/skill sets for every position, and the interview process should help select for them. For camps, those skill sets often include: a program skill, being fun, having some leadership ability, group work, loving children, being safe, emotional intelligence, work ethic, beliefs and behaviors about discipline, and character.

Competency-based interviewing (also known as behavioral interviewing) attempts to assess capability in the targeted domain. Answers to questions are evaluated against set criteria to establish whether they are, for example, excellent, good, average, or poor. Such a detailed exposition would be a small book beyond the current scope, but there are several resources available on this topic. Bob Ditter’s book “Trail signs and compass points” has a section on implementing this technique. A company called Power Hiring (www.powerhiring.com) has also created a system specifically for summer camps. For emotional intelligence interviewing, check out MHS’ interview protocol (eqi.mhs.com).

A few sample interview questions along these best-practice lines are included below, and more are included in the section of this resource entitled “Empowered staff: Desire: Hiring for fit.” (Page 23) For further familiarization with the interview process, please see the other questions in that section.

- What is your major? Did you change majors? {see past interests, goal setting, and discipline}
- Tell me about a few times when you had to discipline children? What is your philosophy of discipline? {see behavior management resource – evaluated against the 5 approaches to counseling}
- What is your definition of a good role model? What qualities do you have that would make you a good role model? What qualities do you need to work on? Tell me about specific times when you feel you were being a good role model.
- Describe your last few jobs. What were they, and what were your responsibilities? Why did you choose those jobs? What did you like and dislike about each of those jobs? What was the hardest part of the job? What would your co-workers (kids) say about you?
- Tell me about any leadership roles you’ve had – project, group, job, kids, or . . . What did you do? What were the most satisfying and challenging parts? Were you involved in organizing or planning it? How did you support the group/task? Did you help grow people? Did that experience change you? Would you do anything differently?
- Tell me about the last significant fight/disagreement you had with someone. How was it resolved? (If they resolved it well, have them tell about a time when they didn’t)

- Describe a situation in which the pressures to compromise your integrity/values were the strongest you have ever felt. This could be at home, school, work, or some other social situation.
- Tell me about two times when you failed or made a mistake and overcame it. Now, tell me about two mistakes you made that you didn't overcome – things you wish you had done differently, but didn't.
- Who do you usually hang out with the most? Who is your best friend? If I asked your best friend to describe you, what would they say? What would they say they liked most about you? What would they say is your down-fall?
- What two things would you like to change about yourself? What two things would you never change about yourself?
- How have you changed in the last couple of years?
- What do you like to do to have fun? What do you not like to do? How do you like to play with kids? Please give me specific examples where you were playing with children? How about something spontaneous (planned)?

It usually isn't possible to hire a staff that comes with the complete skill set necessary to be effective in the camp environment. To that end, there is often a lengthy orientation and training period. In order to actually have a high-caliber staff capable of being instrumental in achieving your outcomes, the training must meet the best practices that have proven to be so vital. Those practices are detailed in the "Staff training best practices" resources. Again, including those free resources here would create a lengthy (over 50 pages) tangent that distracts from the main points about staff motivation.

In terms of motivation, there are two relevant core issues. First, a lot of motivation comes from the internal desire to meet the valued goal of achieving the mission and outcomes. When the goal is set too high for the person's ability, motivation drops. Valuable goals that can't be obtained, in this case because of staff quality/ability, are like the rich banquet set just out of reach of the starving prisoner's cell. For example, one camp asked mediocre staff to change very challenging at-risk children via a demanding intervention. They tried, failed, and were de-motivated. Second, people like to work with those who can pull their own weight and contribute toward the efforts of reaching the goals. When there are a few people who don't meet muster, others have to pick up the slack. The resulting frustration dampens motivation. Again, when people are working hard toward goals, they want to be competent and work with competent others.

Staff quantity

Counselor to camper ratios vary from 1:12 to 1:2. The number of staff required to meet the outcomes for the campers *and* staff can only be determined by careful reflection and evaluation. At the core is the question of whether staff are able to meet their personal needs and the needs of the camp. Such an analysis is inextricable from staff quality, culture, the nature of the campers, and the desired outcomes for campers and staff. For example, if the staff aren't of high quality, the culture is weak, the campers are difficult, and the desired outcomes are numerous and/or difficult to achieve, an enormous number of staff would be necessary to have any hope of a lasting, beneficial impact (assuming the processes were sound). If the staff don't meet minimal standards, having more staff won't help (because more incompetent hands is just more bodies), and might even hurt.

Let me address proper staffing levels with a few statements for you to consider. Of course, the answers to these statements occur along a continuum, so try rating them using the following scale. Also, note that I've often found different answers depending who is asked – counselors, supervisors, or directors. Each perspective is valuable.

Strongly disagree // Never	Disagree // Occasionally	Average // Sometimes	Agree // Often	Strongly agree // Always
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- Staff are able to meet their basic needs of sleep, down time, fun, and socializing. We usually can't give staff all the time off they desire, but we should give them the time off they need.
- Staff members are developing professionally and meeting their personal mission statements
- Staff have time to use and contribute to the knowledge management center (see that resource, which essentially addresses capturing and referencing best practices).
- There is time to accurately and completely fill out camper reports/letters.
- When a staff member is passionate about something, there is leeway to slot that person for "creative hours" so that such endeavors don't have to take place on personal time.
- There are enough backup staff (based on past experience) available to cover for staff who leave (fired, sick, quit, family emergency, etc.).
- Supervisors have time to *ask* and *act* on the question: "Is there anything else I can do to ensure that the campers and counselors are getting the most out of the experience?"
- Similarly, supervisors have time to ask and act on the question for counselors: "What do you need to do a better job?"
- There is a specific time for counselors and supervisors to meet and address individual camper development plans.
- Programs are well thought out, executed, and evaluated afterwards.
- Supervisors and subordinates have enough time to do informal and formal performance evaluations so that they don't happen during people's time off, or when they really should be doing other things.
- Campers that present special challenges (e.g., at-risk, medical needs, physical needs, very young, behavioral) are assigned enough staff to address their needs.
- There are enough support personnel available, such as drivers, shoppers, and secretary(s), so that people in other roles don't have to cover for their duties. Some camps call these people HEROES (honorably employed rotating operational efficiency staff). A "Director of Operations" is often a crucial role, for this person relieves directors and supervisors from tasks that don't require their particular expertise, or that prevent them from focusing on their more primary functions.
- On a typical day, camp life is not harried or rushed.
- There is sufficient time for supervisors to provide perks, support, and benefits (see that section – page 39).

The closer each of your answers is to "strongly agree," the more motivated your staff will be, and therefore both camper and staff outcomes can be better achieved.

It's important to point out what many camp people either know or have personally experienced. It is possible to run camp in an understaffed situation and still have staff be motivated. Sometimes, that crunch of responsibility and the desire to excel will make staff rise to the occasion and yield even greater motivation than one might expect. Such an experience can be exhilarating and satisfying. In the long-term and holistic view where staff are considered customers as well, there are problems with understaffing. Your staff can become burned out during the summer, or after. While burning people out has almost become an American tradition (we are literally the workaholics of the world), it isn't healthy or desirable for numerous reasons you can likely surmise. More detail can be found in the "Organizational factors" resource. Also, for the camp, not having enough staff means that the camper outcomes

are not being met to the degree that is possible. That is your mission on the line! Furthermore, the development of the camp is stunted, because the necessary contributions that grow the camp can't be made, such as true innovation and continuous improvement.

Of course, camps often develop creative ways to deal with an inadequate number of staff, when hiring enough for the whole summer is just not an option. One, they might resort to staff scheduling magic and accept a small reduction in program choice or quality in order to free up staff. Two, some camps have a lot of volunteers, which allows them a degree of freedom in offering more options and just having things run more smoothly. Often the volunteers are past staff or older alumni. Parents sometimes work as well. Three, camps hire some staff on short contracts to aid with particularly busy weeks, or to provide relief for a period when staff tend to need a break. Still, working in a well-staffed camp instead of a moderately staffed one is a world of difference you have to experience to really appreciate. If you can, try it.

Pay

Most folks need a better reason to get up in the morning than cash. In fact, when people put the goal of money in front of their heart's desire, motivation usually suffers greatly. Like mom always said, follow your heart.

At the same time, pay isn't meaningless to most people either. There certainly are staff who work at camp and get paid nothing, because working toward the outcomes for the campers and themselves is reward enough (e.g., working for disadvantaged children, or church camps). If that isn't your situation, pay can make a difference, but it doesn't influence motivation unless it is perceived as inequitable. People want a fair shake. Understand that pay won't create or add to motivation, but it can subtract from it. The exception would be if someone's prime goal is money, but if you've got people at camp motivated by money, the values hiring process failed (see Empowerment: Desire: Hiring for fit – Page 23).

The benefit package needs to be taken as a whole, and staff need help seeing it in that way. They need to understand all the other factors, such as personal development, contributing to the outcomes, professional development, quality co-workers, fun, food, lodging, etc. In that light, the pay can depart from average depending on the relative weight of the other elements. Try including a "Top 10 Reasons to Work at Camp _____" sheet to help put compensation in proper perspective. A sample sheet is included in Part II on setting expectations – Page 90.

If you pay above the average, let folks know and they will be more satisfied with their likely still meager salary. Again, numerous studies reveal that extra satisfaction with pay is unlikely to yield improved motivation. However, I want to reiterate that if you pay less than the average and staff don't perceive the discrepancy as being made up elsewhere, and/or they see the camp as cheap, motivation will suffer. You can pay \$500 less than camps in your area, which can be fine if staff feel like you're spending the money on the mission – balance is still reached. However, paying less than the previous summer, or not raising salary for several years in a row, will likely send the message that staff are not valued.

Pay may also arise as an inequity issue when the salary structure is a mystery. It works better to have a set structure, and to let people know what folks are getting paid. Such a transparent system is perceived as fair and, as long as the discrepancies are justifiable, equitable. Publish staff salaries by position so that there is no question.

Finally, yes, it would be nice to pay camp staff what they are worth, but that is rarely possible. I've worked at resident camps with regular counselors paid \$0, \$500, \$1000, \$2000, \$2700, and \$3,300. If you can pay more, great. If you can't, remember that it doesn't influence motivation a whit unless it is perceived as inequitable. However, low pay might affect your staff's ability to return for another summer and make recruiting more difficult.

Set expectations

Satisfaction = Reality — Expectations

Let staff know what to expect, so that their reality matches (or even exceeds) their expectations. When that is the case, people are satisfied. When expectations are higher than the reality encountered, people are dissatisfied. Working with expectations should be a major part of the hiring process. One camp had the philosophy of trying to talk potential staff out of the job by way of setting realistic expectations, so that they only hired truly dedicated and informed people. Directors sometimes scoff at driving away staff, which are hard enough to find as it is. Yes, greater recruiting efforts will need to be made, but the payoff is staff motivation, and a better return rate.

Camps need to hire staff that are in synch with the camp's vision, mission, structures, processes, activities, and policies. You want someone who is in line with the norms and values alive at your camp. You want someone who is going to gel with how and why things are done at camp.

The following descriptions are a few ways to help set expectations. Everything except the job description, personnel policies, staff application, camper brochure, and camper video is included in Part II – Page 90. All of the expectation-setting material below should be made available to the staff before the full interview is given. After using all of these tools, I was somewhat surprised and quite delighted that potential staff looked through it all, and that interviews were far more fruitful. Indeed, providing this information served as a competitive advantage – “they care, they're honest, and they've got their act together.” For even more ideas on expectations to set that matter at your camp, examine the deep assumptions and enculturation portions of the “Organizational culture at camps” book.

- top 10 reasons to work at camp
- staff video
- one-page assessment of fit and/or core values page
- an essay entitled “The Modern Day Hero”
- quotes from past staff
- job description
- performance standards
- 7 a.m. to Midnight graphical daily schedule of each job
- expectations / clarification review page
- camper video and brochure
- staff application
- personnel policies

Setting expectations continues with the interview. In reviewing expectations for the interview, pick the ones that seem to be the most problematic based on past history, and cover those. If an element is core, include it on the materials applicants get before the interview. Some common points include:

- philosophy on religion
- population of the campers & how long they typically stay
- living conditions, food, and camp location
- diversity at camp
- appearance policy
- drug policy – alcohol, smoking, other drugs
- time off
- typical camper day & why it is that way
- activities you have at camp, and the activities you don't and wouldn't have and why
- this is what an exceptional staff person looks like
- philosophy of competition

After a staff member is part of the family, they usually get a contract, welcome package, staff manual, e-mails and letters, calls from returners, and pre-camp get-together invitations. Each is another opportunity to communicate your values, goals, and expectations. If you send a contract and welcome package, but don't get the contract back by the assigned deadline (say two weeks after the offer), then call them up and start digging deeper. For the welcome package, it can all be bound together, or you may want to spread it out over time. Some common welcome package elements are:

- letter from the directors
- fun facts about the directors
- what the outcomes are and how they are achieved
- core camp values
- flora and fauna at camp
- camp jargon
- West Nile and Lyme Disease information (if it fits, and it won't scare them presented in this way)
- staff clothing and equipment list
- staff goals sheet (to be returned)
- a cd of the camp songs
- song book
- daily schedule
- map of camp
- camp t-shirt
- directions
- how are you getting here form (to be returned)
- first couple days of staff training schedule
- thorough description of their area of responsibility (program/other)
- labels sheet for address (convenience for them)
- and various inspirational pages.

Once staff get to camp, and throughout your contact with them, the expectation-setting process continues. In the appendix of the "Organizational culture at camps" book, there is an excellent orientation enculturation story (page 76 in that resource) that illustrates many of these points (published in *Camping Magazine*, and reprinted with permission). Essentially, think about the value and process expectations you want to convey, and very specifically how you will go about transmitting those to the hearts and minds of the masses. The expectation versus reality-checking experience continues throughout the summer, but it is mostly complete by the time the campers have been at camp for a few short days. Most of this resource is about managing the motivation of staff throughout the summer.

In the expectation-setting process, it is important not to neglect returning staff as well. Even though they've already gone through the ultimate expectation-setting experience (a full summer), there are different expectations for them as returning staff. It is also a time for the administration to learn about the returning staff members' experiences of the previous summer, and how that experience might shape their expectations for the coming summer. The following are some areas you might consider exploring with returning staff. One way to break it up is to pick some of the questions for a written response from staff, and then cover the rest in person or over the phone. A side benefit of the conversation is that it re-establishes rapport, trust, and focus.

- Tell me about what's been going on with you since camp last summer? What's new?
- If you could change one thing about last summer, what would it be?
- How did camp impact your life?
- Life is growth . . . how have you grown or changed since summer?
- What about camp frustrates you the most?
- Are there camp rules you feel are too strict or are unnecessary? Are there rules we should have?
- What are your expectations of the directors?
- What was your greatest personal accomplishment at camp?

- Greatest regret? And, greatest lesson learned?
- What staff member do you remember the most? Why? Who on staff would you most want to be like?
- Do you feel we worked together well as a team last year? How so? How not?
- Are there things that were not cleanly communicated to us last summer that you think should be said now? Or, in other words, are there things you feel we should have done, said, or known that we didn't?
- Key problem #1: Tell me your thoughts about Peter's dismissal last summer
- Key problem #2: How do you think we handled Mary's violation of the community's trust?
- Do you have any comments or reactions about the tentative changes we're thinking about for next summer? (They would already have 2 – 5 pages that describe what's going to be different next summer)
- Are there things we left out? Strengths? Weaknesses? Opportunities? Threats?
- Are there any new things you'd like to bring (or do) to camp this summer?
- What do you think other returning staff will expect of you?
- What do you think new staff will expect of you?
- What do you think we can do to make the new staff part of the team?
- What were your favorite things to teach and lead last summer? What do you want to do this summer? What will you do to make sure things and camp life are creative and not stale?
- All returning staff will have a role in next year's staff training . . . an actual assignment that they will lead. After looking at the staff training schedule, what parts would you like to be involved in?
- From your personal end-of-summer evaluation with your supervisor, I see that the following strengths and weaknesses were agreed upon. What are your thoughts on those now?
- What are your specific personal and professional goals for next summer?
- At the end of the summer, how do you want to feel? What do you think will be your greatest accomplishment?

One final noteworthy point on setting expectations concerns the attainability of camp outcomes for staff and campers. These outcomes should be grounded in very probable reality. When they are not, the effect is an expectation that wasn't met in reality. Not all roads lead to the top of the mountain. For each intended outcome, there needs to be a recipe that will actually result in the desired end. The "Process maps" resource will help you create a very solid means of achieving your specific outcomes. The principles for improving social skills, self-esteem, environmental attitudes and awareness, self-confidence, et cetera are largely the same whether the environment is a school, home, church, or camp. To use another example, means of transportation vary between cars, planes, and trains – the methods are different. But the underlying principles of physics apply in any case. If you jump off a cliff wearing feathered wings (some faulty or missing principles), you're in trouble, and your staff may be quite demotivated.

The role of stories, speeches, and pep talks

I included “Get more from your staff without even asking!” as part of this book title, because I wanted to strongly emphasize that an approach of demanding, imploring, and energizing your staff toward greater productivity is usually fundamentally flawed. Let me quickly add that stories, speeches, and pep talks have their place. But when they are *needed* to get people on track, or to rev them up to a *necessary* level of performance, the other elements I list throughout this resource must be addressed first. They are the cause of motivation problems. Using words to create a standard, acceptable level of performance often does more harm than good, and usually doesn’t last long enough to make a real difference on the outcomes for the campers.

For example, some camps have issues with the staff lagging at some point during the summer. There is some hump where motivation sags. From my experience while at numerous camps for the full summer, let me tell you that there are a lot of camps where that isn’t an issue. There is no slump in week X, or wavering of motivation and energy. These camps enjoy strong, consistent effort without pep talks and speeches, for they have most or all of the other key motivation factors in place. ***Thus, when speeches, inspirational stories, and pep talks are necessary to get the staff going, or going stronger to where they should be, save your breath and work on the other factors.*** They will make a true, lasting difference.

Having said that, pep talks can play a role in staff motivation. They can definitely yield a little spin up in performance. A good, rousing call to action will likely get you some rousing action. Key problems include that the effect doesn’t last long, and like a sugar rush, the extra effort can come with a downer on the other side. Pep talks can also create a staff who need them to stay motivated and focused, and even be addicted to them in the extreme. Staff look outside themselves, to the director or leader, for their motivation, which creates a dependency that was never necessary in the first place. However, a pep talk may be useful when there is a temporary, unusual circumstance that has lowered motivation.

Speeches often meld a pep talk with the substance of a story. They can be rousing and impassioned, or quiet and sincere. Ultimately and simply, a speech speaks to our dreams for ourselves and others. Speaking of dreams, realizing them or working toward them highlights the reasons for breathing, for wanting to be alive. Highlight is a key word, because the speech shines a brighter light on what the leader should have made visible all the time – our dreams for ourselves and others. Speeches are also useful for calling upon values, or offering some educational point in an emotional way. Examples and further descriptions are included in Part II – Page 44.

While speeches can be powerful, two further caveats need to be considered as well. First, they usually move those who were ready to be moved. Preaching to the choir, so to speak. *Like the great speeches of our time, they serve to call forth the motivation that was available to us all the time.* Changing minds is more the stuff of Hollywood than history. Second, speeches borrow some of the drawbacks from pep talks. They can offer a spin up, but such boosts are often short lived, and staff can come to rely on external sources of motivation. We want the coach to send us into the game roaring (even though, for example, the most successful basketball coach ever did not rely on such tactics). So, keep speeches as tools in the box, but understand their limitations (need the choir, spin up, addicts, outside motivation) and appropriate use (speak to dreams, slump, values, education).

Stories are wonderfully diverse tools. They can teach us lessons in a way that we wouldn’t be able to hear otherwise. Stories can expand our thoughts by opening new vistas and connecting seemingly unconnected areas. They can impart values, make complex things easier to understand and remember, relate history, and communicate the culture. Stories can also inspire us and enhance motivation. A great tale woven by a master teller can tug at the heartstrings, or put fire in the belly. Hollywood, a teller of tales on the silver screen, is keenly aware of these properties.

Camps usually have a stable of stories ready to serve these and other purposes (Part II includes several examples). The stories may include the tales of past staff, the influence of the experience on campers, letters from parents, or the stories of people who are present at the camp now. By all means, have campers, staff, and parents tell their own stories whenever possible. Tell your story as well. These stories usually reinforce the way things are done, the outcomes of the experience, and the importance of those outcomes for the people who receive them. Such tales should be sprinkled generously throughout the summer. Training should be replete with them, but they should also be used anytime a group of staff are together. Open and close meetings with a story.

Ultimately, in terms of motivating staff, understand that stories and speeches call forth what was already burning or smoldering inside of staff. They fan the flames of our passion about the vision and mission of the camp. In such a role, they are invaluable. Where camps sometimes go awry is in using stories and speeches as a primary motivational tool in the absence of the whole motivational system that allows them *not only to take root, but also to grow*. In other words, keep stories and speeches in their revered place, but recognize their interdependence with the system that allows them to be truly powerful in a lasting way. Within such a system, you will be able to get more from your staff without even asking.

Camp culture

The better you walk your talk about being trusting, caring, and inclusive, for example, the more motivated your staff will be. In a word, the culture of a motivated staff is “we,” instead of some degree of “us” and “them.”

Culture is a nebulous and fuzzy concept for most people. For the purpose at hand, culture means the shared norms, values, beliefs, assumptions, and patterns of behavior alive at your camp. It’s the “way things are done around here.” Think how different it would be and feel to work for Southwest Airlines, Disney, IBM, or the IRS! Between camps, culture varies as widely as it does between those organizations. Practically speaking, the culture of the camp is the degree to which its desired values (e.g., teamwork, caring, inclusiveness, trust, integrity, quality, performance) are *really* held by all the various people at camp, as well as represented in the physical artifacts (e.g., through play things that invite engagement around camp). I have addressed camp culture in the “Organizational culture at camps” book, but I include a few values here to illustrate the importance of culture to motivation.

Values that promote motivation

As you well know, values can be so much lip service, or they can describe the actions, hearts, and minds of the humans at a camp. Caring about staff development can be an espoused value, but where the rubber meets the road is what matters, which I describe in the “Providing value to your staff” section of this resource – page 27. Below, some examples are given which foster a motivated staff, *but they are just illustrative*, and do not reflect the breadth or depth of the value. Notice that the values are more interdependent than independent, for example caring is not independent of teamwork. Hopefully the separation helps you think more broadly.

In assessing how well these are true of your camp, it is *crucial* to get more than your own perspective. The counselors, supervisors, and others need to be asked in order to gain a fuller understanding of how well or poorly these potentially motivating values are enacted.

Trust is a sweeping concept that encompasses several positive qualities/values of healthy interaction. It has proven to be a critical cultural variable responsible for creating a motivating work environment. Due to that evidence, trust has been given special, separate attention.

General examples

Value	Examples
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Groups are formed around tasks and units, not on social cliques or tenure ➤ When problems occur, teams work on them together ➤ Staff from counselors on up are included in the S.W.O.T. and Long Range Planning processes. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) ➤ During the off-season, potential changes are discussed with staff virtually or in small groups.
Growth is for everyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Supervisors volunteer their mistakes and weaknesses, and accept them in others ➤ Debate, dissent, and discussion are welcome ➤ There is a “Book of Why?” which includes the rationale behind policies, structures, and processes. These are open to question at any time.
Inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Years at camp isn’t a socially divisive factor ➤ The quiet, “weird,” and awkward staff are included during time and days off ➤ There is a noticeable lack of an “us” versus “them” feeling between counselors and the administration
Mutual influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Evaluations are done in both directions – supervisors are evaluated by subordinates ➤ Counselors have the opportunity to sit in on most administrative meetings ➤ The director meets with a rotating “Council of Counselors” weekly (Page 18)
Caring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When significant, unforeseen problems occur at home, staff are allowed personal time off even if it is very inconvenient. Unless it is over a week, pay is not reduced for these leaves. ➤ Camp feels more like home and family than work. It’s relaxed, comfortable, and enjoyable to be there. There is camaraderie. {must be balanced with staff who are at the same time mission driven} ➤ When serious problems occur between staff at any level, there is a truly acceptable means of appeal and arbitration
Fun / Playful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ When onerous tasks need to be done, we think of fun and playful ways to achieve them ➤ Everyday tasks and events are given that little extra spark to make them fun and playful ➤ When I look around at the other people here, they inspire me to be more fun and playful ➤ When bad things happen, people manage to find the lighter side, while also solving the problem ➤ I feel that camp is as much fun for the staff as it is for the kids

Trust

Why is it so important?

Research has shown that companies who do well on this factor alone achieve results 50 – 75% greater than those who sport just mediocre levels of trust. Twice more than those with poor trust levels. When employees said they felt they could be open and honest and that their workplaces were characterized by trust, they were more productive, stayed longer, and were happier. They also did a better job, were less resistant to change, were more cooperative, and did a better job of innovating and instituting continuous improvements. Because of those benefits, the rarity of organizations that have high levels of trust, the fuzzy nature of trust, and its direct relationship to motivation, it is important to give this topic special consideration and evaluation.

What is trust anyway and how much of it do we have?

Very simply, trust is an expectation of how someone else will behave. While true, it isn’t a very useful definition, so let’s look at it as comprising four elements. To kill two birds with one stone, I’ll offer the definition in terms of statements that can be rated on the same 1 – 5 scale used for staff quantity. As before, assess your success from more than just your perspective.

Trust Element	Examples
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Supervisors make realistic promises and deliver on them ➤ I can believe what my managers tell me ➤ My managers walk their talk ➤ Supervisors know what they are talking about; they're competent ➤ Money is used wisely here to meet the mission ➤ The best "role models" we have in this camp really seek out criticism of their own work
Open communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Supervisors are approachable and easy to talk with ➤ In teams, we often have good conflicts where people speak their mind freely without fear of personal, emotional (guilt, shame, disgust, anger), or job retribution ➤ Staff feel that they can be open and honest. They know it is safe (job security, physical, monetary, <i>emotional – guilt, shame, disgust, anger</i>) and that management's ear is really listening. ➤ Anything negative you say around here is likely to have consequences later on (reverse scored) ➤ When people voice disagreements appropriately, both parties come away feeling heard and safe ➤ People here often go along with decisions they don't really agree with (reverse scored) ➤ There are no formal or informal consequences for speaking your mind appropriately, even if it is something we strongly disagree with ➤ In teams, people sometimes disagree on issues, but they'll bite their tongue (reverse scored) ➤ Managers convey their thoughts and feelings, while showing support and understanding
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ People are encouraged to balance their work and personal life (within reasonable and expected camp norms) ➤ Management respects me as an individual, and not just as a cog in the machine ➤ Supervisors partner with me to ensure my career success and good performance ➤ Management respects my ideas, and collaborates with me on decisions ➤ Supervisors are a beacon of integrity
Fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ People here are paid fairly for the work they do (within reasonable and expected camp norms) ➤ Promotions go to those who best deserve them ➤ It is fair to say that the playing field here is level ➤ Politics play a small role in this camp ➤ I've seen weak performers in this camp still do well in their performance reviews (reverse scored) ➤ Supervisors in this camp receive honest feedback about their people-management performance ➤ Performance evaluations are always done in both directions (you evaluate your supervisors) ➤ Subordinates' evaluations of their superiors are seen by their manager's superiors, and it is safe for the subordinates to be honest ➤ There is an effective and safe (personal; emotional – guilt, shame, disgust, anger; physical; or job retribution) means of appeals when problems arise ➤ There is a system in place for anonymous evaluations/feedback ➤ Open forums, where true dialogue occurs, happen when needed ➤ There are no unusual and uncalled for perks and privileges ➤ Problems are viewed holistically – person, situation, other people, and the long causal chain. ➤ Management recognizes that honest mistakes are part of doing business

If you use this as a survey, mix up the items so that, for example, all the fairness questions aren't together. When I say "reverse scored," it means that if someone answered with a 4, you'd mark it as a 2, because they are agreeing with a negative statement. Also, it is important to look at what each anonymous respondent answered, and not just the averages for items, subscales, and overall.

Empowered staff

Empowerment is the process by which staff can increase their sense of power and personal control in the work setting. In general, empowered employees need the *freedom* to act, the *security* to be bold, the *desire* to succeed, and the *opportunity* to contribute. The opposite of an empowered organization is one in which the director does the thinking, supervisors and administration do the talking, and counselors do the doing. In horse racing, the expression “give the horse its head” is used to indicate that the horse might find a better way, or be more inspired, if the jockey would let it control itself. The same is true in empowered organizations. Within the bounds of the values, structures and safety, staff need some leeway to work on goals/tasks/problems . . . to be “given their head.”

Freedom

Having just left the discussion and description of trust, we realize that freedom is fostered in a culture of trust. People feel free in an atmosphere of respect, fairness, and open communication with credible team members. To further highlight the interdependence, fairness is felt when discipline truly means “to teach,” and there is *security* because problems are handled systematically and humanely. Beyond these important related elements of freedom, you know you foster freedom when . . .

You’re buried in suggestions

Experimentation is necessary to create new ideas that will work and stand the test of time. While quantity does not equal quality, a rough guide is to have 6 – 9 suggestions per staff person over the course of a summer. That would be average, while 20 per person would be on the high end. Good learning camps keep records of suggestions and could show you the categorized list offered in a given year – several hundred. One thing to look out for is the number of suggestions generated from different levels of the camp hierarchy, so as to make sure the contributions are coming from all levels and areas. Also, suggestions should be diverse in their nature, covering such areas as activities, personnel issues, policies, processes, structures, and facilities.

One key to generating a marketplace for ideas is what happens to the suggestions. Certainly not all suggestions get implemented, and indeed the rough guide appears to be about 10%. To state the obvious, (a) *shooting down brainstormed ideas*, (b) *offering ill-founded objections*, (c) *not recognizing and valuing people for their suggestions*, or even (d) *having them fearful of making them* are excellent methods for limiting input. If possible, desirable, and reasonable, (e) allow staff members to bring their ideas to fruition; taking away their control and power for an implemented idea can be sapping. A few favorite passion-killing phrases are: It won’t work here, You’re crazy, It’s not a good time, Let’s put it on hold for now, We tried that before and it didn’t work, The director will never go for it, We’re too busy, You’re new here, We’re not ready for that, and We’ll look into that.

Most importantly, the environment/culture has to be one that encourages suggestions. Beyond that, camps have found the following tools and methods helpful in ramping up the number and quality of staff suggestions. Camper and parent suggestions, as well as more staff tools, are the subject of another upcoming resource (innovation and continuous improvement). It takes significant time and energy to generate a marketplace for ideas, but learning organizations settle for nothing less.

- ❑ The venerable suggestion box. Some people get uptight about suggestion boxes, because they feel that it limits suggestions, they want to know who offered them, or it doesn’t offer an opportunity to discuss it with the person. In my opinion, even the healthiest camp culture could use a suggestion box. The determining question is if you’d get the suggestions/rants people put in there without the box. If you wouldn’t and there’s no box, then you’re living in blissful (?) ignorance. If you would, then put out the box anyway and

when it goes empty for a couple summers, you know you've been proven right. Discussing good suggestions during training, and talking about the received suggestions during meetings, will help foster lots of healthy suggestions.

- ❑ Web-based suggestion “box.” There is a prominent place on your website for people (including campers and parents) to write in an anonymous (if desired) suggestion. The web page has a form on it where all they need to type is the subject line, and then as much text as they want. They hit the submit button, and off it goes to the director’s e-mail box. The true anonymity available here can sometimes provide useful suggestions.
- ❑ Anonymous evaluation snippets. During a staff meeting, give everyone a sheet of paper that has “Stop,” “Start,” and “Continue” evenly spaced out on the page. Ask them to write things the camp should stop doing, start doing, and continue doing. It’s still amazing to me how much non-voiced feedback gets offered this way. Some other favorite things to put on the paper are:
 - What are 3 dumb things we are doing?
 - What if . . . ?
 - What else should we be doing?
 - It is really frustrating that/when . . .
 - How do we waste time, money, and effort?
 - How can we improve _____ outcome?
 - What 10 words would you use to describe the camp?
 - What are “The Top 10 Lies” at Camp GoodFit?
 - Give a brief survey, like the trust questions in the culture section
- ❑ In the middle of the summer and at the end, give the staff an anonymous evaluation form. In a two-inch column on the left of the pages, include areas for the staff to comment on if they so choose. The domains include core administrative staff, support areas, camp programs, village life, cabin life, staff manual, facilities, staff training, or whatever else they’d like to comment on. The rest of the page is space for them to write. Maybe staff tell you everything and anonymity here would offer nothing. The only way to know is to try it.
- ❑ Ask. At the end of something, ask for feedback (sometimes called a postmortem or after-action review). Immediately after the program/event is best. During all-staff or unit meetings, ask people to reflect on what recently happened and think about successes and improvements. These are live discussions. During staff training, key staff lead debriefs of the day as evening cabin chats, and that feedback is given to the directors to act on.
- ❑ Appointment forum. I’ve seen this method achieve miraculous results! It goes like this. The director puts up a sheet with various times of the day on it with a blank checkbox next to each time. Usually there are 3 – 5 time slots in a day so that everyone could grab one if they wanted to. “Lunch with the director” is often popular. If the box is checked by someone, the director shows up at a particular, predesignated, static place. The person(s) can then voice their suggestions or concerns. A powerful rule addition is to give the person(s) the option to request 24 hours lag time for a response, so that the director just listens and asks clarifying questions. The carefully considered response doesn’t come until later, which gives great comfort to a lot of staff. Again, if you feel that everyone comes to you already and such a system is unnecessary, then just try it. If there are no takers, then you either deserve many kudos for being so approachable and accessible, or there is fear.
- ❑ Rotating council of counselors. Every week, a group of five or six counselors meets with the director to discuss the running of camp. It’s essentially an open forum, but an agenda of recent events and issues makes good fodder. Due to time issues, these councils usually occur during a free-choice period or large group activity, when a few people taken out of the mix temporarily won’t significantly impact the program or quality of care. If there are two staff per table, a meal can serve as a good opportunity as well. One leaves to be part of the council, and the other stays with the kids. Since it happens rarely, there isn’t a big cost in doing this.

- ❑ “Quiet suggestions.” Instead of suggesting something, people just put their suggestions into practice. As discussed next, this can be good or bad, but “quiet suggestions” are often offered and not paid close attention to. When the bigger picture is examined, and not just the individual instance, a more general need is often uncovered.

People exercise judgment and make decisions in the best interests of the camp

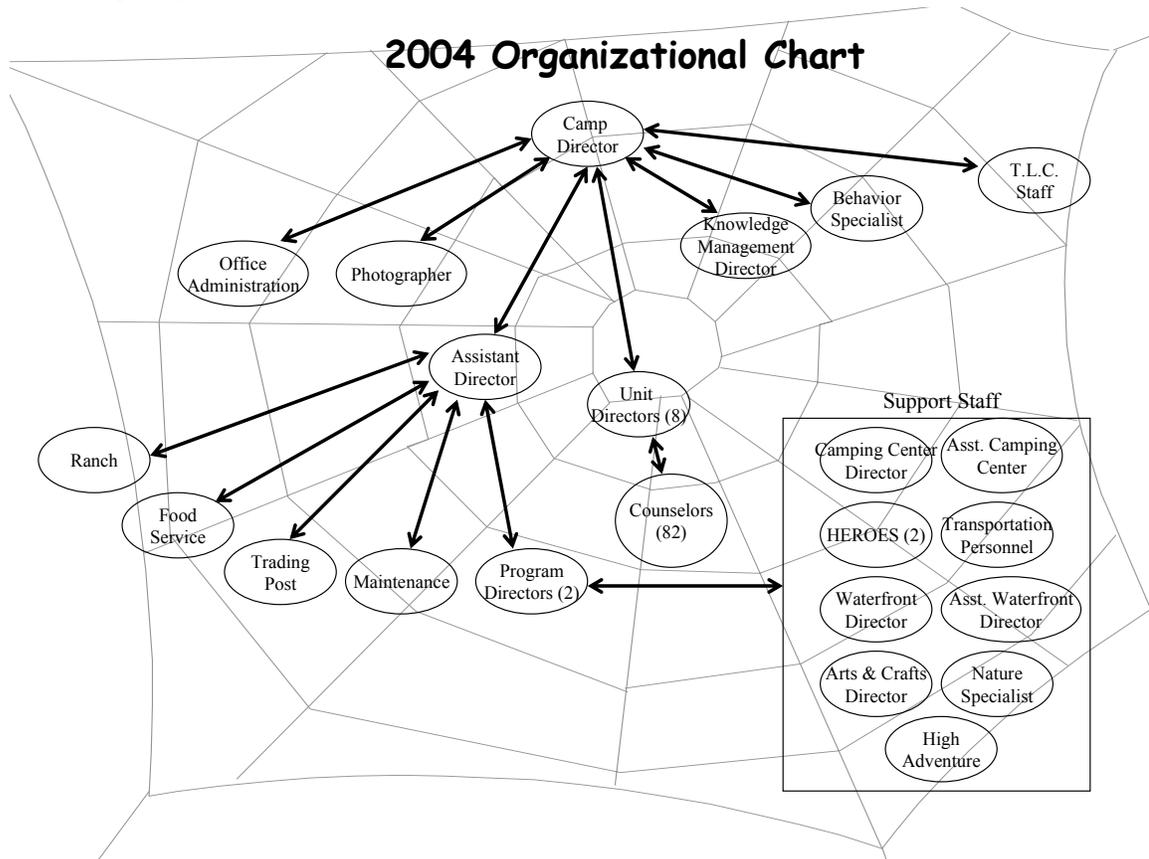
In order for things to get better, change is necessary. After all, if things stayed the same, you could only be as good as you were last year, or 5 years ago. While you don’t want to change things that work well, it is hard to think of things that couldn’t stand a little or lot of improvement. Because innovation and continuous improvement need to be everyone’s job, everyone needs to be able to exercise some judgment to improve things when they see fit – even without immediate permission. Yes, defining “some” is key here, but that is done by providing your staff with examples of things that have changed, or that could change, because of past staff initiative. Let me offer some examples here and then further clarify.

- ❑ A counselor developed a cabin theme called “Ninja Monkey Training.” It involved every aspect of the day when the counselor was with the campers, such as: special wakeups, morning Ninja Monkey training exercises, meal-time challenges, stunts at the flag raising, siesta bonus training, and nighttime “errands.” The counselor thought it would be fun and it would build teamwork, so she just did it without asking permission. It really just evolved out of a whim.
- ❑ During an all-camp game, a counselor was assigned a given station where cabins had to come and solve a task. The counselor was by himself off in the woods, and after one cabin played the game, he realized it was fundamentally flawed, despite the program directors’ best intentions. So, he changed it significantly and was only able to tell the directors after the whole game was over.
- ❑ A unit director read the mood of the 60 kids and 8 counselors during a special all-morning activity, and decided to shorten several of the planned games, cancel others, and add in some cabin time before lunch. The unit director didn’t check with the program director or camp director; she just did it because she was there and saw the change needed to happen.
- ❑ A five-day trip program was backpacking off site. The leaders determined that the needs of the group required less challenge, more processing, and subsequently a change in the travel plans. They were out of cell phone and radio range, so they just did it. On the final day, the trip ended 15 miles short of the pickup point, but they were able to phone the camp in time to redirect the pick-up driver.
- ❑ On the first night of camp, a counselor sat down to use the camp’s cabin contract form with the campers to establish group norms. One part of it required the group to come up with consequences when people broke the agreement to be, for example, caring or responsible. The counselor realized that the “consequences” were actually punishments, because it was impossible for them to be related to the not-yet-existing offense. Instead, the counselor had the cabin sign their names in that space agreeing that appropriate restitution would be made if an agreement were broken. When it was discussed the next day, the camp decided to change the form to reflect that wisdom.
- ❑ A program director was speaking with an upset parent on check-in day, because her child was not signed up for the optional horse program as they had intended. The director wasn’t available to speak to, so the program director overbooked the horse program by one child, knowing that it could be worked out, although it would cause a little difficulty. On that same day, a family checked into a family camp cabin, but found it had no electricity. That wasn’t what they were expecting as they had stayed at this camp before, so the program director moved them to a different cabin with electricity that he knew was available that night.

I'm sure you could imagine each of the above scenarios working out badly under different circumstances, or perhaps you would have a better solution. When this kind of bounded freedom is given, mistakes are going to be made. Even with the best of intentions, good people are going to make bad things happen. Careful description of the bounds (think of campers, parents, fellow staff, and the director first), fastidious staff hiring, solid safety procedures with unbreakable rules (e.g., never be alone with a child, never go near unapproved water), and a good understanding of the mission (what is the ultimate benefit) will help avert serious consequences. To be even more safe, a rule could be added that judgment calls should only be made when it is impossible to reasonably seek advice/permission first. To be sure, the amount of allowed judgment depends on the camp's circumstances (staff, facility, radios, ratios, etc.). Camps and other organizations successfully assume this kind of empowered risk all the time, so that they can benefit from the great ideas and good customer service that do get generated. It can work very well, but it takes work.

Your organizational structure is web-like

When staff need or want to ask someone for permission (and usually more advice), it helps greatly to have more than one go-to person, as is the case in a strict organizational hierarchy. For example, a new or different program idea should be brought up to the program director – the primary link or go-to person. But, if that person(s) is not available, or the individual feels more comfortable with someone else, then make it okay to approach the assistant director, the camp director, or even a unit director with the idea. With pretty wide latitude, those people can give the person a final decision, and even support if needed. Although it is possible for this system to be abused and sometimes yield unpleasant results, I've found it worked quite well in several camps that adopted it, as well as in the camps I've directed. Furthermore, virtually all very innovative companies have such a structure. Try placing a graphic of a spider's web behind the organizational chart to help communicate that message to your staff.



Security

Despite notable exceptions in all our minds, people generally won't take risks for the benefit of the camp if there is a chance they could get hurt as a result. It should be okay to fail when someone (a) makes genuine mistakes, (b) tries something with the best intentions and it goes badly, or (c) is simply unlucky. Camps can do several things to make themselves a more secure place for staff to take healthy risks in the spirit of the shared vision, some of which are noted below. See "The art and science of mistakes" resource for more detail and examples.

A holistic view of problems

The learning camp rigorously searches for the systemic causes that might underlie the symptoms/problems being noticed. When things go wrong, it is *extremely rare* for individuals or teams to be held solely accountable, because there are almost always larger issues and other individuals that facilitated the error. The goal is to create truly effective solutions that reduce or eliminate the symptoms and will stand the test of time. A learning camp needs both intelligent individuals and intelligent systems.

Common tools of this discipline are "After action reviews" or "Postmortems," where a team will get together and take the time to carefully examine the symptom(s). Brainstorming, interviews, and evaluations often get turned into process models (see that resource), which are then utilized to address the larger issues responsible for the symptoms. Outside perspectives are often invited on issues of great significance.

The point here is that people know that a careful, fair examination will be made of the *situation* (structures, policies, processes, history), *the person or team*, and *other people*. People breathe easier when they know such a value isn't just lip service, but the way things really happen. This point is discussed further under "Providing value to your staff" (page 30) and in Part II under great ways to de-motivate your staff – Page 100.

Counseling, restitution, and support

Even though you might be looking at the salient problem, there is a long causal chain responsible for almost any trouble. After good consideration of the situation and other people involved, folks are often inclined to take their share of responsibility. In doing so, they need to try and help make things right. Staff need to understand that when problems occur, they have an opportunity to make restitution, rather than suffer the logical consequences. Punishment is unrelated to the incident, and consequences are imposed from outside, instead of being accepted from within. It's a subtle, semantic shift, but restitution creates internal control, while logical consequences imposes external control. Similarly, guilt, coercion, disgust, and anger send the message that it isn't safe to fail at the camp. Plus, they don't help solve the problem; they just exacerbate it. To facilitate perspective and restitution, try using the discussion formula of: Situation, Emotions, Intentions, Ends, and Means (SEIEM). More detail can be found in Part II on de-motivating staff under the 3rd point – Page 103. Finally, people feel secure and supported when they are given help and coaching to improve their behavior, knowledge, or attitude. When staff can tell their friends that "the camp really helped me improve myself in an honest, caring way," you'll have fostered security and growth.

Reward failure

Learning camps sometimes institute an award like "The Exalted Order of the Extended Neck" to indicate that there is public recognition and support for promising ideas that didn't get off the ground. For example, a counselor spent a lot of time planning a special free-choice activity offering that was totally original and whacky. She came up with a lesson plan, gathered the materials, trained her helper, and hyped up the activity. Unfortunately, the game was not well received and a few tweaks didn't seem to help it. After she won the award, some staff members walking out of the meeting were overheard saying, "That's cool that it is okay to mess up here."

Tell stories “I remember when . . .”

You’ll get a lot more experimentation when people hear their superiors talking about and displaying the chinks in their armor and their underbellies. Next to the innovators hall of fame, there could be a little board that displays people’s gaffs, goofs, and blunders. During training, and here and there to support those who were recently cut by failure, a poignant and personally told tale of failure is great chicken soup for the downtrodden soul. Some examples are included in Part II in the stories section.

Performance reviews

An entire section is devoted to reviews later in this resource (page 30), but briefly, staff feel less threatened about making mistakes when they show up on their evaluation form. The language on the form could be something like: “Good mistakes – best effort, inferior result – are frequently made (this is a positive thing)” and “The counselor learns from his/her mistakes.”

Finally, you know you’ve got a safe place to fail (the security to be empowered) when people truly believe: “We appreciate intelligent mistakes, work with outright gaffs, and value people’s ability to fail forward in either case. When people fail, we offer them a hand, but not the back of it.” Hang it up on a hand-painted poster/painting in your staff lounge.

Desire

What fuels the fire in the belly of the spirit of man? Beyond spirituality, which is inseparable, it is their dreams for themselves and others. Staff’s dreams for themselves is covered in the section called “Providing value to your staff” – Page 27. Their dreams for others should be a good match with your dreams for others . . . your vision and mission.

Vision and mission

Again, people need a better reason to get up in the morning than cash. A paycheck alone buys only routine time and effort. Folks enjoy working toward significant (but attainable), valuable goals. The outcomes of a camp experience for campers are usually high, inspiring goals. Those outcomes are incredibly diverse, but I’ve listed some examples for campers below. Note that the separation is illustrative and not definitive.

Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Appreciation of diversity❖ Communal orientation❖ Conflict resolution skills❖ Creativity❖ Hope & goals (future sense of self) / sense of purpose❖ Environmental attitudes, awareness, and behaviors❖ Leadership❖ Locus of control❖ Moral reasoning / character / ethics / values – e.g., six pillars framework: trust, citizenship, fairness, respect, responsibility, & caring❖ Extroversion❖ Problem solving / planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Emotional intelligence (Assertiveness, responsibility, cooperation, self-control, emotional self-awareness, empathy, interpersonal relationships, social responsibility, problem-solving, reality testing, flexibility, stress tolerance, happiness, and optimism)❖ Appropriate risk taking❖ Receive positive attention / love / caring❖ Fun❖ General self-efficacy, independence, self-confidence❖ Self-esteem / self-concept❖ Self-discipline / delay gratification / restraint / impulse control / aka self-control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Achievement motivation / success orientation❖ Grades / cognitive development❖ Behavior problems (externalizing and internalizing)❖ Free-time activities at home❖ Skill achievement or enhancement❖ Friendship status (popular, neglected, rejected, controversial, average)❖ Intergenerational relationships❖ Health self-efficacy and behaviors❖ Volunteer activities❖ Physical fitness
<h3>Spiritual</h3> <p>(Orients and gives meaning to our lives; Guidelines for living; Answer the question Why? for things like random nature of events, uncertainty of the future, and death)</p>		

Hiring for fit

Camps need to hire staff who really, truly care about the outcomes you're trying to impact. In order for this to work well, it has to be an explicit, dedicated process. This point was touched on during the staff quality section at the beginning of this resource – Page 6. Generally though, you might ask some of the following questions to ascertain their reasons for coming to camp and their expectations of the experience.

- What do you imagine life at camp to be like? (What have you heard? What are your expectations?)
- Why do you want to work with us specifically? What about other possible jobs? What about other camps?
- Describe your ideal position at camp, and what makes it ideal.
- Where do you see yourself working after college? {Is this job a good fit?}
- What do you hope to get from an experience of working at camp?
- What are some of the reasons you think parents send their children to camp?
- What do you want children to go away with after having been at camp with you specifically?

This gives you a good, initial handle about their fit with your camp life, their personal goals for themselves, and what they want/expect campers to receive as a result of the experience. You can then go into more detail about their fit with your outcomes, their experience influencing such elements, and delve into their worldview of children.

- Our mission includes: self-confidence, skill development, environmental awareness, emotional intelligence, creativity, character enhancement, building life-long friends, and safe risk taking. Let me give you some examples of how we impact each one of those. Now, tell me, what do you think about each of our goals and how we go about them? {look for passion beyond the political response}
- What opportunities have you had to influence those outcomes in your life recently?
- Tell me about your experience in youth groups, clubs, organizations, and other child related experience.
- When was the last time you sat down and had a heart-to-heart conversation with younger siblings/cousins/any other child?
- What is your favorite, specific moment working with kids?
- When was the last time that you saw an adult recognizing the worth of a child?
- Do you think you've changed in how you relate to kids over the past few years? How?
- What is your honest impression of youth today?
- What are your plans for the year after camp is over? If you wanted to, could you come back for another summer?

See the section on “Setting expectations” (page 10) for more tools to screen staff so that they are appropriate for the environment they'll find at your specific camp. For older staff, see the “Providing value to your staff” section – Page 27.

The cog in the machine

The other key is to let staff know two things. *First*, they need to understand how the camp experience is going to explicitly influence those outcomes. One great method here is to process model the outcomes (see that resource) and go over those graphic representations of your goals with staff. Reviewing outcomes should have been done during the interview, but staff can't hear it enough, and they should hear it several times (welcome package, staff manual, staff training, etc.). Michael Brandwein's book “Training terrific staff” has some fun tools for communicating mission points during staff orientation. *Second*, staff need to understand how their specific actions on a day-to-day basis are going to fit into the grand plan. To some degree,

this will be obvious from the process models, but some interpretation for the different roles people hold is helpful. The test is to ask staff to take out a blank piece of paper at the end of orientation and ask them to (a) write out a list of outcomes, and (b) write out the means by which the camp is going to influence those outcomes. If they can do that and tell you their specific place in those plans, you'll have done your job very well. Many kudos.

Once upon a time (really), the boys from a cabin were walking down to the bathhouse to clean it. Every cabin had a community job to do in the morning. The campers were complaining, because this was their least favorite job to do. One vocal camper was complaining bitterly, "Oh man! This sucks! This camp is so bootleg; we paid a lot of money! They should just hire someone to do this! How come they don't?" The counselor's response was "I don't know. Look, this is just how it is. We have to do it. Everyone has to do it eventually and today it's our turn. If you complain, it's going to take that much longer. Let's just get it over with so we can get on to the fun stuff." The counselor didn't get it.

The above counselor's response isn't what you would have hoped for. Instead, the counselor should have replied, "We all live in a community here at camp, and we all need to contribute. This is our job today and everyone has one. By doing this, we make the camp a nicer place to live. The camp could pay someone to do it, but that would make the camp more expensive for everyone to attend. Some people here couldn't afford it." If your counselor were really awesome, she or he might relate it to the broader community: "When people do their part to recycle or vote, they are all working together to accomplish more than anyone could do by himself or herself." Better still would be for the counselor to ask pointed questions so that the camper could answer his own question. As an aside, if the children picked (choice, power) how they wanted to contribute to camp, they likely would have been happier about it.

Watching staff who believe in and are committed to enriching lives, *and who have the tools and resources to do so*, is an amazing experience. When the vision is not only adopted, but shaped, refined, assimilated, and perpetuated by staff members who make the vision their own, going above and beyond average performance becomes the norm. It is expected by everyone. The visionary cycle, which never really ends, begins to develop a life of its own.

Opportunity

Tools of the trade (standard things)

You probably hire quite a few staff who really love the program area where they'll spend much of their time teaching. That's great, but it comes with a potential cost, because such a program person often doesn't feel that their area is supported sufficiently to do their job.

All too often I have witnessed deflated staff who are confronted with the reality of the equipment at hand and the camp budget. The staff member may then implicitly deduce/think, "So, this is what the camp *really* thinks about me, the program area, and the campers." While this may be unavoidable to some degree, it can certainly be mitigated by setting realistic expectations and explaining the realities of a camp budget before the staff member signs up. Satisfaction on any factor is the discrepancy between reality and expectations. Hiring folks with expectations that are in line with the realities at camp is a central factor of a motivated staff. I address setting expectations on page 10 as well. Of course, state-of-the-art equipment will create satisfaction as well, but it isn't necessary for a motivated staff as long as the equipment is capable of meeting the mission point in the eyes of your staff.

Other tools that staff need to achieve the mission outcomes are good training, and good processes. See the "Staff training best practices" resources for an education about what excellent trainings entail. In terms of process, not all activities yield respectively greater environmental attitudes, self-esteem, or appreciation for diversity. As I noted with the D.A.R.E. example in the introduction, there are lots of well-intentioned programs that fail to meet their

objectives. To make sure your recipe for your mission points is a good one, use the “Process maps” resource.

P r o m o t e p a s s i o n (m o n e y f o r w e i r d t h i n g s)

Staff can come up with weird ideas in the summer. Generating weird and not-so-weird ideas is great for improving camp. Every now and then, some strange idea will come up and it will ignite a person, a small group of staff, or everyone. That ignition is passion/enthusiasm on the launch pad. When folks get really geared up about something, pay close attention, even if the idea is, in your “better” judgment, ridiculous. Let me offer a few examples.

- ❑ One summer, a counselor really wanted to start a small garden. He was FIRED UP! Technically, the garden didn’t really make any sense. There wasn’t a great place to put it, a fence would have to be built to protect it from the animals, it didn’t fit the program very well, and it would be relatively expensive – about \$500. This counselor wanted the garden from the seat of his soul. His passion was contagious and about a quarter of the staff fell in line with his request. The director gave all the reasons why the garden didn’t make sense and thanked the staff for their enthusiasm. It didn’t stop there, because the passion level was just too high. About half the staff donated \$20 to this counselor in order to pay for the garden. The director still turned them down. There were virtually no new ideas submitted to the director the rest of that summer. The staff felt alienated and disempowered, and they voiced their disappointment and disgust even two months later on an end-of-the-summer, anonymous evaluation.
- ❑ At another camp, there was a small, but usable, wooden castle. People would sleep on the roof of it, and play games around it. Well, a couple of counselors thought the castle needed a catapult – a real, life-sized, fully-functional catapult. They wanted to build it with the campers and use the original construction techniques. It really didn’t make much sense, because it would take a long time, cost a sizable chunk of money, and require specialized and dangerous equipment. After jumping over several hurdles and demonstrating widespread support for the idea amongst the campers and staff, the camp finally, reluctantly conceded. With much enthusiasm, an incredibly heavy, unmovable, medieval siege machine was constructed and many a weird thing was then launched to fly amazing distances. This camp received lots of crazy ideas, and most never went anywhere, but management had their ear out for passion and knew to support it when a critical mass was achieved.
- ❑ At yet another camp, creating a photo board for the staff house was the issue. The cost was a lot of film, developing (pre-digital era), and a significant portion of time for the counselor involved. The interest and passion were there, and it was clear the idea had ignited something with the staff. So, the camp agreed to supply the time and expense for a limited-scale operation.
- ❑ One camp had a song that ended with “and the [camp name] spirit goes on and on and on.” Well, this one counselor decided that he wanted to do an “and on athon!” For 24 hours, he was going to take volunteer campers and sing the song through once, and then just repeat “and on” over and over again for 24 hours straight with no break. Campers would do this in 15-minute shifts. During the night, there would be a watch fire and food and drinks. He needed some money for special food and drink treats as well as some miscellaneous equipment he wanted to play with during this event. The directors agreed, and the counselor sold it to the campers. Because of his personality, the campers signed up. Weird, but it cranked up the passion for a song (pun intended)!
- ❑ Harry Potter is all the rage these days, except with a minority of kids, and the über cool. A counselor wanted to start a Quidditch clinic. Starting it would require the purchase of about \$200 worth of equipment, some dedicated preparation time for herself, and some support staff to create the field. Permission was granted, and the activity was an enormous success – breaking the camp record for being the most popular clinic ever!

As you would've guessed, passion can take any number of strange shapes. Examples include creating a special meal, starting a new activity, changing a program area, adding a program area, doing a summer video memory book, traveling to a certain place, and getting a special person to come to camp. More often than not, the passionate project doesn't make sense on many levels, but it does make sense in terms of nurturing a passionate and motivated staff. Put "promote passion" on the administration meeting agenda as a permanent item.

Create a small fund (\$500 – \$5000) to promote passion. Lots of things will get turned down with appropriate explanation and appreciation, but as with any suggestion, people need to be heard. As part of the process, I had a rotating group of seven counselors vote on whether to fund an idea, which worked amazingly well! If the passionate idea really must be vetoed, try a little brainstorming and redirection to channel the energy elsewhere and communicate your support. However, when it is clear that the project is a critical opportunity to promote passion, break the little piggybank and watch the show. Passion usually doesn't come cheaply, but it is almost always more valuable than its monetary equivalent.

Think, then act (knowledge is power)

O.W.L. stands for Orchestrating Wisdom and Learning. It's a much better title than "knowledge management." *That resource should be viewed for a complete understanding of this incredibly powerful tool.* When you institute the full system, your camp and staff will never be the same. It's trite to say that, but camps that have done it have said just that, and that they'd never go back for anything.

The goal of O.W.L. is: "To insure that the right people have the right knowledge at the right time so that they can do a better job of achieving valuable outcomes with fewer resources." With good knowledge, people can make better decisions faster and take more intelligent action. Staff grow themselves, one another, and the camp. Such a system is tinder for motivated staff (sticks) to achieve their mission as well as the camp's. In essence, the O.W.L. provides many of the tools necessary to be effective on a self-service basis. It helps the staff be effective, which is motivating. Some *examples* follow:

- Exceptional, tried-and-true pickup activities to use with campers are readily available.
- If there is a perplexing behavior management problem, counselors and supervisors (for counselor problems) can consult distilled, relevant, adapted knowledge categorized for easy reference and utility.
- If staff want to know about special events (e.g., carnival, evening programs, special days, etc.), they can learn their nature, purpose, details, and history, including what has flopped, at any time without asking anyone.
- New kitchen staff (including the chef) need very little personal training. Virtually everything they need to know about the job is already at their fingertips, including lessons learned in past years, so the wheel doesn't have to be reinvented or re-taught.
- What to do on time off and days off is well researched and available. Directions to everywhere of interest are easily referenced. Hotels and campgrounds are listed and reviewed.
- Every activity area has a system that tracks what works and what doesn't. That information can be easily referenced for the past several years without assistance. Excellent lesson plans and best-practice methods are a matter of record.
- Hikes around camp – full directions, activities when you get there, things to do along the way, . . .
- What excellent counselor letters home look like
- What indispensable knowledge past nurses had

M o m e n t u m (p e o p l e)

Once you have the resources of money, time, things, recipes, and knowledge, they need to be picked up and used! Passionate people who know the mission and are operating in an environment of trust and security are going to want to get up and get moving! The last element of opportunity for empowered staff is having the *number* and *quality* of people available to act. Both of these elements were addressed at the beginning of this resource. The only thing I'll add here is that even competent people enjoy working on *dynamic teams* around tasks or problems that are going to feed the fire in their belly to meet the high, inspiring goals you've both agreed to try and meet. Create teams based on knowledge, skills, and personality, instead of the same folks for every task.

Providing value to your staff

Sometimes camps pay more attention to the outcomes for their campers than for their staff, which can be a reflection of values or a lack of reflection. Being purposeful about the outcomes of a camp experience for staff adds value to them as people, which they will reciprocate with motivation and dedication. Remember, people are motivated by their dreams for themselves and others. This is the “themselves” part.

One camp director with a 70% staff return rate had this to offer. “I believe that our biggest reason for a 70% retention rate is that we have the attitude that our staff are our ‘cabin group’ for the summer. That is, we want to do everything we can to make it the best time in their lives, to help them grow – even to have a life-changing experience!”

That point is well taken, and yet as an aside, good return rates are not in and of themselves the metric by which to measure whether or not your staff are motivated, or how much value they are receiving. For a full discussion of that point, please see the appendix on “Issues with evidence that camps often rely upon” in the “Organizational culture at camps” book. For example, some camps get good staff return rates by creating a staff-serving culture – excessive time off, lighter schedules, and hosts of perks and benefits.

Three areas of adding value to staff are described below. The first is the individual development plan, which specifies and formalizes what, how, and why. The second is the on-going feedback, support, and review. The third is the performance evaluation. When they are done well, they provide value and motivation, but doing them well rarely happens, so some guidelines are provided.

Individual development plan

To get specific about providing value to your staff, have them sit down one-on-one with their supervisor and develop a personal mission statement or development plan. Returning staff need to update or totally redo theirs. Campers might have an individual development plan, and this is the same thing for staff. Sometimes the drafted goals overlap with the general camp goals quite a bit, and sometimes there are elements that are unique to that staff member. For example, goals might vary depending on whether the staff member is interested in a career in business, education, engineering, or art.

The set outcomes must be attainable. Too many goals, or individual goals that are set too high, are not inspiring, because obtaining them isn't realistic. Smaller, more reasonable goals for the outcomes of the summer experience may not sound as lofty as the big, dramatic ones, but they will engender more motivation and satisfaction. Easy goals and very difficult ones are not very inspiring, but realistic, meaningful goals inspire motivation, performance, and satisfaction. It turns out that problem solving releases a chemical in the brain that makes us feel good – people are wired to desire

and work toward challenging goals. When people are stretched (not broken) and given the tools (time, training, people, things, cultural facilitators, etc.) to achieve valuable (in their mind, not yours) ends, they will give it their all. The synergistic benefit is that confronting problems grows your staff, which in turn grows your camp's ability to achieve. The resulting culture attracts and retains better staff, which further enables the camp to reach higher levels of performance.

The outcomes should also be clear, specific, and measurable. Perhaps Jane wants to return as a unit director, so she and the director went over the performance standards for that position and spoke about how she might fare, and how she could develop the strengths necessary at camp and via outside opportunities. Another common one is to become more emotionally intelligent in specific domains, which is attainable, clear, specific, and measurable. See the "emotional intelligence" resources for an explanation of how that is possible. Some other examples include:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| ❖ activity skill enhancement | ❖ first aid | ❖ problem solving |
| ❖ behavior management | ❖ flexibility | ❖ project management |
| ❖ child development domain | ❖ knowledge of games | ❖ risk management |
| ❖ CPR | ❖ large group leadership | ❖ skill integration |
| ❖ creativity domain | ❖ life guarding | ❖ small group leadership |
| ❖ decision making | ❖ listening skills | ❖ teaching skills |
| ❖ enthusiasm | ❖ motivating others | ❖ teambuilding |
| | ❖ organization | ❖ teamwork |
| | ❖ prioritizing | |

Using process modeling (see "Process maps" resource) with staff outcomes is a very useful technique to address outcomes you hope all staff receive. Essentially, it encourages you to be as specific with how staff develop as you are with how the campers develop. For each personal, tailored outcome, you'll want to break it down into behavioral indicators of success and opportunities for practice and support. Michael Brandwein's book on "Super Staff SuperVision" has a detailed behavioral appendix on developing staff in certain areas, such as group leadership, teaching skills, teaching knowledge, teamwork, responsibility, communication, behavior management, creativity, enthusiasm, consideration, flexibility, humor, listening, organization, problem solving, patience, respect, and responsibility.

Although rarely done explicitly, "mapping second-order outcomes" helps complete the value circle. The basic idea is that the outcomes desired from the camp experience are treated as building blocks to achieve larger goals or outcomes. For example, increasing one's emotional intelligence, small group leadership ability, and teaching skills might lead to a desirable internship, which would then lead to a specific career experience that would help the person land a better job after college. *Creating these kinds of connections is very exciting for staff!* Another track might be creating a map/plan for staff to follow in order to possibly reach a higher/different position within camp. As sort of a culminating step to help staff's career progress, the camp might consider writing a letter of reference for each staff member that details their outcomes and how they were achieved through a camp experience. It is a lot of work, and not everyone will desire it, but staff see such a product (detailed letter of reference) as extremely valuable and one of the benefits that can offset the generally low pay in camping.

Providing value through development opportunities outside of camp is something that seems to be occurring ever more frequently. What has become fairly common is to send some staff to ACA or AEE (Association for Experiential Education) conferences. Also common is sending staff to technical (hard) skill trainings, such as lifeguard, Wilderness First Responder, CPR and First Aid, Archery, Sailing, Basic Camp Director's Course (knowledge), etc. Even on-line courses or sponsoring specific college courses has grown in popularity. Other varieties of outside-of-camp development are interpersonal skills trainings – such as the Landmark Forums, staff supervision, and leadership. A growing trend is trainings sponsored by the camp in a couple of locations, often centered on child development or interpersonal skills development. The symbiotic meeting of goals is very motivating to staff!

Older staff (25 – 117) often come to camp with different needs and expectations. If that is the case, addressing those needs will be motivating. Usually, older staff come to us with more skills and knowledge, and being purposeful about how those can be utilized at camp during the interview or re-interview is crucial. Maybe they want to bring their woodcraft knowledge, their leadership experience, or something from their educational discipline. Explore their reasons for wanting to come to camp. Do they want to connect with people in a different way from their normal lives, or be with a different kind of people? Is their motivation to be at camp to recapture some of their youth, or seek a change of pace? During the summer, some dedicated time for older staff to discuss their thoughts and their role with the administration will help them provide value, as well as receive it in the process of giving. What do they want? Sometimes they might not even know for sure, but they can probably come to realize it through discussion beforehand.

Although there may be no concern, two further considerations when working with older staff are needs for breaks and assessment for child abuse risk. Older staff *may* have a greater need for rest breaks, or time alone when they aren't in the social milieu all the time. Bob Ditter has some resources on assessing staff for child abuse risk. Certainly, I do not mean to imply that younger staff might not abuse children as well.

Whatever the goals and opportunities, creating development expectations and then not *seriously* helping staff meet them is very de-motivating! The “Staff training best practices” resources will offer a helpful primer regarding on-going staff development.

Informal performance reviews

Often, these are quick sidebars that offer support, praise, or discipline. If the point of the little chat is *discipline*, please see the 3rd point in Part II under “10 great ways to de-motivate your staff,” (Page 103) which discusses how to do it humanely and have it result in motivation. If the little chat is for *praise*, see the section on “Praise and recognition” for some T.I.P.S. – Page 35. Sometimes the attention is to provide *support*, perhaps through giving the person needed things, information, or relief. Support, praise, and good discipline (which is also coaching) are wonderful supervisor tasks.

In providing value to our staff, we need to help them meet their goals for themselves and others on an on-going basis. To serve those ends, I'll offer three methods and three structures here. The methods are tutoring, modeling, and coaching. Sometimes the reason staff aren't reaching their potential is due to a “simple” lack of *knowledge*. For example, the counselor might be reading ghost stories and not playing fun games during idle times because s/he doesn't have or know more appropriate stories and games. Mistakes require some resources and perhaps tutoring. As we all know, *modeling* is demonstrating a skill to a student willing and able to learn it. But we should not leave out the processing of the experience with the student(s) afterwards, because folks need to think through what they saw and how they can personally remember and apply it. Perhaps surprisingly, *coaching* involves only two principles and four tools – that's it. The principles are to provide limited assistance only when required and to process the experience through with the student afterwards (sooner rather than later). The tools are helping the student to define the task, have the student think through the task, support the student through praise and understanding, and modifying the skill so it is within the student's grasp. The “Staff training best practices” resources go into great detail with examples on tutoring, modeling, and coaching. Michael Brandwein's “Super staff supervision” book provides several examples of questions that a coach might use within this framework.

Three structures to help formalize coaching so that it really happens are dedicated time in groups, meal meetings, and a cabin focusing sheet. Again, more are available in the “Staff training best practices” resources. *First*, coaches should spend as much time as is reasonable and required with their students. For village leaders and their counselors, one or two hours a day per cabin has served as a good guide. So, if the village leader has five cabins, they spend an hour a day with each of those cabins in order to be there when coaching, modeling, or tutoring is needed. *Second*, it is helpful for the teacher and student to meet on some formal schedule in order to process through situations and skills that need

review or that weren't done while with the group. This time is also useful for discussing all their campers, personal goals, camp goals, and general performance. Meal meetings seem to work quite well, as a counselor can be gone for lunch if either there are two counselors at the table, or if someone else fills in for that time. *Third*, supervisors/coaches can spend time (which they might not without a structure/requirement) filling out a "cabin focusing sheet." That sheet has focus areas down the left side, and space to write comments off to the right of each one. The page is usually double sided, serves the whole cabin (multiple counselors), and includes areas such as: cabin cleanliness, morning routine, cabin activity quality and variety, community service, rest hour, evening activity participation and preparation, bedtime routine, overnight, laughables and laudables, mission stories, special things done for each counselor, counselor goals and progress meeting them, and counselor performance notes. That sheet is food for coaching and reflection. While acquired time for these structures may be difficult to come by, each one contributes to the development of the staff, and hence their motivation.

Formal performance reviews

In all cases, people need help meeting the goals set for themselves and the camp. Performance reviews are just a formal and systematic look at the progress being made toward those goals. They serve as a discussion tool around goals that are truly subscribed to by the evaluator and the person being evaluated. Both parties benefit from the clarification of expectations, recognition of efforts well spent, suggestions for improvement, and plans for supportive coaching. It is possible for a performance review to be an enjoyable and useful experience for all involved – rare, but possible. Successful reviews should have the following elements.

They happen

Ideally, reviews happen a couple of times during the course of the summer. Usually, the informal reviews happen rarely, and the formal review is awkward and done quickly. Another common problem is the lack of dedicated time for the review, so it happens on people's time off. Scheduling can be tricky, but taking a few people out for a meal seems to work well for many. Also, if there are free-choice periods, offer a few less choices and the freed-up staff can have their reviews.

Up – down, Down – up

Each person evaluates the other. For example, counselors get evaluated by village leaders, and village leaders get evaluated by counselors. It's true that the counselor can't evaluate the village leader on all their responsibilities, but they usually can evaluate them on most standards. The director should also be evaluated by his/her direct reports. Before the pairs meet, each should evaluate themselves and the other, so that they aren't biased by the other person's numbers when they see them. For key individuals who need or desire greater development, a "360 degree evaluation" could be arranged, which is described in that available resource.

It is about development

The focus of the review must be on development. Three elements help make that true – the spirit in which the review is conducted, what happens to it, and working on people's individual goals. Let's start with the spirit in which the review is conducted. When there are problems and deficiencies, the first questions before meeting with the person should be:

- "have we already talked about this and have we been as helpful as possible?"
- "do I have specific behavioral examples?"
- "am I sure there is a problem with this person, or should we talk about it as a general problem and seek a broader picture and perspective?"

With that background and problem clarification, the spirit of the subsequent discussion should be training and development (or a systems change). Also, it shouldn't be "Good luck with improving your weaknesses," but rather "Here are the specific ways we're going to help you." Does the person need more knowledge, a shift in attitude, or some more skills training?

More on this point is covered in Part II under “10 great ways to de-motivate your staff” – Page 103. The person should not leave with a sense of fear or insecurity. The problem discussions should come from the angle of “How can we help you?” instead of “How hard a smack do you need to get into line?” The former gets cooperation, and the latter gets resentment. Guess which one is more motivating?

Another way to communicate that reviews are developmentally focused is to let staff know that the initial evaluation, after a week or two, is just between your supervisor and you. There is no record kept of it, and the director never sees it. It helps take out the often inherent fear (on both parts), because the message is that it is just a conversation, and not an official record that might have possible consequences. It has the side benefit of preventing rosy evaluations and politics. How all the staff are performing generally (and specifically if asked or observed) is known even without the evaluative piece of paper. It isn’t really needed for managing the camp. Even in the extreme case of gathering documentation for a dismissal, there are plenty of other options besides that one piece of paper.

The goals staff set for themselves (personal development) with their supervisors should be placed on the performance evaluation form. That way, the individual and the supervisor have a formal discussion about actions and progress from both perspectives.

Not blind to the full nature of the mistakes

By the very nature of sitting down to evaluate someone’s performance and placing marks on a page about that individual, *the situation and other people* are virtually by definition not taken into account. The interdependence of people’s jobs and wider circumstances are ignored. Psychologists found this phenomenon so pervasive they called it the “Fundamental Attribution Error.” When was the last time you had or gave a review that took mitigating factors into account? Some or all of the following things may have played a part in less than perfect performance, but rarely, if ever, are they brought up as extenuating factors.

- | | |
|--|---|
| ❖ lapses in initial and on-going training | ❖ errors in the processes involved |
| ❖ error of hiring someone who wasn’t a good match (camp’s fault) | ❖ faults of supervisor(s) |
| ❖ fault of the camp culture | ❖ time issues |
| ❖ effect of limited resources | ❖ mismatched goals, or ideas of how to achieve them |
| ❖ inability to provide the kind of reasonable support needed | ❖ relevant camper issues |
| ❖ co-worker issues | ❖ inherited situation |
| | ❖ faulty expectations |
| | ❖ and other things |

With America’s “Rugged Individualism” culture, we like to think that people should perform well regardless of such handicaps. It is true that people operate in less-than-ideal circumstances all the time and do quite well, thank you very much. However, unless you’ve got a complete wreck, the person being accused of a few faults is doing well in several or most areas, but just not all of them.

People have different capacities to respond to less-than-ideal situations, and they manifest themselves in distinct ways, with different lapses in performance on a case-by-case basis. For example, everyone but John might be great at getting a cabin to bed at night. It’s easy to *assume* that John is the problem here, but it is *reasonable* to conclude that John is uniquely influenced by not getting enough of the training he needed in that domain, having a co-counselor who takes a back seat, a supervisor who isn’t great at coaching that skill, and that John is a crazy, enthusiastic guy who has a hard time being calming. People are different, and people are flawed differently depending on the wider circumstances in which they find themselves. Jane, Sally, Pete, & Steve each have different areas of weaknesses. The problem is that when we point the finger, we stop at the person, and don’t continue onto the circumstances. *It doesn’t mean that areas of weakness don’t need to be developed and supported*, but rather that we shouldn’t look at the person and conclude their weakness is solely their fault, and that

others around them are not also weak in perhaps other areas. Don't you personally have areas of weakness, and could you not do better in certain areas if the circumstances were different? Unless you're perfect, the answer is yes.

One excellent way to formally incorporate this point into evaluations is to have a write-in space with a heading like "Include how the effect of selection, training, the camp environment, limited resources, supervisors, co-workers, campers, or other situational and people factors might have contributed to this person's weaker performance areas."

C o n s e q u e n c e s a r e n o t i n t h e l e x i c o n

People are offered the opportunity to make restitution – make things as right as possible – and feel supported. When consequences become necessary, the culture is weakened. Discipline from an external base of power is ultimately not motivating or effective. Consequences are imposed, and restitution is offered – that's the key difference.

Picture a child who wrote graffiti on a cabin wall. At the end of a conversation with the counselor, the child is handed some sandpaper. The child turns his hand upside down and lets the sandpaper fall to the ground. You know restitution is not offered, and a consequence (or different teacher) would be necessary for the child to remove the graffiti. If at the end of a conversation the child asks for sandpaper and willingly removes the graffiti, you have changed that child's heart and mind, and truly engaged in child development, instead of child control. When staff are approached by a compassionate teacher, consequences are almost never needed, and restitution flows naturally. Make no mistake though, restitution is rarely fun or easy.

The absence of consequences is a philosophy, and it holds true on a day-to-day basis as well, in addition to performance review situations. See the "Behavior management" and "The art and science of mistakes" resources for more information. *In all cases, the use of fear comes from weakness.* When discipline (it means to teach) is done well *and combined with meaningful support*, there is security, trust, and internal motivation at the end of these difficult conversations. Part II on "10 great ways to de-motivate your staff!" discusses staff discipline in more detail – Page 103.

"So," I hear some people asking, "what about serious safety and judgment errors that could jeopardize someone's employment?" First, obviously, such discussions should happen immediately, and not wait for their review. Second, the difficult task is to truly, honestly support someone (and they should feel it) up until the point where firing becomes necessary. In that case, see Part II on "10 great ways to de-motivate your staff!" for a discussion on humane dismissals – Page 101. It is possible for restitution to include one's resignation, but it's a difficult end to reach without a skilled leader.

A w a r e o f (a l m o s t) i n h e r e n t i n a c c u r a c y

Summer after summer, I'll have senior staff disagree about a counselor's performance in a given domain. Or, a counselor will have a different village leader later in the summer, and the counselor both performs differently and is evaluated slightly differently. This happens because they bring different perspectives to bear, have different abilities to support weaknesses, and they often haven't seen the person in a variety of situations, among other reasons I'll address later. Similarly, think about the President of the United States . . . this person is evaluated differently by innumerable citizens, as well as such institutions as parties, various newspapers, independent watchdog groups, etc., whose opinions are dependent on their unique interests and viewpoints and therefore don't reach consensus.

Frequently, I'll see staff who have been employed at different camps and gotten strikingly different evaluations. In essentially identical camps, different things will show up on evaluation forms – entire sections of criteria may be added or deleted. Beyond that, the

expectations for what characterizes various scale scores (1 – 5 for example) often differs between camps. Finally, even when the same items do appear on both evaluations, they may be given different weights. Camp A values activity teaching more, while Camp B values cabin and camper development more. For directors, Camp A values budget and return rates, and Camp B values outcomes, return rates, and then budget. The summative judgment rendered is quite different.

It is possible to get a fairly objective performance reading on someone when the following methods are used: expert-developed, behaviorally anchored, and absolute scales for a competence; reasonable performance targets; trained raters; and different raters across a variety of situations. However, that is essentially never done at camp, or most other places. *The systems, expert raters, and time required just aren't often in place.*

Furthermore, it is common that a relatively young supervisor will evaluate another young staff person. Rarely is the supervisor capable of rendering a truly expert opinion. Other common problems include:

- the scale range is not appropriately used (behavioral anchors for absolute numerical scale)
- people are compared to others instead of more objective criteria
- there is social fear and sometimes guilt
- friendship issues
- responsibilities are given different weights/importance
- personal biases/perspectives
- nice & attractive people are usually rated higher on most, and irrelevant, criteria
- self-fulfilling prophecies – supervisor expectations can create reality (Pygmalion Effect)
- specific incidents are given inappropriate weight compared with normal performance
- and a lack of a representative sample of behavior.

Judges often point to obvious and extreme examples of performance and proclaim that therefore they are accurate. Or, they'll point to a pattern of accurate judgments/appraisals and then deduce that they are accurate. *These are logical fallacies that require uncommon wisdom and humility to overcome.* Combine all of these problems with some of the deadly sins of human memory and there is a validity problem. Some memory issues include: transience – over time, the exact nature and timing of things are often forgotten; absent-mindedness – people don't pay as close attention to things as we might expect; misattribution – people misattribute the source and cause of events all the time; and suggestibility – what others say and political confusions.

All this is not to declare that people are always or even often wrong when evaluating people, because obviously they aren't. Also, some camps take great pains to be more accurate with their evaluations. Still, across the 30-plus criteria staff are often evaluated against, the potential for error, and the consequences of it, can't be ignored.

Some camps recognize these faults and resort to a scale of something like “Exceeding Expectations, Acceptable, Not Meeting Expectations.” While removing variability (compared to a 1 – 5, or 1 – 10 scale, for example) helps improve gross accuracy, it isn't very helpful for developmental discussions, and is still subject to many of the flaws noted above. Such a three-point scale *is useful* for senior staff and the director to utilize near the end of the summer when assessing whether or not to invite people back for next summer, and under what conditions. I prefer 1 – 10 scales for subordinate and superior to rate each other, and for them then to discuss discrepancies of 2 or more points. The larger scale better suits developmental assessments and progress tracking, even with a nod to the fact that judgments may not perfectly reflect reality. To do even better, the discrepancies would create a discussion of what the behavior would look like at various points on the scale, and each person would provide examples of why a specific score was given. You get bonus points if your scale is behaviorally anchored with specific examples for every point.

Year-round staff (goals and pay)

To avoid de-motivation, and provide motivation, goals and targets should be both mutually agreed upon and flexible. Rarely are these two criteria met in a wholehearted way, which sows the seeds for problems over the course of the year. The goals for the upcoming year should involve a discussion, where both people feel heard. If there is a disagreement of significance that isn't resolved through discussion (e.g., return rate or budget numbers), bringing in a tie-breaker/arbitrator will provide the third opinion and establish equity. As far as flexibility is concerned, the environment is likely to change over the course of a whole year, perspectives might shift, or other priorities may surface. In each case, it should be possible to change the goals so that the performance standards are not static. The ancillary benefit of that flexibility is that it promotes innovation, and the ability to be formally recognized for it.

For summer staff, pay is less of an issue, because returning bonuses are usually set formulas not based on previous performance. One camp, however, tied the returning bonus to the following year's return rate. For counselors, it varied from \$100 - \$300 more, which was paid for by the higher returning number of campers. For year-round staff, performance reviews and pay raises often go together – better performance equals better pay. The problem with that is the implicit assumption that the employee is externally motivated by money – usually around \$500 – \$1500 as the range *outside* of the 4% average raise they could expect to get. *If the potential of that extra money truly motivates the employee to higher performance, you've got the wrong person for the job.* It also puts the superior in the position of being both judge and coach, which is *very difficult* to carry out well. Recognizing this, many organizations rated as being a “Best Place to Work” don't tie raises to individual performance. Instead, sometimes they utilize profit or gain sharing, which sends a team message – “if we do well, then we'll benefit.” On this point, however, it appears that either way you go is unlikely to budge motivation greatly; within the normal range, money isn't very motivating.

Wrapping up

An example evaluation form exists in Part II under the setting staff expectations section – Page 95. All forms and methods have drawbacks and limitations, but I think that this one creates a good balance. The criteria/statements are not as tidy as they could be, but being more precise is costly in terms of length and cumbersomeness. Also, each statement could be directly accompanied by behavioral criteria for the scale scores, but again that would create a lengthy form and process. Even the best form won't solve several sticky performance review problems noted previously. Instead, the form should be used as a tool for fruitful discussions of observations with a focus on development through support and coaching.

Is such a humane method of performance evaluations as described above effective? Doesn't it create a system where people are not really motivated to change their lagging behavior? The answer is yes, if the hired person sitting across from you doesn't really, deep down, have the goals of the camp as their own personal goals. Even in that case, which is a hiring failure the camp needs to take responsibility for, the individual can often be reached on a character level – caring, honesty, and responsibility. For people in line with your mission, the above performance evaluation system will help and inspire them to reach higher goals for themselves and the camp. That's an excellent way to leave a performance evaluation session.

Praise and recognition

Do we need it or not?!

First, let me say that I believe the answer is yes, some degree of praise and recognition is needed, but with certain guidelines and cautions that are discussed below.

Believe it or not, there's a good deal of controversy about the value of praise and recognition. A summary of the problems with praise can be found in Kohn's book entitled "Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise, and other bribes." Using external sources of motivation is the carrot approach. You want people to be motivated by an internal desire, and rewards and praise can shift that focus to external sources. While highly evolved individuals may be able to see the value of their efforts and draw motivation from that, most people have not yet reached that level (self-reinforcing, strong sense of self). They need help seeing and knowing when they've done a good job, and they're not quite sure what their supervisor thinks of them. So, the question is, do we pander to the lower level, or try and pull people up toward higher functioning? Both. We should use external motivation here, but at the same time try and wean people off of it as an absolute necessity.

Let me offer a camp example. Several camps with 70 – 90% staff return rates had no warm fuzzy board, no awards to speak of, very little extemporaneous praise, and did essentially no praising during meetings. Doing those things probably would have done little or nothing for staff motivation. Indeed, when surveyed, the staff echoed that their satisfaction and motivation wouldn't be affected, because they were extremely motivated and satisfied already. Similar stories abound in some excellent corporate institutions and businesses. Praise and recognition are most certainly nice, but they aren't *necessary* for a highly motivated and dedicated staff, which can be attained by instituting the other elements noted throughout this resource.

The philosophy at these camps was that praise and recognition were all around them. The leadership also understood that some people might need a little help at first before realizing that. If the cook needs praise and recognition, have him sit with the campers for a meal every now and then. If counselors seem like they could use a little praise and recognition, help them to see how they can recognize their influence in the campers. *To be proverbial, instead of giving them fish, the goal is to teach them how to fish.* Helen Hayes offered the following story/quote: "My mother drew a distinction between achievement and success. She said that achievement is the knowledge that you have studied and worked hard and done the best that is in you. Success is being praised by others. That is nice, but not as important or satisfying. Always aim for achievement and forget about success."

People often retort that "praise and recognition should be given because they feel good, and don't staff who feel good make for more motivated staff?" This logic prevents us – jails us – from seeing the true, big picture of staff motivation, and it robs us of what is possible. When the other motivational elements are in place, praise, perks, and pep talks as necessities fall by the wayside, because people are motivated by providing and receiving value. That's what makes people feel good. Again, there are several camps and other organizations that have extraordinarily motivated staff with meager servings of praise, recognition, perks, and pep talks.

When we run around seeking to make people feel good so they'll do a good job, *we've fostered and fed an addiction* that only requires more so people will continue to feel good . . . and don't think about taking things away. After you've reached a satisfactory level, giving staff intravenous caffeine, daily massages, and heaps of specific praise isn't going to make them work harder. Let's quickly visit history; people have been happy and worked hard when they didn't have air conditioning, power steering, and 24 hour stores. If your happiness and work effort depends on those things, then you are now unhappy and not as motivated due to yet-to-be-invented things. Eventually, a camp can spend too much valuable time and money resources on making people feel good, when much of that could go toward serving the mission in better ways.

The question to ask is why don't people feel really good already without those things, since that is quite possible? External versus internal power generation. Motivation needs to be looked at as a system, with multiple pillars of support. Again, most people do not pick up on the praise and recognition available to them, such as the cook and counselor examples in the above paragraph. So, pointing out good work to people in public and private can help serve that aim, and several methods are detailed below. Yet the central point still is that praise and recognition are not *necessary* for people to be extremely motivated, and lots of it will foster a dependent staff who need fish because they are not good fishers. Nonetheless, as stated in the first paragraph, we shouldn't cut off our nose to spite our face; praise and recognition in moderation, and as instructive of the praise that surrounds everyone, is good. To be even more effective, tie praise and recognition directly back to a mission or value point.

Praise and recognition in practice

Can I have it in writing?

Names for this activity vary from "Warm fuzzies," "Pat on the back," to "Gotcha" notes. Usually there's a board with everyone's name on it, envelopes tacked to a wall, paper next to people's mail boxes, or something along those lines. When people want to write a nice note of support, good work, or congratulations, they grab a piece of paper and scratch out a quick note. Having nice, artistic paper is a real plus here, as it helps the mood. Handmade papers are really nice. Pens of various descriptions also help. One village leader glued a small rock to a cutout paper star and wrote a nice note, ending in "you're a rock star." Putting notes on pillows is a nice touch as well.

To go a step further, many camps include an end-of-summer finale along these lines. For example, a large piece of paper is laid out for each person. The only thing on it is the person's name. As a part of the final ceremony or ritual, people are given an hour or two to go around and write things on people's papers. Often there's music and small munchies. Most people keep their little pieces of paper and the one big one for a long time. Another twist on this idea is to put nice paper out in the shape of placemat. After the writing was done, this camp had them sent out for laminating.

Thank you circle

Everyone forms a circle and each person thanks someone else in the circle for something. The person doing the thanking should be specific, and speak from their own experience/feeling (I statements). Every person has a turn to say something if they so choose. If your camp is too large for this (it would take forever), have thank you circles in cabin/community groupings. One group did it with a can of Pringles. Each person would take some chips out, and thank someone for every chip they took.

T.I.P.S.

Extemporaneous praise and recognition can be utilized as well. This element is probably the most valuable one of the lot to include, but not so constantly that people get hooked on this kind of praise. The little formula to keep in mind here is T.I.P.S. – True, Immediate, Positive, and Specific. Regarding specificity, it's important to go beyond saying good leadership, nice teaching, great job, or I appreciate how responsible you are. Those are still general. Being specific means talking in terms of observable behaviors, such as "That was great how you got control of the group by whistling, being energetic, making eye contact, and touching the most disruptive child!" Definitely keep T.I.P.S. as a tool you use, but understand that it isn't the meat and potatoes of motivation.

Meetings

General meetings are another opportunity to offer praise and recognition. When people go above and beyond the call of duty or do something really special, a little recognition of it in front of everyone can be nice. On your meeting agendas, try putting the standing item

“Laughables and Laudables.” That works well for all-staff and village meetings. The village leaders, program directors, and director each usually mention about five things that fit either category. Afterwards, the floor is opened up for the staff to share their laughables and laudables.

Certificates of appreciation are sometimes made up and given out as well. A similar twist is a traveling trophy of some kind. Some camps have little awards that get passed around, such as “Above and Beyond,” “Random Act of Kindness,” “You Rock,” “Holy Cow” (amazing effort), and “The Exalted Order of the Extended Neck” award. The trophy/award might also be for something like selflessness, bravery, having the hardest week, or some such facet. The trophy is then passed around, sometimes determined by leaders, and sometimes determined by the last person who got it.

A village group created an “Eye-Spy Can” in the staff lounge. When someone saw something great, they would write it down and put it in the can. At the weekly meeting, the village leader would open the can and read out all the notes.

Peer-to-Peer Token Recognition

All of the above methods incorporate elements of people on the same level giving each other praise and recognition to some degree. A few camps have taken the idea a little further by allowing peers to recognize one another with a little token. One camp had loads of stretchy Gumby figures that people could give each other for being flexible and stretching to meet the camp’s needs. Kitchen-prepared smoothies, other food, camp store item, and brief chair massages are other examples. In all of these camps, the director kept the items or coupons, and staff could come to him/her to get one to give to someone else. The tokens shouldn’t have any value outside of camp. The danger of implementing this idea is that people can be irked if they feel they deserved a token, but didn’t get one while others did. “Didn’t anyone see or appreciate what I did!?” If it isn’t random and somewhat infrequent, people can become trained to reach externally for recognition, treats, and their motivation. Because of those pitfalls, this idea is provided only for your information.

Camper feedback

At the end of every week, some camps have their campers fill out a confidential or anonymous evaluation of their experience (even if the kids are there for eight weeks). Counselors are part of that evaluation with a numerical scale, and a place to write in comments. The village leaders compile that feedback for a cabin and individual counselors, and give it to them in an unidentifiable manner (won’t know which camper said what). The great stuff kids say is motivating, but even the negative comments are motivating, when they are viewed in the proper light and supported by the supervisor and camp.

Counselor appreciation days are utilized by some camps. Here’s one version. The counselors go off for a short meeting and the unit directors and other administrative staff stay with the kids. The supervisors quickly explain to the kids, “We want to show the counselors how much we appreciate them for all the things they do” (long list read at lightning speed). They’re told that Counselor Appreciation Day will happen during rest hour the following day. Signs will be put up saying CAD is coming, and the kids are not to tell their counselors what it is. During a meal later that day, some kids from each cabin will volunteer to go off for a meeting with the directors and other supervisors (supposedly to talk about how camp is going). At that time, they write notes of appreciation, and perhaps make a little gift. During rest hour the next day, the supervisors run around camp screaming it’s Counselor Appreciation Day, and the kids spring their notes and gift on the counselors. For the rest of the day, campers are told to say a special thank you to staff around camp, and do little, nice things for them (e.g., hug, fill their water bottle, carry something, fan them, etc.).

For the frill and thrill of it – perks and benefits

First, let me say that I am not against perks and benefits, but rather I believe that a very small amount of them are necessary. The problems I discuss below include that they are relied upon, given in excess, and are misunderstood in terms of their value to staff motivation.

Carrots, prods, and other external approaches to motivation will get some kind of motion if they are big or special enough. What any organization needs, however, is people who have an internal generator . . . people who will move under their own steam. I have a friend in the Peace Corps who is serving in Mongolia. Her only real perk is being given a subscription to *Newsweek*, and having her very basic needs of food and shelter met. When I e-mailed her and asked her if her effort would change if the Peace Corps gave her a host of perks and benefits that I could think of, she said that she would appreciate any and all of them. But, her motivation to do the best job possible and work her hardest did not depend on getting one or all of them. I've found the same thing in exceptional camps with 70 – 90% staff return rates . . . staff appreciated the few perks and benefits the camp provided, but what most people would consider a meager assortment of such things didn't seem to matter to their motivation. Indeed, when I asked them about their need for perks and benefits to increase their motivation, they looked at me in a puzzled way; it struck them as an odd, and to some, insulting question.

Perks and benefits don't so much add to motivation, as they do detract from it when people expect them to be present and they aren't. In other words, they don't have the potential to add much in the long haul, but they can demotivate over the short and long haul when expectations don't match the reality. Externally motivated staff often have the expectation that their employers owe them. To some degree, we all have that expectation based on societal/cultural norms. Health benefits for full-time employees are almost a given. Providing internet access to summer staff is also expected now. The danger some camps (and many larger corporations in search of motivation) get into is providing loads of perks and benefits, which returning staff expect, and new staff come to expect. Beyond the existing level of expectations, they were never *necessary* for motivation.

If your staff are not as internally motivated as the Peace Corps woman, or as selfless and dedicated as the camp with the 90% return rate, you may be in a position where providing extra perks and benefits will help motivation. Know, however, that motivation – de-motivation don't exist along a continuum. Think of a water glass. The degree to which someone is externally motivated, and they feel entitled to certain perks and benefits, is the degree to which the glass is less full. Once the glass is full, or near full, folks look for a better reason than water to expend effort. Like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, they want soul satisfaction, which they'll get through working toward meeting their needs to develop themselves and help develop others. The Peace Corps woman has a narrow, small glass that was easily filled, and then she stopped thinking about water. Some people come to camp with a bucket instead of a glass. Even then, filling up their glass/bucket will spur more motivation up to a point. Pouring in more water than the glass can hold won't get you more effort, just spilled resources.

That being said, perks and benefits are nice. People don't usually turn them down, and they often get upset when you take them away. Once we take perks and benefits out of the realm of *needing* them for staff motivation, we can appreciate them for their value in other ways. They can help maintain and nourish relationships, and communicate values. Caring can be expressed in many ways, but if the message isn't already loud and clear, perks and benefits can amplify the sound level. The more caring, fun, and other values are communicated through some of those different means that I have noted throughout this resource, the less they'll need to be communicated via perks and benefits. That is why camps with very high staff return rates don't need a long list of perks. Beyond helping communicate values and nourishing relationships (depending how much help is needed with those elements), perks are usually fun for those who give and receive them. And, they can serve as little boosters.

Often, the effect of perks is a little spin up in energy or mood. One problem with little pick-me-ups is that people get used to the thrill of them here and there (and they can eventually become viewed as birthrights). Then, either the perks and benefits need to get bigger, be so special that the novelty and enjoyment don't wear off with repeated exposure, or they need to be different.

Before the list of 50 perks and benefits, there are three more points worth mentioning. First, if they are mandatory, obligatory, or offered without the sincere intent of support or appreciation, you won't have gained much. Second, try thinking "What do they really need?" and provide that. Add to that list, "What handful of perks and benefits would really demonstrate we care?" Third, camps are diverse and unique, thus no universal checklist of perks can be provided. *They must fit with the culture and outcomes the camp values.* For example, movies at one camp might seem fine, while such an electronic intrusion at others would be considered blasphemy. Rather than tailor this collection to my own cultural values, I've decided to just provide a list. Pick and choose among them as you see fit, and please don't shoot the messenger.

Special staff events

- If your program allows it, organize an optional communal trip or event with your staff between sessions. River rafting, touring local attractions, and play-at-camp-without-the-kids day are fairly common.
- A staff banquet at the end of camp is a favorite. Mix this with some special ceremonies to make it even more fun. For example, if your camp has an award system, present awards to your staff for different things that happened over the summer. Often, there are real and joke awards.
- During the middle or final week of camp, a secret Santa or buddy event can be a lot of fun. By that time, the staff know one another a lot better. Everyone draws names at a staff meeting and then every day for a week, the secret buddies should do something. Remember, you hired fun and creative people; just watching staff members receive things is often an event in and of itself! This has been done with the stipulation that staff can't spend money, which has also worked well.
- A welcome-to-camp banquet and party
- Pamper-yourself evening staff party – massages, herbal foot baths, music, treats, etc.
- A root beer and ice cream party out of the blue
- One camp threw a "Club Seaweed" party on the camp beach. There was a floating fire, a sand volcano, sailboat and canoe full of iced drinks, music, grass skirts, water guns, party favors, luminarias down to the beach, and lots of gourmet finger food laid out nicely.
- A coffee house evening is another favorite. Think poetry, guitar, and open microphone in subdued lighting with various flavored coffees (usually decaf), finger foods, and pastries. Board games have also been put out. The guitar player is often hired, so that regular staff won't miss out on the socializing and fun themselves. Karaoke is for the brave.
- Staff bonfire – people sing, food, drumming, dancing, and general socializing.
- Evening dance of some sort. Contra dancing, square dancing, country line dancing, and even formal dance lessons have been offered. Clear the decks, kick up your heels, and enjoy watching staff just play with one another.
- Slideshow or movie evening. If the camp has a photographer and/or a videographer, that person(s) can be responsible for making a staff show. It can be done in the middle of camp over popcorn. At the end of camp, it can be given as a show, and then a copy provided for everyone as a keepsake.
- Do you have a CIT program? They can throw parties (casino night or dance) for the staff during rest hour or at night. If you want to get really carried away, the CITs can charge a cover or take the house winnings to fund a special CIT adventure. A small limit of five or ten dollars should be set so that the staff don't spend their meager earnings.
- As a twist to the above event, some camps have the staff throw the CITs a party during the first week of camp. In their opinion, it is a great way to give the staff a party, but at the same time make the CITs feel welcomed into the staff community. It can break down walls and encourages CITs to become full staff members later.

Food

- Pizza, munchies, soda, and juice at staff meetings.
- Personally cook something for the staff. Often, time given is more valuable than money – especially when the staff appreciate how valuable your time is.
- Pastries, hot chocolate, Starbucks coffee, and proper English tea served right before the first vespers (or morning event) during staff training
- Homemade lemonade available at all times
- The cooks can be responsible for creating a daily staff special that would be available in the staff house. Cake, brownies, jello, cookies, a dozen pre-prepared smoothies, . . .
- When it is really hot, throw the staff a watermelon party during rest hour or at night.
- By turns, have the staff over to the director's house/cabin for a more intimate gathering.

Benefits // Meeting needs

- Provide staff laundry. This perk will add to available staff time off because they won't need to take so much personal time to do it.
- Fans in the staff house and perhaps in the cabins (depending on culture and need) can be much appreciated.
- Since variety is the spice of life, staff members would appreciate teaching more than just their core area at camp.
- The option for staff to participate and learn another program area of camp is often highly rewarding. Although this is frequently stated as an option, making time available to staff *exclusively* for that purpose is more effective. Also, if your camp has a tripping program, this can be a powerful perk to staff so inclined.
- Every morning, a staff member from some camper groups gets to join a special staff table where they can just be with one another. Sometimes this table is in another building from where everyone else eats. There is no agenda, except to help find time for staff to gel together, support one another, and get a little break. Usually, they end up talking about their kids and camp anyway. Administration members fill in the counselor holes, which helps lessen any "us versus them" feelings.
- E-mail and the internet used to be a really special perk, but now it is an expectation and need. Going above and beyond the call of duty is including an impressive MP3 collection, and multiple computer stations with high-speed internet access. Policing this can be tricky though.
- Meet their needs (not dreams) for exercise, relaxation, being social, and doing nothing. Provide the unconflicted time.
- Sometimes what staff really want is the ability to have some life outside of camp. They really want to go to a concert. They really want to go to a wedding. They have some school or sports event they want to attend. A friend or relative is coming from far away, and they want to be with that person. Being flexible with the staff schedule can be a big benefit. Sometimes a former staff member can be brought in. Sometimes a session might not be totally full. Sometimes you can wing it for a couple days. This can become epidemic, but staff who really want these things will usually come talk to you about it, and they'll do it before camp if you ask about it explicitly. Even better, don't dock their pay, as no one at camp is working for an hourly or daily rate – see more about this point on Page – 112.
- Facilitate staff's need to play and have fun as adults. Vans available for staff at night (if there is a camp driver) so they can get away from camp if needed or desired for errands or relaxation. A good knowledge management (OWL) center where staff can learn about all their options and make informed choices. When folks stay at camp, they can arrange with the program director to have fun – like participate in activities with campers, or when the activity areas are not in use. Providing free tickets to some things has worked well too.
- For interested staff, personal feedback and development could be arranged on several personality assessments– EQ, AQ, NEO big five, Strength Finder, and the 16 PF. People usually find these very interesting and are fascinated by the results. The domain specific, targeted feedback would also help the staff member do a better job while at camp.

- College credit for working at camp. As we all know, it certainly is an education!
- Religious/spiritual camps might find that staff discussion and nurture groups that meet weekly can be a real perk.

Time

- Having the director take over a cabin rest hour (relieving the staff) once during the summer for every cabin is symbolically meaningful, and it gives the staff just a little more time off. Combine this with direct supervisors doing the same thing and you've given staff a couple of extra hours off and much more! As a bonus, administrative staff have the opportunity to get closer to the campers, which is meaningful for the campers as well. When campers are at camp for a short time, this might not be a good idea, because the campers have less time with their counselors.
- Set aside specific time for counselors and supervisors to play with one another. This may include a special trip at night, some time during the day, or even supporting the staff person in a special project where they could use some help. Time for supervisors to just BE with counselors is a powerful way of showing support.
- Creative hours are available upon application. Some camps offer a little bit of extra "free" time to staff if they use it for the camp. These time periods are called creative hours or planning hours. If a staff person wants to do something special or extra, s/he can apply for creative hour time. If necessary, someone else will cover for the staff person.
- Allow staff to stay at camp for a few days before or after the season to enjoy the place without the campers
- On any random day, the administrative staff might go out of their way to assist the counselors in their daily tasks. Some such surprise support might include: allowing the staff to sleep late while administrators get the campers up and deliver breakfast, or take the campers to breakfast; relieving the counselors just before dinner for an early evening off where they don't have to return until curfew; cooking a special treat for the entire group; or providing a warm herbal foot bath for everyone during the evening. Sometimes little coupons are given out that staff can cash in, like "Sleep-in passes."

Miscellaneous

- Provide a couple of camp t-shirts and perhaps a hat for free.
- Student massage therapists will work for \$10 - \$20 an hour and can give two seated/chair massages an hour (25 minutes each). There are more massage therapy schools than you would imagine and for a day's work and the school-required experience, students would be willing to drive a long way.
- Soft Kleenex and soft soap in the staff lounge
- An audio cd of all the camp songs gifted to everyone.
- A new and a returning staff member are paired up. Together, they have a small budget and some time to find some area of the camp to improve, and then just do it. The projects are usually quite small, but it helps people take ownership of the camp, break down some barriers, and build community.
- Bedding: proper, nice, full-sized, 100% cotton sheets for staff; proper pillows; non-squeaky bed frames; long bed frames for the tall; nice, thick, proper mattresses; and one cotton blanket available per staff member.
- Allow staff siblings to attend camp at cost, or even possibly for free.
- Random acts of kindness should be a main staple of staff appreciation – smoothies; small, useful gifts placed on all staff's beds (wrapped of course); a personal note of appreciation, . . .
- A homey staff house where staff will actually want to hang out serves as an excellent place to recharge. It also creates a place for staff to be without leaving camp to go places they shouldn't. Pictures, flowers, candles, incense, fabric hangings for wall and ceiling, art, posters, and plants are some ideas to make the area more homey and cozy. Inspirational camp related quotes (and qualities of a good staff member) on plaques and in colorful forms can be both homey and

inspirational. When staff are given the task of decorating or improving, they often do a good job of it. One camp went so far as to add a kitchen and short-order chef to prepare food and drinks for the staff on their time off at night. They also offered nightly movies in a home theater, pool table, board games, rooms with couches and bean bags, and other various pleasures and diversions. Again, the staff house needs to fit your camp culture – some camps are offended by such things, and others call them necessities.

- ❑ Provide a video camera that staff can check out. They can use it to create their own memory tapes of camp. Staff pay a few dollars for the tape. This perk has been extremely popular. Staff have commented that the reason they decided to come back was because they looked at the video they made. If your camp already gives everyone a summer video memory tape, still consider using this idea. Staff will have their own custom version. Yes, there are problems and issues, but they can all be worked out. Play the “Believing and doubting game.”
- ❑ Framed picture of the camp staff
- ❑ Staff yearbook with sections for: what is a counselor, quotes, last wills, I remember when . . . , camp is good because . . . , photo collages, cabin half-pages where they draw or write something, contact information, and a letter from the directors.
- ❑ Keepsake of some sort – a pillow case with a photo collage put on it of all the staff, a customized t-shirt specific to everyone’s character, a little wooden doll dressed up like the person’s character, beads, plaster foot with quote on it, unit photo albums, necklace, hand-crafted journal or scrapbook (best given at the start of the summer), staff slideshow and/or movie, Top-Ten-list t-shirt specific to that summer, handmade soap with something unique inside it, . . .

More ideas

When you ask staff what they would find supportive, you’re likely to get a flood of suggestions. Those suggestions often trigger other ideas. The result after a few summers is a pretty comprehensive list of things staff would enjoy – far more than could ever be done. That allows for the rotation of some ideas as well.

Ideas tend to be specific to a given camp’s situation. When administrative staff think in a caring, supportive, and respectful manner, they usually come up with lists equally as long, and often more useful. It’s the same with close relationships. The best things you can do for your mate are not the generic things anyone could do, but the ones that show you understand their lives and know what they’re thinking and feeling, and how to help them. Empathy.

Benefit caveats

He who giveth and then taketh away is in the red – not even. Once things get institutionalized, they become expectations of the camp staff. Taking them away diminishes the reality compared to the expectations, which yields lower satisfaction. Of course, with proper explanation, or sufficient passage of time, the expectations can eventually be altered.

Do you have a morale officer? This person spends a couple of hours a day working on doing great things for staff. Keep in mind that satisfying your staff is not something to which you decide you’ll budget 20% of your time. You have to do it all the time; you’ve got to live it. It’s got to be part of your style of running camp. Motivation needs to be looked at as a system, with all the elements therein. Thus, a specific morale officer can be a bad idea, because people think it is that person’s job, when it is everyone’s. Also, what a morale person can do is of very limited benefit compared with all the factors that truly make a difference in staff motivation.

Perks and benefits are great when they are random, and/or when they are not used as a reward for something specific. Rewards set up a dangerous mental dynamic with no advantage over not using rewards and relying on more systematic motivation strategies. They can also have the unintended consequence of creating a culture where people rely on external stimuli for their motivation.

Profit sharing at camp? One camp offered a dividend to counselors depending on their cabin's return rate for the following summer. Beware of this tactic though, as there is a psychological principle called the "overjustification effect." Essentially, the phenomenon makes people want to try (and often care) less when they are paid to do something they would have done anyway. Extra money may budge the lazy, but it will likely undermine psychological commitment for those who buy the mission and/or are intrinsically rewarded.

Perks and benefits are wonderful things staff will enjoy. However, these things are not the driving force behind motivation. It is much less about the number and nature of the perks than it is about the underlying benefits and perks of just being at camp – the intrinsic value. When the camp has the other motivational elements in place, perks and pep talks are just the dessert to an otherwise already delectable meal all by itself.

Conclusion

Again, use this resource like a checklist. Mark off the elements that are firmly in place, the ones that aren't, and note those that could use some improvement – assess your success. Regardless of where you are, the way to get better is to use continuous improvement. Taking small, meaningful steps over time using a systematic plan will create ever higher levels of performance and motivation. Usually, it takes several focused years to develop a comprehensive staff motivational system.

I've attempted to offer an overview of a motivational system that will create a level of energy and dedication that equals best-practice camps. When most of these elements are essentially in place, the motivation the staff display is awe inspiring. They function at a level that exceeds what almost anyone would have thought possible! This kind of staff far surpasses what the average camp experiences. It serves as a critical element in creating an exceptional camp capable of achieving its outcomes to an unprecedented degree.

Many camps focus on pep talks, heaps of praise, perks, and benefits. "The three P's" are what lots of people consider staff motivation – pep talks, praise, and perks. Relying on those elements is like eating your salad and dessert and saying you're finished. The main course consists of: structures (quality, quantity, and pay), setting expectations, camp culture (including trust), empowered staff (freedom, security, desire, and opportunity), and providing value to your staff (development plans and reviews). Yes, with such a large meal, you could get by with less, but where the analogy breaks down is that when all these ingredients are present, the motivation of your staff will seem more magical than even your fanciful dreams. It is within such a comprehensive motivational system that you will be able to get more from your staff without even asking.

Part II

Part I included the core information and suggestions about fostering staff motivation. The second part offers more examples for some of the principles in action. You'll find speeches you can adapt and give, stories you can tell, inspirational pages for your staff manual or posters, and expectation-setting material for your staff. In addition, there's a section on great ways to de-motivate your staff, because sometimes we can best understand positive things when we see their reverse.

Introduction to Speeches, Stories, and Staff Manual Pages

“Ladies and Gentlemen! Boys and Girls! Dogs and Cats! It is my sincere pleasure and honor to present to you our Camp Director, who is now going to say a few words that will inspire and motivate us all! Without further adieu, big round of applause, THE CAMP DIRECTOR!!”

Sometimes it can feel like that. Thanks to the media and selected historical examples, people are conditioned to think of the leader as big booster and charismatic entertainer. That would be fine if it turned out that such a leader were helpful to the bottom line or the benefits the campers and staff receive. Perhaps surprisingly, the research evidence reveals that such a person isn't, and indeed that charisma without balance and focus is quite bad for organizations. What is helpful is the focus on the mission . . . the dreams people have for themselves and others. On that note, a quiet, sincere, and humble leader is just as capable as the flamboyant one.

Thus, all of the following examples are focused on the mission in one form or another. Your mission and situation will guide your speeches, your stories, and the inspirational writings you choose to leave in the manual or on posters. The examples I provide may be ones you can use, be things you can adapt, or may inspire you to remember or create your own.

Some readers asked why I would include so many speeches, stories, and inspirational writings, when I argue that such things are not the core of staff motivation. Indeed, these elements often distract people from doing the things that would be far more effective and inspirational than some words from a few individuals. The answer is that while these elements are not elemental, they aren't useless, and as noted at the top of this page, the leader is often thrust into the spotlight to make a speech or tell a story. When that spotlight shines, you can redirect the glare toward the mission, and perhaps better serve it by doing so.

To help you think of the stories you've used, the ones you're toying with, and the future stories and speeches you'll give, I'll include some categories and phrases. These sparks will hopefully generate a flame. When you're inevitably called upon to be inspiring, you'll have a box of diverse matchsticks that you can use to further kindle people's dreams and desires.

- Feelings – love, hope, sadness, anger, happiness
- Power – appeal to our best selves and our most noble desires
- Encouragement – we count, we matter, work matters
- Hope & optimism – problems are external, temporary, specific, uncontrollable – not our fault, it will get better
- Pure energy – get your mojo running. Charisma is fine, but not necessary.
- Empathy – moods, temperaments, motivations, and intentions. Confirm what others feel, and why they feel that way.
- Emoting – openness invites openness. Self-disclosure. Speak of your emotions. Hide anger, disappointment, and cynicism.
- Comedy – reframe dire moments, manage stress, manage fear, manage embarrassment, invite participation. Charm, not chafe. Use stories, humor with purpose

- Highlight outcome/benefit
- Heartstrings
- Fire in the belly
- Calling upon values, such as:
 - integrity, responsibility, caring, inclusive, teamwork, innovative/creative, performance, humane, positive role models, learning, fun, safe, credible, service, open communication, respect, and fair.
 - Or, you could tie a few together into a theme like: “We are a creative, trustworthy, fun, community of servants focused on the mission” When people need to remember core values, they need to number less than seven, and tie together.
- Communicate culture – way things are done
- Relate history
- Make the complex simple
- Educational point / lessons to expand our thoughts or see things in new ways
- Camping Magazine's “A place to share” usually includes an inspirational story
- What's your personal story? Why do you care? Why are you here? Followers want to know the leader's heart.

- Leader's job = to repeat the same message over and over again in different ways.
- Attention = intensity, repetition, striking quality, definite form
- Interest = novelty, importance, suspense, conflict, animation, familiarity, humor
- Facts = clear, relevant, and compelling
- Emotions = rich, intense, and heartfelt
- Symbols = memorable and meaningful

Opening Welcome & Opening Staff Campfire

{You'll need to make the words, benefits, and style your own, but this outline should give you some ideas for things to tell staff during the beginning of their time at camp}

Opening welcome

Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory

Different place . . . Special and magical

Lack of power as influence tool . . . rare

Dedicated world built for children

Business of playing . . . fun stuff!

Interested in their healthy development

Camp outcomes

You are the music makers . . you are the dreamers of dreams

Making sweet things (good fun)

Helping children learn and grow

For you too

Not a job, a home

Learn – about yourself, kids, games, and more

20 kids for 3 hours “Let’s put on a movie” they say, but you have a better idea

50 kids going crazy . . . you can handle it

Maybe you’ll change careers, become more confident, reorient your values, or make a best friend

Shoot a bow, paddle a kayak, lifeguard, first aid, Dutch oven . . . you’re all about it

Amazing people here

Diversity – life experience and philosophy

Work elsewhere for more money, but they work here

People who are here now have chosen to give their lives to children for three months

0 – 60 in 2 seconds . . . it’s a rush!

Dog years – every 1 day will seem like 7, every month will seem like 7 months

Opening Campfire

We have the power that few people ever get in an entire lifetime

Toads, trees, buildings, grass, trash cans, this place has things

Groups use this space all year long . . . they see the same things

The magic is that we make the spirit – we breathe life into summer camp

Possibility and responsibility – we stand at the edge

It is our responsibility . . .each one of us must decide

Ego – selfishness . . . poison to our community

You have the power

Impact the children . . . camp outcomes

Power of our community

People belong

Be yourself

Returners and newcomers – all welcome and appreciated

Putting in the time and effort

You’ll set the pace

You’ll create your own ceiling . . . we just provide opportunity

We influence each other

I hope that it can never be said that I didn’t honestly listen – greatest insult

Evaluations go both ways

Everyone evaluates the camp as a whole

Cheer each other on . . and lend a hand to those who need some help

Shared sense of purpose

Play like we invented the word

Be someone that the kids, and your fellow staff, remember as a person who changed their life for the better

You have the power

Take it

Wield it

Rise up . . . make a joyful noise . . .

The professor and the Buddhist

A story to start orientation with

Have a pitcher of water ready with some cups so that you can actually play out that element of the story - hits home more.

A professor of Eastern studies at a prestigious university was fascinated and infatuated with the Zen philosophy. He read everything he could about it and taught a course every year just on Zen and its meaning. Well, it came time for his sabbatical and he decided that he wanted to travel the Orient in search of a Zen master and ask him some questions that still perplexed him. After a couple months of traveling, he heard of a very wise Zen master who lived in a cave in the side of a mountain. The professor pilgrimaged to this cave and after a long hard journey, found the Zen master in the cave as promised sitting on a grass matt.

The cave was very simple with only the barest of necessities. The professor approached and the Zen master bade him to sit at a small wooden table with two chairs to partake of some tea. This is the standard custom of the region and so the professor obliged. They spoke of each other's lives and what meaning they have found in them and in life thus far. After several hours had passed, the professor could no longer contain his enthusiasm to ask the questions that he had come so far to ask. He began, "Zen master, I would like to ask you some questions about Zen that I am still perplexed by. . ." As the professor went on, the Zen master poured tea from the pitcher into the professors cup. (demonstrate this graphically) Soon the cup overflowed and yet the Zen master kept pouring the tea as it spilled out of the cup, off the table, and onto the cave floor. The professor stopped speaking and pointed out to the Zen master what he was doing. The Zen master replied, "Yes, I know, but until you know, we cannot speak of Zen. Please go to a monastery about 10 kilometers from here and stay until you understand." At this, the professor left.

He stayed at the monastery for several weeks thinking about Zen and speaking with the other monks until one morning he decided that he did understand and traveled back up to the Zen master who greeted him warmly.

The professor said, "I understand that my cup of knowledge was full and that anything you told me about Zen would have been like the tea in the full cup, it would have flowed out. I needed to drink from the cup, and like tea, have some of it stay with me and nourish my body and soul while the rest would not be used and flow from my body and be lost. But, having drank from the cup, there is now room for more tea/knowledge and so I may continually drink from the knowledge of life so that there is always room for more."

So it is with what you know about anything - including children and camp. You need to keep drinking and learning and taking in knowledge so that you may keep some and discard some and so that your cup is always ready to receive more.

Stories from parents, campers, staff, past staff, "old" directors, school principal . . .

For these speeches, it is best to get the folks who have the stories to tell, to tell them themselves. Using this format, the staff don't see the same faces all the time, they pay more attention, and the message is often better than if you said it yourself.

P a r e n t s

Invite some parents who have a strong connection to your camp to come speak to the staff. Three to five seems to be a good number. It works well to have this occur as close to opening day as possible. Allow each of them 3 – 5 minutes to say whatever they want to the staff who will care for their and other parents' children. Following that, you might have some prepared questions to help foster points that might not have already been covered. For example, you might ask:

- What made you decide to send your child to camp? What did you want for him/her?
- What was your child's reaction to going away to camp?
- What is it like the day before camp, and the day your child returns from camp?
- What does your child remember most about camp?
- How has your child changed as a result of going to camp?
- What do you want the counselor of your camper to know?
- What do you look for in a counselor for your child?

C a m p e r s

Kids say the darndest things! Such a panel is more unpredictable than the parents, but even silly, outrageous, and awkward things kids might say can be turned into teachable moments. I am constantly amazed at the wonderful outcome of a camper panel. Try and get a couple new campers, as well as two or three returning campers to sit on the panel. Depending on the kids, you might want to just launch into some questions:

- What are you looking forward to most?
- Did you want to come to camp at first? Do you want to come now?
- What are the best things about camp?
- What are the worst things about camp?
- What things should new campers know about their counselors?
- What makes a great counselor?
- What do you wish counselors did more and less of?
- Have you changed at all because you went to camp?

S t a f f a n d p a s t s t a f f

These panels have been perhaps the most unpredictable unless the folks are chosen carefully, and perhaps even spoken with first. Staff and past staff are asked to talk about the camp experience from their perspective. They might tell stories about specific campers or cabins, bonding and craziness between staff, the general magic of camp, and how the camp experience has influenced them. If the camp has a long history, older alumni fit in here very nicely. One camp called this the "Eyetooth talk," because past staff would say how they'd give their eyeteeth to be able to go to camp again.

" O l d " d i r e c t o r s

Former directors are great for spinning yarns about the power and magic of the camp experience. Because of their experience and fresh faces, the dramatic tales are often greeted with rapt attention. Sometimes you can get them to spend the day at camp and chat with the staff informally as they go about various duties and preparations.

S c h o o l p r i n c i p a l s

If you have connections with such folks, and especially if they've been to camp, they can offer a nice perspective about how camp is different from school. Discussion and messages about the opportunities that camps have can often drive the point home better than a few words on a page, or via mention by the folks they hear give speeches and messages all the time.

Last 24 hours

{Basically, you are looking to have the staff empathize with the campers and what they might be doing right before they show up to camp, and right before they leave camp. This talk is more of a facilitated conversation than a speech or soliloquy. Ask questions, and have the staff provide the answers.}

The kids are going to get here in less than 24 hours. What are those last hours going to look like?

Perspectives to take while guiding this talk

- Returning camper for years
- New camper
- Teenage camper
- Young camper
- Scholarship camper

What are they doing?

- Eating last meal
- Talking about with family
- Talking on the phone
- Packing
- Looking over camp stuff

What are they thinking about?

- Friends
- Counselors
- Food
- Activities
- Other kids in the cabin

What are they going to be thinking about the last 24 hours before going home after being at camp?

- Friends made
- Fun had
- Enjoying the last of the activities
- Soak it up as much as possible and take lots of pictures
- Reflect on how they have changed (if guided)
- Reflect on their counselors and what they've meant to them
- TV and video games and the internet to play with again
- Seeing home family and friends again
- Eating certain foods, and playing certain games

Hero Song

Mariah Carey sings a song about Heroes. I often get groans here, but nevertheless . . . Take transparencies and write these lines (one line per slide) along the bottom. Number each slide as well. Hand them out so that each person (or small group) sees only one. Give them colored sharpies and have them create a picture that symbolizes the line. Don't tell them what you are going to do. When it has been done, pick a good time, and play the song while flipping through the slides. Practice flipping through the slides first, because it is more confusing than you might expect! Finish with a talk about how the staff are heroes in the lives of kids. You can use "The Modern Hero" spiel that follows for ideas. If the setting and time are right, it gets tears almost every time. Beyond the hero example, this technique can be utilized with many songs.

1. There's a hero, if you look inside your heart
2. You don't have to be afraid of what you are
3. There's an answer if you reach into your soul
4. And the sorrow that you know will melt away

5. And then a hero comes along, with the strength to carry on
6. And you cast your fears aside, and you know you can survive
7. So when you feel like hope is gone
8. Look inside you and be strong,
and you'll finally see the truth, {grouped with next line}
9. that a hero lies in you

10. It's a long road, and you face the world alone
11. No one reaches out a hand for you to hold
12. You can find love, if you search within yourself
13. And the emptiness you felt will disappear

14. And then a hero comes along, with the strength to carry on
15. And you cast your fears aside, and you know you can survive
16. So when you feel like hope is gone
17. Look inside you and be strong,
and you'll finally see the truth, {grouped with next line}
18. that a hero lies in you

19. Love knows, dreams are hard to follow, but don't let anyone tear them away
20. Hold on, there will be tomorrow
21. In time, you'll find a way

22. And then a hero comes along, with the strength to carry on
23. And you cast your fears aside, and you know you can survive
24. So when you feel like hope is gone
25. Look inside you and be strong,
and you'll finally see the truth, {grouped with next line}
26. that a hero lies in you

27. That a hero lies in you

Co-counselor wedding spiel for staff training

Co-counselors (or trios at some camps) are together for the whole summer (8 – 12 weeks usually). That's a long time, and they'll spend as much time together as a married couple would in about a year. The point of creating a "wedding" is to emphasize the point that they'll need a lot of the same skills a married couple will – commitment, communication, respect, teamwork, friendship, etc. To that end, when the pairs are going to be announced, make it fun and communicate a message. Of course, if such a representation of marriage is offensive to you, don't do it.

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today to celebrate the union of these fine couples. It is with great joy that we honor the commitment, loyalty, trust, patience, and respect they will have for one another. Those things will continue to grow and deepen into a lasting relationship over the course of the summer.

There are the inevitable stresses that will pull, strain, and tear at your bond and commitment. You'll share a very small space, your stuff will touch, you'll know each other's smell, and you might even trade clothes. Your mate may snore, breath funny, or talk in his or her sleep. Anything your mate says in their sleep will just reinforce the bond of trust you have for one another as you swear to never repeat it to anyone. You may fall into the trap of playing good cop and bad cop, but you'll get through it. You won't be able to hang out with each other on your time off, as someone will have to be with the kids. You might have severe homesickness, little Damien, extreme attitude child, Mr. too cool for school, the heartbreaking child with a terrible story/life, or super-hyper kids, but through it all, you'll have each other. It is up to you if these things push you apart, or pull you together.

You shall not be as two conflicting or competing forces, but rather the energies of your lives shall blend into harmony and oneness. On your journey, you will need exceptional communication. At the end of every day, you'll process the day through, talking about highs and lows, and problem-solving for tomorrow. The next day will be discussed, so that you'll know the plan and be able to support each other in it. However, when your co forgets to tell you that she changed the cabin activity time, or the activity itself, you'll recognize your own mistakes and respond with love and understanding. When things do go awry and your patience has worn thin, you'll use I statements, validate each other's feelings, and reframe messages for understanding and problem-solving.

But, there are also all the wonderful times you will share together, and those times will be yours forever. You'll share the paperwork load. You've got a shoulder to cry and lean on. You'll give each other little presents and pick-me-ups. You'll leave each other little notes on the table or their pillow. You'll give each other back and foot rubs. You'll give each other little breaks – 'go ahead, take five.' You'll get your kids to write to your co saying how much they appreciate him. Yes, truly you shall be each other's joy.

Now, I shall read out the names of the partners {usually a mystery and greatly awaited announcement}
{for fun, the staff all formed a tunnel with hands outstretched upward in front of them. As couples got called out, they would run to the front and go through the tunnel, sometimes getting a light slap. All staff were announced, even if they were not counselors – administrative and support staff. Upon the conclusion, everyone re-gathers for the final words from the director}

During your joining, you will eat together, play together, work together, and sleep together. Your joy and growth are yours to grasp and to hold. Your pleasure and pain are yours to decide and reap. May you be each other's shelter. My you walk together through all things. May you always try your best. May you be a gift to each other. It is with great pride and joy, indeed my honor and delight, that I hereby, by the powers vested in me by the ACA and board of directors, pronounce you all a team!

Please join me in singing a joyful song of celebration {Sing Bill Withers' Lean On Me}

Sometimes in our lives we all have pain
We all have sorrow
But if we are wise
We know that there's always tomorrow

Lean on me, when you're not strong
And I'll be your friend
I'll help you carry on

For it won't be long
'Til I'm gonna need
Somebody to lean on

Please swallow your pride
If I have things you need to borrow
For, no one can fill, those of your needs
That you don't let show

So just call on me brother, when you need a hand
We all need somebody to lean on
I just might have a problem that you'd understand
We all need somebody to lean on

Chorus

So just call on me brother, when you need a hand
We all need somebody to lean on
I just might have a problem that you'd understand
We all need somebody to lean on

If there is a load you have to bear
That you can't carry
I'm right up the road
I'll share your load
If you just call me

Call me (if you need a friend)
Call me (fade out and repeat ever more softly)

{In order to facilitate the couples getting to know each other better now that they are paired, the ceremony is followed by some values clarification/get-to-know-you exercises. These are just examples, so debrief them, change them, substitute, or don't do them.}

Four trees are marked with either: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. Take these ropes and tie your legs to each other at the ankle and thigh. I'll call out some statements, and together you must decide which tree you'll go to.

Donate your body to science
Genetic engineering of food
Condoms in high school
Metal detectors in all schools
Legalize marijuana

Now, get out some paper and pens. Separately, write down 20 things you like to do. Now, put a \$ sign next to the ones that require money. Put a P next to those that require planning. Put an A if it can be done alone, and a T if it requires other people. Pick the top 5 and circle those. Now, compare and talk about your lists with your mate.

Okay, here are some small wash basins and some twine. Over there is a large barrel with water in it and sponges. Use the rope (not twine) to tie one leg together and one arm together with your mates. Over here are donuts, maple syrup, and string. Your task is to feed each other a syrup-covered donut on a string. After that, you need to build a wash basin stand using whatever you can find around here (usually sticks in the forest), and the stand must be off the ground. Then, use the sponges to fill your basin and clean each other's faces off.

{After that is done, it is debriefed in village/unit groups. How did teams work together? Were there different designs and solutions? Did people ever choose to work with other teams? Did anyone change what they were doing based on what they saw others doing? Did people use supervisors or directors? How was the communication? How were ideas discussed and carried out? How were the emotions? So what does this mean for the summer? Now what are we going to do with this insight?}

You are Powerful

{This speech is not an easy one to give, but it will create a language and an idea that can powerfully transform a camp and the people. The three pages will need to be read over a couple of times before a good grasp of the sentiment and points is had.}

They say that 17 – 24 year olds have exaggerated perceptions of their power and abilities (usually gets a laugh)

True, except in one odd area – their minds, hearts . . . their emotions

In that area, young adults don't find themselves powerful, but more often weak and fragile, even though they don't realize it

The Shift (see following pages and review those points – read if necessary).

Hard to have an internal focus, but possible even in extreme circumstances

Happy prisoner of war

Study of death and health disasters

A Harvard professor decided to study people's reactions to tragedy. Hospitals, funeral homes, and police stations were hung out in. When bad things happened, the researchers managed to get people to talk about their disasters, and their view of the future using structured interviews. Despite the ghoulishness, there was surprising cooperation and interesting results. At the time, people overestimated the time it would take them to recover by a factor of 4. If they said a year, it usually only took three months. He hypothesized that people have an innate homeostasis and propensity to right themselves. When people were purposeful about their recovery, they did so even faster. We have the power; we just have to choose it

Your challenge is to be loving when it is hard to do so

Kids are difficult

Co-workers do frustrating and inconsiderate things

Our pain is the result of the difficulty of being loving when others are not {say it again}

Chicken Soup for The Soul – full of stories of people being loving.

You have the power to be happy and loving you have to choose to do it

Read parent and camper letters of praise

Think of your mentors . . . people who you respect greatly

You have the ability to be powerful in children's lives

It happens every week – parent and camper evaluations

Self-confidence – skill, comfortable in their own skin

Teach about the environment

Model and influence character

Shared responsibilities, evening embers, cabin activities, Siesta, Clinics, random times

Be remembered like the CITs who remember their counselors – for being someone positive and influential

You have the power to be a hero

Talk about the essence of “The Modern Hero” essay.

You are powerful

You are as happy as you choose to be

You are as loving as you choose to be

You have the power to be a modern hero

Go ahead do it

The Shift

Abstracted from Dr. Barnes Boffey's internal newsletter

The Shift: From external to internal control

External control

"I felt angry and that's why I yelled at him!"

"I'm depressed, so that's why I'm sitting here doing nothing."

"My friends make me feel stupid."

"My mother made me angry so I'm not talking to her."

"When people call me names, I'm going to hit them. It's their fault if they get hurt, not mine."

"If you would just stop being so uptight, I could relax and then everything would be fine."

"If Jane would just clean up her room, I wouldn't get so angry."

"I'm going to make that guy do what I said or else!"

"I'm bored. That's not fun. I need more fun things to do."

Core belief: We feel the way we do because some person, place, or thing makes us feel that way. We blame.

Core belief: We either manipulate, or we are manipulated

Core belief: The outside world should give us things we need to be happy

Core belief: We do what we do because of how we feel

People who are externally motivated spend a great deal of time looking for exactly the right people, places, and things so that they will finally feel fulfilled. To wait for others to change so that we can love them will be a source of endless frustration and disappointing relationships. Our ultimate freedom comes in being able to find our balance regardless of another person's action.

Internal control

"How do I want to feel in this situation?"

"That person called me names; I can choose to feel angry, sad, sorry for their lack of understanding, or grateful I am not them"

"Do you want to be homesick? Can you imagine being happy even though you are not with your mom?, Do you want to be enjoying camp rather than feeling sad all the time?"

"I really respect myself for the way I handled that situation."

"I like who I am when I act like this."

"Would you like to spend your time feeling good about what you did well or bad about what you didn't do so well?"

Core belief: What's going on outside of me is just information. I have the power to choose how I want to feel. Feelings come from the inside out, and not outside in.

Core belief: Our pain in the world comes not from the circumstances of our lives, but from the way we deal with those circumstances. Our pain is the result of the difficulty of being loving when others are not.

Core belief: People want to do and be good, but sometimes they need help learning how.

Core belief: People have the power to be terrific people, even in non-terrific situations

Being loving is easy in situations where those around you are doing what you want and giving you the attention and love you desire. But being loving is more difficult if someone is mad at you, or lets you down, or treats you poorly, or does not do what you want them to do. When we are caring and compassionate in the face of bad situations, we find peace, balance, and love.

Our core needs

From this perspective, people have five core needs. It is believed that all behavior can be traced back to one of these core five needs. All behavior is code, and all behavior happens for a reason. These needs instruct us on how to be in the world.

The instruction to "Be Loved and Be Loving" is an urge to connect, to belong, to feel compassion for others, and to forgive. Even though it is difficult to see this need expressed in people sometimes, the assumption is that we are all born with the desire to be this way in the world. For example, people may express this need through anger, showing off, bitterness, or even by being shy. Also under the need to be loved is the need for self-worth, or self-esteem. People want to feel good about themselves.

“Being Powerful” means standing in your own circle of strength, having a voice, staying strong in difficult situations, being worthy, having self respect and having impact on the world. Being powerful means telling the truth when you are worried others may criticize, it means taking a step off the zip wire platform even though you are scared, and it means sticking with a difficult project until you are really proud of your work.

“Being Playful” is the ability to have fun regardless of the things or activities that surround you. When children complain that they are bored, mothers are often quoted as saying, “Only boring people are bored.” Too often as we get older, we wait for external circumstances to create pleasure. The internally motivated playfulness comes from viewing each situation with curiosity, whimsy, and an openness to new perceptions.

“Being Free” is our ability to maintain a sense of autonomy and choice. People following their internal instruction to be free are able to see choices, to “see the glass half full,” and to think about “freedom to” and “freedom in.” People who are trapped in the external are always worried about “freedom from” and ask themselves, “How is this *making me* feel?” People who are being free are more likely to ask, “How *do I feel* about this situation?” and even more importantly, “How do I *want to feel* about this situation?”

Safety and survival are also core human needs. We need food and shelter, and when they aren’t provided, they take up the majority of our thought and behavior. People also act quickly when there is an immediate threat to safety or survival.

If we don't follow our psychological/spiritual instructions, we feel internal signals -- loneliness, powerlessness, boredom, or feeling trapped -- that inform us of that fact. When people who understand their internal instructions feel lonely, for example, *they do not wait for others to love them. They look for others to love.* They call a friend, they pat the dog, or they give a gift. As they take these actions, *they begin again to be loving, and the loneliness disappears.* When they feel bored, *they don't wait for something to entertain them, they create their fun by beginning to be playful in the situation at hand.*

Examples

A happy prisoner of war?

In 1967, Senator John McCain was shot down over Vietnam and held as a prisoner of war in Hanoi for five and a half years (1967-1973), much of it in solitary confinement. Despite this incredible oppressive force in his life, he managed to remain in relatively good spirits and even happy. Afterwards, he was able to recover from the experience quickly. When asked how he managed it, he said that he realized that he had no control over his situation, but that he did have control over his attitude. Faced with the choice of being happy or unhappy, he chose to be happy. He found ways to amuse himself and be happy. Now that’s powerful internal psychology!

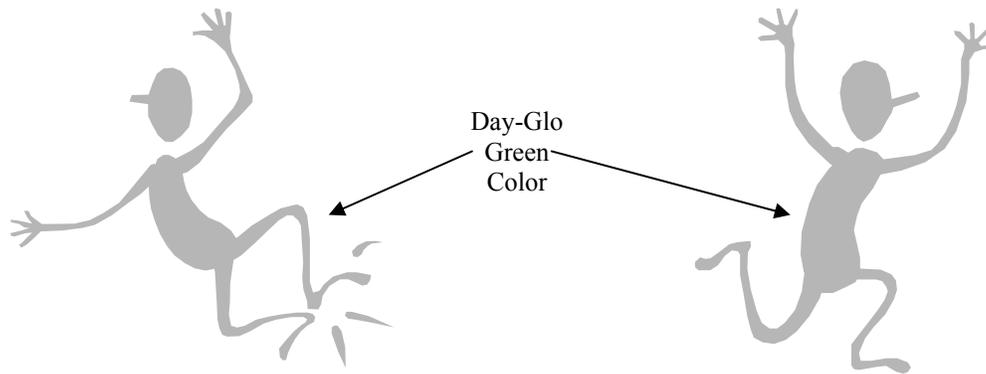
Wanting

The job of almost all advertising is to convince us that we need things to be happy. Things are external. The message is reaching our kids, because children under 12 already spend a whopping \$28 billion a year. Teen-agers spend \$100 billion. Children also influence another \$249 billion spent by their parents. Children spend more time shopping than reading. The average U.S. child is exposed to 20,000 TV commercials a year.

The want of things is often the want of love, power, and play. Children want to belong, and lots of kids place value on clothing (Abercrombie and Aeropostale are hot right now) and toys (video games, snazzy skates, cool MP3, flashy car) in an effort to belong. Besides for love, some kids choose things as a way to gain and keep access to special groups like a clique, club, or even school. Bored children seek things to keep them entertained, but like drugs, the need for more and more stuff can never be satisfied.

Children who strongly value wealth and related aspects tend to have higher levels of distress, lower levels of well-being, worse relationships, and less connection to their communities.

The Green Bean/Being Dream



I had a dream. Maybe it was one too many S'mores last night, or watching the Matrix series and Animatrix before camp. It was weird, but I'd like to share it with you.

We were visited by a colonizing space ship from another galaxy. The somewhat-human-shaped beings said they wanted to live on Earth with us, and fit in to our culture. Having never been visited by aliens, Earth decided to be hospitable and allow them to share the planet. So, these Green Beings, or Green Beans as they came to be called, settled in all over the world. They looked like well-flushed-out stick figures, kind of like this picture I've drawn for you.

What made everyone on Earth so hospitable was the Green Beans' very nature. They were energetic, happy, helpful, and nice. Having one of them over for dinner was all the rage! The Green Beans took the worst housing wherever they were, but they were fine with it. In fact, regardless of how horrid the conditions were, they acted like they had just won the lottery and a mansion when they saw their digs. The Green Beans didn't have any particular skills to start off with, so they took the worst jobs out there.

You could see Green Beans mucking out pit toilets, slaughtering animals, putting widgets together, doing after-liposuction cleanup, doing the 2 a.m. cleanup at a xxx movie theater, and doing data entry. The funny thing was, they loved their jobs no matter what they were. In fact, it was popcorn-eating entertainment just watching them do their work! There was even a 30-minute television show that basically included video of the Green Beans doing their horrible jobs. One of the best episodes included a segment with a Green Bean being told that his/her/its job was to clean out a twelve-foot-deep pit toilet with a hose and shovel. It was like a child being shown a Christmas tree full of presents. The pure glee, honest enthusiasm, and pleasure at hearing of the task struck the rest of the world as dumb. The Green Being took to the task so wholeheartedly and vigorously that you'd think there was nothing else in the world the fellow would rather be doing.

The inability to fathom the Green Beans' attitude and work ethic in even the worst situations tortured the modern soul. Indeed, another reality-based television show spawned with the idea of trying to stump the Green Beans. The things they had Green Beings do put the show Fear Factor to shame. Eventually, the show was cancelled, because it became boring to watch a foregone conclusion – they would love the job, and do it with every ounce of energy they had.

I could regale you with more stories of the Green Beans, or tell you what happened in the end of my dream, but we don't have all day. Maybe I'll write a screen play for the movies sometime. Instead, I want to leave you with this . . . all of us have the potential to be like the Green Beans. It has been a hard week. Some of you have had cabins that make the rest of us wince and give you pats on the back. We had to deal with a Lice outbreak this week, and as you all know, that put a lot of stress on all of us. Five of the last seven days have been gully-washers with record amounts of rain for this time of year. Two of our staff family had to leave because of personal illness. Hopefully they'll be back in a week or two. Despite these things, we have the ability to choose our attitude . . . our outlook . . . and our actions. We don't have to be happy about what happened, but we can choose to be happy anyway – even chipper, helpful, and nice. We can't change what happened. What we can do is play the one string we have – our attitude. It isn't just the Green Beans that have that power. In the end, humanity in my dream was so tortured because the Green Beings so visibly and constantly reminded them of that power and ability that we all have. Enjoy your well-deserved day off, and think about what it would be like if you were a Green Being.

What's left after the ashes?

{Every summer, tragically, it seems that some camp burns down, or perhaps is lost to a flood. Other camps close their doors forever due to the owner's death. In this case, I use the example of fire, usually due to a forest fire. This is a true story, but you can adapt or embellish it. Usually done at a closing campfire.}

Stop. Be still. Look around and quietly notice at least 10 things you can see, or favorite places around here where you like to be. {wait}

Okay, start calling out things. {Get a long list of things, and then fill in some things of your own that they wouldn't mention – other buildings, sacred spaces, natural beauty of different areas}

Now, imagine, just imagine, this. A great forest fire is just over that ridge. It spans for miles and has destroyed thousands of acres. By the time you're home, everything we've just mentioned will be ashes. {pick up some ashes and slowly let them pass through your fingers}

That actually happened this summer. A camp in _____ is gone – ashes. I spoke with the director and some of the staff a few days ago, as I knew them. Through those conversations and the community e-mails people were sending out, I was struck by one thing.

They spoke about how they had changed as a result of being at that camp. They had made great friends. They had learned how to do archery, or sailing, or build a fire. They saw the stars in all their glory for the first time. They could be silly and goofy. They remembered the amazing experiences they had, and how they had changed them.

Our camp doesn't have to burn down for you to realize those things. But even if it did, no one can ever rob you of what you've learned and experienced here – those things are yours forever. For sure, you've all had fun doing the activities, playing the all-camp game, doing smorgasbord, your cabin activities, and our special meal.

But, beyond that, some of you have made friends that you're going to know for a long time, or perhaps like our alumni here, for 40+ years. Some of you have become more confident in taking risks, and in being your real self and comfortable in your own skin. Some of you have become more independent after being away from home, taking care of yourself, and camping out. Lots of you have become more goofy, and have been able to get messy, dirty, and do silly things with all the counselors. Maybe your counselor sat and talked with you, and you learned something from him or her that you'll always take with you. Maybe you've learned to work better as a team. Maybe you appreciate the environment more after tending the garden, being in nature, or caring for our camp. Hopefully you've learned that you don't need computers, internet, and TV to have fun. Maybe you won't know how camp has changed you until you've been home for a while. {long pause}

I've gone around camp to the different campfire rings, and have gathered some of the ashes. They are here in these vials. When you walk out of here tonight, take a vial home with you. Let it remind you that camp is not about this place, but that it rests in your hearts, minds, and spirits. No one can ever take that away from you.

Go in peace.

Wish, Wonder, and Surprise (provoke, invoke, evoke)

{More of a facilitated conversation with the staff than a soliloquy. You can use provoke, invoke, and evoke instead of wish, wonder, and surprise as the key words if that will work better for you.}

Wish, wonder, surprise. These are powerful words. We summon them all the time at camp, even though we may not use those words very often. I want to bring them up again, and to remind us of their and our power. As I remind you of the ways in which we all use these, think about ways in which we can do even more to inspire wish, wonder, and surprise, and to be provoking, invoking, and evoking.

- Wonder (Invoke the imagination)
 - Star gazing
 - Caving
 - Stories
 - Campfires
 - Radar gun
 - Nature walks
 - Light their first fire
 - Castle and the catapult
 - Magic show
 - Problem-solving games
 - Cook their first meal over a fire/coals
- Wish (Invoke the imagination & evoke the emotion)
 - Fire spirit (wishes burned in hay sculpture)
 - Wishing on a star
 - Ragers (character program)
 - 4-leaf clover farm patch
 - Friendship circles
 - Storytelling
- Surprise (Provoke the senses & evoke the emotion)
 - Outcome of Giants, Wizards, and Elves (pie in the face?)
 - Success at an activity (bullseye, catch a fish, swim a lap, make a bracelet, . . .)
 - Counselor antics
 - Sponge war
 - Ropes course, Giant swing, The Blob, Adventure trips
 - Log rolling
 - Horizontal bungee
 - Superslop obstacle course
 - Brain jello-mold for dessert & smiley face imprint on all toast
 - All-camp game

The Worlds We Know

{If it fits, try playing Collective Soul's "The World I Know" song as an intro.}
{There are a lot of examples here, and some may not fit your situation, but you'll get the general idea}
{You'd either only want to use a few of these, or spread them out over the summer}

We've all had a chance to live in a couple different worlds now – the regular world, and the camp world. In particular, I want to draw a special distinction between those worlds that the kids, and us, here live in.

Environment

Regular world

Half of the population is breathing unhealthy air
More people die from air pollution than car crashes
Lost ¼ of the sea species in less than 100 years
It's possible to go from air-conditioned house, to car, to building experiencing only seconds of the real world.
Children learn about the environment from books

Camp world

Live in natural splendor with clean air and water
We recycle, reduce, and reuse.
Children learn about the environment through their hands and hearts
Story of child who pulled up a carrot from the garden and exclaimed that he never knew that was how they grew.
He just knew them from the supermarket.
Story of child who saw the night sky for the first time, because of the air and light pollution in the city

Fun

Regular world

Children spend an average of 40 hours a week in front of the computer, video games, and television – a full time job
Media tries for our attention, create excitement, release dopamine in the brain. They need fast scene changes, violent images, sexualized images, racy plots, and stark language.
Kids are rushed to grow up – the hurried child. Being silly and playful can be uncool for some kids.

Camp world

Kids are engaged with people, and not things
Fun is created *with* the children, and not *for* the children. They are participants. They are actively engaged.
Kids learn how to entertain themselves. They understand that boredom is a choice, and how to entertain themselves.
Story of child who took up storytelling and art after camp, and halved the amount of media he watched
Story of child who took camp games to school and turned the whole school into camp at recess

Hobbies and passions

Regular world

We are a nation of voyeurs – watching other people play sports and do hobbies
Adults work more and play less – Americans have 4 weeks less of vacation a year than Europeans

Camp world

Passionate teachers – you – share your contagious love for the activities you instruct
Story of child who took his family camping in the woods when they had never gone before
Story of child who took up kayaking and horseback riding as driving passions

Physical health

Regular world

250,000 people a year die from inactivity related diseases – the CDC calls it "Sedentary Death Syndrome"
Type II diabetes has increased tenfold from 1982 to 1994 among the young, & 27% in the last 5 years
65% of adults are overweight or obese – more than half the American population.
Fifteen percent of children are seriously overweight, a rate that's tripled since 1970
Physical education and recess have disappeared from several states as standard public school elements
In Europe, people make 33% of their trips by foot or bicycle, compared with 9.4% for Americans.

Camp world

Exercise through play – the best kind. The kind that sticks and that people really enjoy.

People are supposed to get 10,000 steps a day, most get half that, and kids at camp get double that

Meals are certified by a nutritionist – they are balanced and nutritious

Story of child who lost five pounds at camp, then changed her diet, and took up swimming and soccer

Story of child who started eating vegetables when she got home, and stopped drinking soda and eating french fries

Safe risk taking

When don't have safe risk options, experiment with alcohol, other drugs, sex, restrictive eating, driving too fast, etc.

Kids need to ask and answer the questions of who am I, what can I do, and what do I want to do

Regular world

1/3 of Americans are taking prescribed antidepressants

Kids listen to music like Marcy Playground's "Sex and Candy" and Salt 'N Pepa's "I Live to Party."

American teens have the highest pregnancy and birth rates, as well as the lowest contraception use

30% of high school kids have been drunk in the past month, and 25% have used illicit drugs

Camp world

Kids can try on another persona at camp. Kids can be accepted for who they are

They can get up in front of a crowd, risk making art, explore a deep cave, master archery, or climb a mountain

Campers challenge and reward themselves through our challenge by choice program in every activity

You, the staff, serve as role models that you can be cool, popular, and happy without taking unhealthy risks

Story of a child who changed her friends and stopped drinking

Story of a child who said that at camp she found the courage and reason to start using birth control at home

Material happiness

Regular world

The job of virtually all advertising is to convince us that we *need* things to be happy

Children under 12 already spend a whopping \$28 billion a year. Teen-agers spend \$100 billion.

Preschool programs get an average of two corporate advertising solicitations for the kids a month

Kids want to be popular and to fit in, and they are often conditioned to buy things to accomplish that (Abercrombie)

College kids often arrive with: color TV, stereo, compact disc and DVD players, video game player, desktop

computer, printer, refrigerator, microwave, two fans, and rechargers for a cell phone and camera.

Camp world

There is a dress code, and children are counseled on their appearance

Kids don't (and can't) bring things they don't really need to camp, so materialism is removed

Children see no ads, can't focus on buying anything, and learn that happiness comes from inside

Story of a child who was stopped watching almost all television when he got home, and simplified wardrobe

Story of a child who started a monthly "buy nothing day" campaign in his school

Going solo

Regular world

Isolation – cocoons of houses and sound-proofed cars.

From Starbucks, to public parks, to movie theaters, we find ourselves traveling in a bubble.

Travel from isolation in isolation to isolation – alone in a crowd.

Schools have moved from relationships to surveillance to control and guide children. Guidance counselor ratio is

250:1 in many schools. When's the last time you invited 250 friends over?

Children want to be social, and teens often are, but not to the degree that they were. Use of media as an example.

Camp world

Sometimes I joke and say that the only way to be alone at camp is when you are going to the bathroom

People learn emotional intelligence, compassion, & social skills by *being* with other people in a healthy environment

Friendships are made and kept over the summers, and often when they get home as well

Story of a child who got his friends to play games, just hang out, and do community service

Picture the smooth, still reflecting pond by the bridge. You all are the drops of water that can create a ripple in these kids' lives. Truthfully, lots of kids will go away from here largely unchanged, but how many do change, and how much they change – how big a splash you make – is up to you. You are the center. You are where it happens. You are the drop of water.

What Would The Regular World Look Like If It Were More Like Camp?

{This is a facilitated conversation with the staff. You want to guide them so that they are thinking and they are coming up with answers/examples. You might get some off remarks, but such are just fodder for education}

Instead of speaking to you, I'd like to speak with you. I want for all of you to help me think about a question I've been pondering. That question is: If the world were more like camp, what would it look like? {pause} I'll start off with a few things I've come up with, but I'd like to hear your thoughts and ideas. Okay? {offer maybe 4 – 6 and then open it up to others}

- People would recycle, reduce, and reuse.
- We'd have healthy air to breath
- Alcohol, other drugs, and sex wouldn't be status symbols or markers of being mature or grown up
- You could walk around your neighborhood or a park and feel safe
- People would get rid of loads of stuff they have, because they'd realize they don't need those things to be happy
- There would be beautiful places to play and enjoy nature not far from every neighborhood
- People would spend more time with each other instead of with computers, video games, television, and movies. People would have a lot of friends that they could and would want to spend time with.
- People would exercise through play and usually eat a healthy diet
- People would treat people the same regardless of what they looked like
- When people had a problem with someone else, they'd confront them in a healthy way instead of spreading rumors or sulking
- People would interact with nature more instead of things – canoe, sail, hike, climb, camp out, view natural nirvanas, . . .
- When small groups of people got together, they'd find ways to play together beyond dinner, movies, and board games
- Kids could be kids without trying to be super cool or mature beyond their years
- You wouldn't need to have X clothes, Y stuff, and Z language to fit in and be accepted
- You could wear normal shorts and a t-shirt every day and no one would care
- You could make a mistake without fear of social or physical consequences
- People would try and help others reach their goals, instead of stepping on them on the way to theirs
- When you're being goofy and silly, people would laugh with you and not at you
- People would vote, and neighborhood associations would really work
- We'd know who our neighbors were and care about them
- Neighborhoods would have block parties, and when you walked along, people would say hello
- At work and at home, people would find playful and creative ways to do unsavory things and repetitive tasks
- You'd go to work and find it a happy place where people trusted each other and the company
- When volunteers were needed, there would almost never be a shortage
- Families would eat at least dinner together, and spend a couple hours of "quality time" together daily

Thank you all for playing with this question with me. Some of you might think that it really doesn't mean anything, because the world isn't like camp, and all those wonderful things don't happen as often as we'd like them to. But keep in mind this quote from the famous anthropologist Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of committed individuals can change the world – indeed it's the only thing that ever has." You are a committed group of individuals, AND you have the opportunity to influence children who do and will have the chance to make a difference. Have a great week at camp.

Where A Kid Can Be A Kid

- Be cool.
- Wear this.
- Do that.
- Don't say that.
- Talk like this.
- This is good, that is bad.
- Sexualized images readily available to pre-teens
- 40 hours a week on average with television, video games, and the internet
- Divorce.
- Both parents averaging more than 40 hours a week of work
- Little time for parents to be with their kids – 2 weeks of vacation is average

Kids have a lot going on in their lives these days. In an effort to be good parents, children sometimes have schedules that require a Palm Pilot – from piano to soccer to swimming to gymnastics to homework to school. Then there are the other kids who do little else but sit in front of a computer or television screen as their childhood melts away in an electric haze. Camp is a place where a kid can just be a kid, as pure as we can make it. In addition to the atmosphere of camp, there are a lot of things kids can do at camp at a relaxed pace just in the spirit of enjoying be a kid. A few examples are:

- go outside at dusk and stay there until it's dark, watching the stars come out
- camp outside
- swim until their skin gets wrinkled
- be without television
- make homemade ice cream where you have to hand crank it
- take a hike by the moon light
- create art or a craft they can be truly proud of
- attend live performances
- sing and not care how they sound or how silly the song is
- let a fuzzy caterpillar crawl on them
- get buried in sand, and build a sand castle
- chalk drawings
- ride a horse
- cook a meal with their own hands over an open fire
- serve their community because they want to, and see the real difference they can make
- roll down a grassy hill until they are so dizzy they can't stand up
- play the games that kids played before electricity was around
- write a letter without a computer
- interact with and learn about insects, reptiles, amphibians, fish, birds, rodents, and mammals
- play huge games with a sea of children and counselors
- stretch their creative muscles, and marvel at and enjoy others doing the same in a playful way
- making their bed, cleaning their areas, doing their dishes, and finding satisfaction and joy in life's normal tasks
- experience adventure with rich plots, deep and close characters, wonderful props, and be right in the middle of the action
- kids (and people) want to grow. At camp, social, emotional, and cognitive growth happen by design and usually through play
- be loved for being a kid, and not for what they like, do, think, or for being overly mature
- get covered in jello, green slime, and leftover oatmeal
- be given choices about whether to participate in things, and be respected for their choices
- in a changing world, have camp as a touchstone of stability and purity

I want to thank you all for being here for the kids . . . for giving of your whole mind, body, and spirit . . . for making a world where a kid can be a kid. You're all heroes. Have a great week at camp.

15 Minutes and Counting

Good morning Camp GoodFit! It is Sunday of Session 2, and we get a whole new batch of kids today! {applause and whoops}
By my watch, their bright, anxious faces will be here in about 15 minutes.
As last time, we'll gather outside and sing them into camp, into our special world just for them.

They will have left a world where:

- They were breathing unhealthy air
- Their food is often filled with hydrogenated oils and unintelligible & unpronounceable unnatural ingredients
- Despite perhaps playing a sport of some sort, they get less than half of the MINIMUM exercise they need daily
- Many of these children go to school where recess has been permanently cancelled
- From 100+ television channels, to violent and sexual video games, to the vast internet, they are exposed to images and content that don't belong in children's heads. Teen magazines are quite toxic as well. They see a lot of media, because children get a weekly dose of about 40 hours on average – the equivalent of a full-time job.
- They left a world where psychotropic medications are overprescribed to children by about 1000%
- In late 2003, Abercrombie & Fitch published a mail-order catalog targeting teens that included naked models and tips for oral sex. This came in the mail, where any child could view and read it.
- They just left a world where ads are in most schools; where the job of most advertising is trying to convince these children that they need things to be happy. It must be working, because children spend about \$128 billion a year, and yet they don't seem incredibly happy – especially without unnecessary things. When you take away their stuff, they are unhappy. That dependency is a recipe for disaster. It doesn't seem to work when they grow up either, as roughly 1/3rd of adults are on some kind of antidepressant.

I don't care what Disney says, THIS is the happiest place on Earth! This is Neverland.

Camp a healthy world – a world truly designed around children's best interests.

Camp is unique – it's not school, not the mall, not home, and not Disney.

- Here, we have the kind of fun that doesn't require electricity – just other people
- Here, kids can learn, and learn to love, some healthy skill/hobby that they can take with them forever
- Here, kids can learn that they can exist without materialism
- Here, kids can be themselves, and be accepted for who they are
- Here, we're all pretty much wearing shorts and t-shirts . . . clothes aren't a competition or social statement
- Here, they can find adults, yes, that's you, who love their jobs and are excited about what they do and who they are
- Here, kids can find adults who are caring, honest, respectful, and responsible. They can trust and feel safe with you.
- Here, we teach the heart and hands, and not just the head. You can actually learn science at camp seamlessly, and love it.

Despite being fun and rewarding, you have not chosen an easy life.

- There is little time off, and there is curfew
- You have to get up EARLY, and your job lasts from dawn until dusk and beyond
- You're asked "Why?" 1000 times a day, you're often tired, and the heat can fry your brain
- A kid might pee in his bed, scream that he wants candy, get in a fight, and give you reason to wonder if you love kids after all
- You'll bond with a kid, only to learn of the less than ideal life she may lead at home, and then you'll send her back there

You are all basically volunteers, as you certainly aren't here for the money. You are here willingly to be servants. You work along side folks from Australia, New Zealand, Germany, England, Canada, Russia, and the United States. You work alongside black, brown, yellow, and pink people. You work next to rich and poor staff, man and woman. Yet, we are all united by the common cause of our mission.

You were all carefully selected and trained to be modern heroes. You must provide a child with one thing—hope. It is your calling to give that child hope wherever they need it. Heroes allow children to have hope for themselves and their future. Heroes keep the glimmer that we see in the eyes of children from fading as they get older.

Here is where we are defending and preserving childhood as it should be. Whether you go on to work with kids or not, this session, which starts in about 3 minutes, is your chance to impact a child in a lasting way.

The parents have trusted you with their most prized possession. Yet, you won't understand that until you have children of your own. They send not only their children, but their prayers for you, so that you will be safe, and keep their kids safe, and return to them a child better off for having been with you.

Stay sharp. Stay focused. Stay safe. Use the training and resources available to you. Trust in your co-workers. God bless us all, and GOD BLESS CAMP GOODFIT!

By my watch, we've got about 2 minutes. LET'S GET OUT THERE AND SING!!!!!!!

Final Staff Gathering Candle Ritual

In essence, this is a ritual that honors the community as a whole, the joys of the group and individuals, and the pains of the group and individuals. It's also good closure.

A few supplies are needed:

- A candle for each person. Candles are hand-dipped bees wax in several soft, somber colors – not white or black. Religious and gift stores can often buy them for you in bulk at extremely reasonable rates.
- Raffia, which is used to tie a message onto each candle – double bows are nice.
- Handmade paper from a specialty shop or truly handmade at camp. Rough texture in natural tones.

This should take place at night. Everyone is gathered in a sacred place. The entrance can be done in a long line with folks circling the sacred space and then everyone taking a seat in a circle. As everyone enters the sacred space, they are given a candle with the note attached. Before everyone enters, they are instructed not to read the note, to remain silent, and to honor the moment (no laughing or giggling or the like). A moderate fire is already going. The fire can be in the center, but if it is behind the ritual leader, that can sometimes work better to aid the darkness that comes later. Complete silence by everyone but the ritual leaders is maintained at all times.

After everyone is seated, some special, somber songs can be sung. Prearranged people can read short poems or letters. It is important to keep the purpose of the ritual in mind and not mix intentions (humorous and the serious) as it can dilute the effect. After these things have been done, the ritual leader makes a small speech about the summer, which summarizes what everyone is thinking and feeling in a sentimental, reflective manner. The struggles and triumphs of the community and individuals (usually not specifically named) is offered as evidence of the growth staff have achieved. Now, the symbolism of the candle and the fire are brought forth. It is explained that the fire already burning represents the light of everyone who has gone before and their collective force, inspiration, and the light they now give off to others they've touched. That fire is the wider community, which everyone around the circle is now a part of. To symbolize joining that community and the summer that just passed, the ritual leader takes his or her candle and lights it from the fire. After the candle is lit, the leader (from memory) recites the following passage/poem.

Like this candle, we have been molded
The heat of (insert camp name) has allowed
Us to change ourselves and others
We have felt burns and questioned our strengths
From the strength of this community
We give and receive light that
Is stronger than our own
We take this warmth and inspiration
And share our vision with others

The ritual leader then passes the flame on to the next person in the circle while repeating the last two lines. The few people next to the ritual leader already know to recite the last two lines, and everyone else picks that up without it having to be explained (very important). The light goes around the circle and the room or area gets brighter – a symbol in itself. There should be a pause after the candle is lit before the flame is passed on so that the candle is really lit - this can be modeled as well. Once all the candles are lit, a full minute should be taken in silence to appreciate the community and the meaning of the light. The ritual leader can preface this time, but it isn't necessary.

Then the ritual leader blows out his or her candle in the direction of the larger fire, which symbolizes adding the individual lights to the community that has gone before. One by one, each person around the circle blows out their candle. The area is now darker and that moment can be appreciated. If there is a symbolic way the camp usually parts company, that tradition can be done. Otherwise, people can be led to file out again, a group hug, a hand squeeze, or some other note of ending. As an addition, it can be explained to everyone that their candles should be lit again on new year's eve and the poem read again. In that way, the community will be whole again in spirit and the memories of camp renewed fresh again.

Banquet Speech

{It's the end of camp. The order of events for the final staff banquet has the director giving the camp his last speech. The initial applause have been given, everyone quiets down quickly, and they are all listening to your final address. Below is a speech that you may find helpful the next time you're in that spot with something wonderful to be said.}

Camp is like Dog Years

Special, protected time, almost like science fiction

Star Trek story: So, there's this Star Trek: The Next Generation episode where Picard is examining this space probe from the bridge of the Enterprise. There are several odd things about it, and then the probe sends a particle beam that hits Picard and he falls to the floor. All the crew's efforts to revive or release him fail, so they just wait. Meanwhile, Picard finds himself in a humanoid, alien civilization, where he learns that he is married, has apparently had a fever that has taken his memory, and that he has lived a full and long life as an upstanding member of the community, where of course everyone knows him as they always have. After several years, Picard begins to finally believe that this is his real life. After a few more years and a lot more to the plot, he is released from this life and he awakens from his trance on the Enterprise. It has only been a matter of minutes on the ship, but Picard has lived more than 30 years of this other life. The episode ends with him playing a flute he learned to play while in this other life – bringing home the reality of the experience he had for decades. Fade to black.

That's kind of what camp and these past months have been like. If you weren't there, you can't imagine what it has been like, and we've been more or less out of touch while in that environment. And, although it has only been a few months, it feels like seven times that many months. When you return to your normal life, you'll know a game or song, and like Picard's flute, it will remind you of your time here, which no one else will be able to understand.

Community

Work hard, work together

Italian Dinner

Work projects

Shared responsibilities

Death and accidents

All camp game

People offer their hands

Norms and values

{communicate the idea that people here share the camp culture and work hard toward it. Include your core values, and your core mission points. Try and read a parent evaluation/letter, or camper evaluation/story about how those things were really impacted at camp, from the horses mouth so to speak}

Mission

Out of doors

Skill/not watching TV

Silly (flag)

Social skills (friends)

Responsibility (chores at home)

Fun (good play)

Influence each other

Shared governance (theme meals, daily schedule, new programs, counselor council, open meetings)

Evaluate each other, and anonymous evaluations

Belong

Camp GoodFit family. "Welcome to the family"

Inviting others out during time off

Feeling comfortable just being here

All of these things are what made us a strong and powerful community. When neighborhoods, suburbs, towns, and cities are so often not good communities – work hard and together, shared norms and values, people influence each other, and people belong – it's great to be here with all of you so that we can teach it to the kids so that they can appreciate it and take it with them, and so that all of us can enjoy its magic and potential.

IT

I was sitting with a bunch of counselors when someone started talking about how people here just get "IT." What is IT?, I said. He said that he couldn't put his finger on it, but that most people in the world don't seem to get it, but that people here did, and it was great to be around people who got IT! We talked about IT for a while, and here's what we came up with.

Don't value makeup and fancy clothes

Not the money

Simple pleasures

Understand what is really important – people

Invested your body, mind, & spirit in children

Invested in each other to create a family

Favorite article – “The unbearable automaticity of being” We travel along without really being in the present. Be mindful.
Beauty – there is much in the place, and in the people {give specific examples}
Gratitude – there is much to be thankful for {give specific examples}
Powerful – you are more powerful than you think {give specific examples of counselor growth and achievement}

Beginning, Middle, End

Star Wars, Matrix, Harry Potter – all these stories have supposed beginnings, middles, and ends, but really, any point is just the middle. The beginnings and ends are little illusions we place on the world. The Harry Potter story could have started when Harry was attacked as a baby. The Matrix could have started during the machine-human war (as Animatrix later did). Star wars started in the “middle” and then picked up at the beginning, which depending on your perspective, is again just a different middle.

Camp has a start and an end – true, but so does each episode of those stories

Camp happened last summer

Listserv and reunions continue it on

Returners carry camp forward

Camp is over like book 3 of Harry Potter – there is more.

The characters change a little bit.

The plot is a little different too

It isn't really the end. Camp has changed everyone here – take that with us forever, into our next middle.

What does the next middle look like? Don't know, but the thrill is in turning the pages

Thank you

English language fails me here.

Save your life or Pass the ketchup and still say “thank you.”

Emotion helps convey, but even that still fails, as it does now. I can't be emotional enough to say thank you enough.

Hard job – you work harder and longer than most jobs people hold in this country

Hopefully, my thanks comes not now, but over the whole summer

My actions and decisions over the summer. I have been your servant. Quite imperfect.

I'm not quite sure what to say, but thank you for giving of your mind, body, and spirit.

Life Changers

Dr. Barnes Boffey & Dr. Christopher Overtree, Originally published in Camping Magazine, Reprinted with permission

Life Changers challenge us to reinvent the boundaries of what we expect about ourselves, what we believe about ourselves, and what we imagine our lives can be.

One of the claims often made by those of us in the camping world is that by spending time at camp, children can significantly change their lives for the better. What we generally imply is that they become more responsible, more creative, more balanced, and more resilient in their ability to live their lives and that they learn to integrate values and beliefs that they may not have access to as clearly in the non-camp world. It is clear that we provide an environment in which campers and counselors grow and change, but it may not be as easy to define how that change takes place or how we ensure that our environment will foster that change. Many of the situations that “change our lives” are the direct result of our interactions with a specific person or group of people who allow us to see both ourselves and the world in different ways. In moments of personal transformation, these people have a powerful impact on our perceptions—they believe in our capacity to be more than we are currently being, and they expand our perception of what is possible in our own lives and in the world.

These people are *Life Changers*. They nurture relationships within which others can grow and explore, and although their personalities may be very different, there seem to be common characteristics or attributes that exemplify people who have such a powerful impact on our thinking.

Life Changes at Camp

Camp professionals can identify these general attributes in many of their staff, but it is the *Life Changers* among them who consistently act in a manner that significantly redefines the boundaries of our expectations. For example, most camp counselors encourage children, providing them with the support they need to try new challenges and to go the extra mile. But counselors who become *Life Changers* surprise children with encouragement that goes beyond what they can imagine and have previously experienced. The significant difference in a *Life Changer* is that they challenge us to reinvent the boundaries of what we expect of ourselves.

What are the fairly common expectations for many of the characteristics that describe most caring and competent camp professionals? What are the significantly different expectations and experiences that *Life Changers* create in their relationships with others?

Love

We expect to be loved when we “behave well” or when we fulfill the expectations placed upon us by others. *Life Changers* love us more than we believe we deserve. In doing so, our own sense of worth and value is redefined, expanding our capacity to be loving, compassionate, and self-accepting. *Life Changers* love us even when we do not love ourselves.

Humor

We expect to experience humor in our lives, most often when things are going well and the mood is light. When things are not going well, our ability to be humorous and playful often suffers quickly and severely. *Life Changers* help us find humor in situations where we would normally succumb to worry, despair, or fear. They understand that humor is an affirmation of the wondrous complexity of life. *Life Changers* teach us the power of humor and how to appreciate the lighter side of even our darkest moments.

Forgiveness

We expect to be forgiven when we earn it by atoning for our mistakes and admitting that we are wrong. Sometimes we have thoughts or actions that we believe are so egregious, that we hide them to avoid judgment. *Life Changers* teach us to forgive ourselves for things we imagine to be unforgivable. They are never concerned with blame and shame, but only in how we convert our mistakes into opportunities for growth. A *Life Changer* understands that consequences may be reasonable, but forgiveness is magical.

Honesty

We expect people to be honest with us, except when they fear hurting our feelings or fear their own severe embarrassment. We come to understand that consistent honesty can be difficult to give and is often compromised when it leads to personal vulnerability. Life Changers tell us the truth when others will not. In doing so, they are able to combine honesty with love. For Life Changers, uncomfortable feedback is always coupled with a sincere offer of help. Life Changers understand that simply telling the truth is a courageous act.

Humility

We expect that people will respond with humility when they have been humbled or even humiliated. Experience teaches us, however, that humility often departs when the remembrance of imperfections grows more distant. Life Changers constantly acknowledge their own imperfections—they are comfortable with their mistakes. They teach with a gentleness that comes from self-acceptance. Life Changers share both their victories and defeats, encouraging us to use their experiences as lessons in our own lives.

Encouragement

We expect encouragement when others believe that what we are attempting is a worthwhile endeavor or when it is obvious that there is a chance of success. Most people look at our actions and encourage us in our “doing.” Life Changers see beyond our actions and encourage us in our “being.” Life Changers always believe in us more than we believe in ourselves. Life Changers believe in us when our own confidence has been shaken. They help us to nurture our dreams—even before we are ready to accept the possibility of achieving them.

Generosity

We expect generosity when we have earned it and from those who can afford to be generous. We understand generosity most when it does not appear to exceed what a person is able to give without experiencing undue hardship. Life Changers generously and repeatedly give of themselves, their resources, and their time without obligation or expectation. For Life Changers, service to others is a guiding principle. They are generous beyond what we expect or can even understand.

Integrity

We expect others to behave with integrity, but we also understand that their willingness to maintain integrity will be weighed against the often-harsh consequences of living truthfully. Experience teaches us that integrity may be compromised for convenience or to avoid unpleasant consequences. Life Changers exemplify in their own behavior a level of integrity, congruency, and constancy that shatters our preconceptions and excuses. Life Changers teach us by simply being who they are, accepting who they are, and demonstrating the qualities they challenge us to embody.

Fostering Life Changers

If our goal as a camp community is to create significant change in the lives of children, then we will need to spend our time helping staff to become Life Changers—to become counselors who will go beyond their own limitations and open themselves to the possibility of a new found personal strength and ability to be of service to children and adults. Perhaps the greatest tool in this training is modeling this concept ourselves as directors and camp leaders. The greatest tribute we can pay to those who have helped shape our lives is to challenge our own fears and expectations—to adopt a way of living that will help others see new possibilities and new horizons.

Your life is a sacred journey



And it is about change growth, discovery, movement, transformation, continuously expanding your vision of what is possible, stretching your soul, learning to see clearly and deeply, listening to your intuition, taking courageous risks, embracing challenges every step of the way

You are on the path

exactly where you are meant to be right now and from here you can only go forward, shaping your life story into a magnificent tale of triumph, of healing, of courage, beauty, wisdom, power, dignity, and LOVE.



Come to the Edge, Life said.

No we can't.

Come to the Edge.

No we're afraid.

But they came. And Life pushed them.

And they flew.

~~ Guillaume Apollinaire

A child's world is fresh and new and beautiful, full of wonder and excitement. It is our misfortune that for most of us that clear-eyed vision, that true instinct for what is beautiful and awe-inspiring, is dimmed and even lost before we reach adulthood. If I had influence with the good fairy who is supposed to preside over the christening of all children, I should ask that its gift to each child in the world be a sense of wonder so indestructible that it would last throughout life, as an unfailing antidote against the boredom and disenchantments of later years, the sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, and the alienation from the sources of our strength.

If a child is to keep alive that inborn sense of wonder without any such gift from the fairies, the child needs the companionship of at least one adult who can share it, rediscovering with the child the joy, excitement and mystery of the world we live in.

Rachel Carson

Always in the big woods when you leave familiar ground and step off alone into a new place there will be, along with the feelings of curiosity and excitement, a little nagging of dread. It is the ancient fear of the Unknown, and it is your first bond with the wilderness you are going into. What you are doing is exploring. You are undertaking the first experience, not of the place, but of yourself in that place. It is an experience of our essential loneliness; for nobody can discover the world for anybody else. It is only after we have discovered it for ourselves that it becomes a common ground and a common bond, and we cease to be alone.

Wendell Berry

If I had but two loaves of bread,
I would sell one
and buy hyacinths,
for they would feed my soul.
The Koran

*Once in a while, you get shown the light in the
strangest of places, if you look at it right.*

Jerry Garcia

Sermons We See

I'd rather see a sermon, than hear one any day
I'd rather one should walk with me, than merely tell the way.
The eye's a better pupil and, more willing than the ear
Fine counsel is confusing, but example's always clear.
And the best of all the preachers, are the one's who live their creeds
For to see good deed in action, is what everybody needs.

I soon can learn to do it, if you'll let me see it done
I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run.
And the lecture you deliver, may be very nice and true
But I'd rather get my lessons, by observing what you do.
For I might misunderstand you, and the high advice you give
But there's no misunderstanding, how you act and how you live.

One good person teaches many, for we believe what we behold.
One deed of kindness noticed, is worth forty that are told.
Who stands with folks of honor, learns to hold his honor dear.
For right living speaks a language, which to everyone is clear.
Though an able speaker charms me, with his eloquence I say.
I'd rather see a sermon, than hear one any day.



Children Learn What They Live

If a child lives with criticism,
He learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility,
He learns to fight.

If a child lives with ridicule,
He learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame,
He learns to feel guilty.

If a child lives with tolerance,
He learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement,
He learns confidence.

If a child lives with praise,
He learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness,
He learns justice.

If a child lives with security,
He learns to have faith.

If a child lives with approval,
He learns to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship,
He learns to find love in the world.

If a child lives with love,
He learns to love.

Originally published in the early 1950's, there is a recent book that flushes out the ideas a little more. Nolte, D. L. (1998). *Children Learn What They Live: Parenting to Inspire Values*. Workman Publishing Company.

The Ten Major Thinking Errors Known As "Cognitive Distortions"

1. All-or-nothing thinking	You see things in black-or-white categories. If a situations falls short of perfect, you see it as a total failure. When a young woman on a diet ate a spoonful of ice cream she told herself. "I've blown my diet completely." This thought upset her so much that she gobbled down an entire quart of ice cream!
2. Overgeneralization	You see a single negative event, such as a romantic rejection or a career reversal, as a never-ending pattern of defeat by using words such as "never" or "always." In response to finding some bird dung on his car, a depressed salesperson exclaimed, "Just my luck! Birds are always crapping on my car."
3. Mental filter	You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively. For example, you give a speech and get many complements and one small critique. You obsess for days on the later remark and ignore all of the positive feedback.
4. Discounting the positive	You reject the positive experiences by insisting they don't count. If you do a good job, you tell yourself that anyone could have done as well.
5. Jumping to Conclusions	You interpret things negatively when there are no facts to support your conclusion. Mind reading: Without checking it out, you conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you. Fortune-telling: You predict that things will turn out badly -- e.g. "I lost my job; I'm going to lose my house." This is also called "catastrophizing.
6. Magnification	You exaggerate the importance of your problems and shortcomings, or you minimize the importance of your desirable qualities.
7. Emotional reasoning	You assume that your negative emotions reflect the way things really are. For example, a person will say, "It feels like this depression will never end; therefore it must be so," or "I'm scared of flying; therefore it must be unsafe."
8. "Should statements"	Instead of accepting things as they are, you tell yourself that they should be the way you hoped or expected them to be – similar to "musts," "ought tos," and "have tos." Many people try to motivate themselves with "shoulds" or "shouldn'ts" which usually leads to a rebellious urge to do the opposite.
9. Labeling	Labeling is an extreme form of all-or-nothing thinking. Instead of saying "I made a mistake," you conclude, "I'm a loser." These are useless abstractions that lead to low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety. You can also label others, calling someone an "S.O.B." when they did something to anger you. This leads to dehumanization.
10. Personalization and blame	Personalization occurs when you hold yourself personally responsible for an event that isn't under your control -- e.g., "it's my fault their canoe hit that submerged rock." Blame holds the other person responsible-"My marriage is bad because my spouse is a jerk." Blame often leads to counter-blame from the other party.

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

Nelson, P. (1994). There's a hole in my sidewalk: The romance of self-discovery. Beyond Words Publishing

I

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in
I am lost . . . I am helpless
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

II

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in the same place,
But it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

III

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in ... it's a habit.
My eyes are open,
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

IV

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

V

I walk down another street.

What Is A Counselor?

Somewhere between adolescence and adulthood there occurs in human development an age which is physically and psychologically impossible. It is that unfathomable stage known as the *camp counselor*, a creature undefined by psychologists, misunderstood by camp directors, worshiped by campers, either admired or doubted by parents, and unheard of by the rest of society.

A camp counselor is a rare combination of doctor, lawyer, indian and chief. She is a competent child psychologist with her sophomore textbook as proof. She is an underpaid babysitter with neither television nor refrigerator. She is a strict disciplinarian with a twinkle in her eye. She is referee, coach, teacher, and advisor. She is an example of humanity in worn out tennis shoes, a sweatshirt two sizes too large, and a hat two sizes too small. She is a humorist in a crisis, a doctor in an emergency, and a song leader, entertainer, and play director. She is an idol with her head in a cloud of woodsmoke and her feet in the mud. She is a comforter under a leaky tarp on a canoe overnight, and a pal who just loaned someone her last pair of dry socks. She is a teacher of the outdoors, knee deep in poison ivy.

A counselor dislikes waiting in line, cabin inspection and rainy days. She is fond of sunbathing, exploring, teaching new games, an old car named Mrs. Beasley, and days off. She is handy for patching up broken friendships, bloody noses, and torn jeans. She is good at locating lost towels at the waterfront, fixing stopped up toilets, making friendship bracelets, and catching fish. She is poor at crawling out of bed on rainy mornings, and remembering to fill out forms.

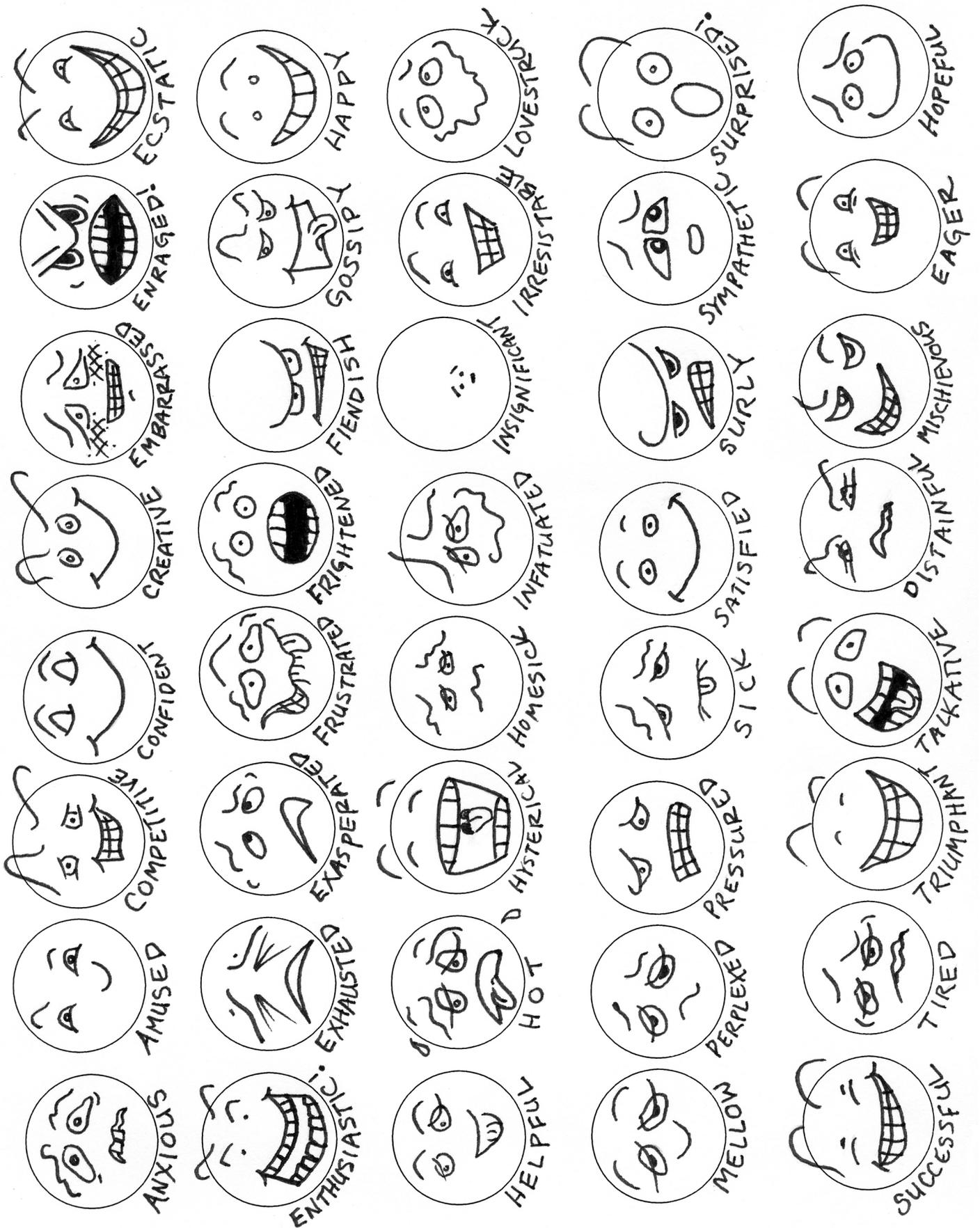
A counselor is a friendly guide in the middle of a cold, dark, wet night on the long winding trail to the TLC. Who but she can cure homesickness, air out wet bedding, play 16 games of 4-square in succession, whistle "Dixie" through her fingers, carry all the cook-out food, speak Pig Latin in Spanish, stand on her hands, sing 37 verses of "You Can't get to Heaven", and eat four helpings of Sunday dinner.

A counselor is expected to repair 10 years of damage to Jill in 10 days, make Julie into a woman, rehabilitate Judy, allow Joan to be an individual and help Gertrude adjust to a group. She is expected to lead the most prized possessions of 16 adults much older than she. She is expected to lead them in fun and adventure, even when her head aches; to teach them to live in the outdoors, even though she spends 9 months a year in the city; to teach them indigenous activities when she can't even spell the word; to guide youngsters in social adjustment, when she hasn't even reached a legal age; to ensure safety and health, with a sunburned nose, a band-aid on her thumb, and a blister on her heel.

For all this she is paid enough to buy the second text in psychology, some aspirin, some new socks, two tires for Mrs. Beasley, and some new tennis shoes. You wonder how she can stand the pace and the pressure. You wonder if she really knows how much she is worth. And somehow, you realize that you can never pay her enough when, as she leaves at the end of the summer, she waves goodbye and says, "See ya next year!"

Phyllis M. Ford

Face emotions



100 years from now, it won't matter how much money was in your bank account, the sort of house you lived in, or the kind of car you drove . . . but the world may be different because you were important in the life of a child.

Keep my words positive:
Keep my behaviors positive:
Keep my habits positive:
Keep my values positive:

Words become my behaviors.
Behaviors become my habits.
Habits become my values.
Values become my destiny.

When you make people wrong, you've lost them.

All behavior is either an expression of love, or a call for it.

The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them

Everyone is making the best choices they are currently capable of making.

Everyone you meet knows something you didn't know, but need to. Learn from them.

Life is like a single letter in the alphabet. It can be meaningless, or it can be part of great meaning.

Be forgiving of yourself and others

USE YOUR WIT TO AMUSE AND NOT TO ABUSE.

Learn to disagree without being disagreeable.

The purpose of criticism is to help, not to humiliate.

If the wrong person preaches a right teaching, even a right teaching becomes wrong. If the right person expounds a wrong teaching, even a wrong teaching becomes right.

WHEN YOU LOSE, DON'T LOSE THE LESSON

A person who has not passed through the inferno of their passions has never overcome them

When someone is angry or hurt, they can turn inward, outward, or cope; those are the options.

Master: Suppose your foot itches. Does it feel better to scratch your bare foot or to scratch the itch through your shoe?
Student: To scratch your bare foot, naturally.
Master: Reading about enlightenment is like scratching an itch through your shoe.

Who here among us can stand to live a fully examined life?

A L L B E H A V I O R I S C O M M U N I C A T I O N

Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

See their souls instead of their behavior

From the Sanskrit:

"Salutation of the Dawn"

Look to this day for it is life, the very life of life.
In its brief course, lie all the verities and realities of your existence:
The bliss of growth, the glory of action, and the splendor of beauty.
For yesterday is but a dream; and tomorrow is only a vision.
But today well lived makes every yesterday a dream of happiness,
and every tomorrow a vision of hope.
Look well, therefore, to this day!

Pain is inevitable, suffering is optional

Letters from parents and campers

Stories are soul food. It's one thing when we tell stories about camp, but it is another when they come from the parents and campers. The panel of parents and campers can work beautifully, but so can an eloquent letter penned with thought and reflection. Camps get these letters every so often. Break open the filing cabinet and sort the letters by outcomes of the camp experience. If a letter fits in more than one, then copy it and stick in both/several folders.

Letters from past summers serve as fodder for staff training and the first little while of camp. When the stories/letters are just wonderful, you'll use them for years. During the summer, try and read as many stories/letters as you can to your staff, and relate the letter back to a camp outcome. If you get a parent phone call, ask if they wouldn't mind sending you a letter, or e-mail, so that you could share their thanks with the staff.

A great camper thank you came in the form of a small photo album. The 10 year old girl got her pictures developed, put lots of the duplicates in a small album, and sent it to the counselor. She annotated the pictures with things she remembered and what she got out of the experience. An accompanying letter expressed her appreciation and thanks for the camp experience, and the counselor. That counselor was on cloud nine for a week, and the rest of the staff could appreciate the camper's words, knowing full well that it is the rare child who goes to such efforts, but that their own efforts are not less valuable.

A particularly well-composed letter appears on the following page, entitled "My Spirit Home."

Dear Everyone at Camp GoodFit,

I just wanted to thank everyone for a great week at camp. Peter was a camper in Cabin Illahee and I was one of the volunteer nurses. I understand Peter's behavior caused some problems and I apologize for the problems. We have been seeing a therapist since his diagnosis of ADHD. We recently found out he has a language impairment and possible central auditory processing problems. Further testing is scheduled later this summer. These new problems may be a contributing factor to some of his behavior problems. Hopefully, after all the test results are compiled, we will have a better idea how to handle his behavior.

Brian and Savannah were both so helpful and professional. I appreciate the extra attention and support they offered Peter and myself. Peter has only good things to say about camp. He liked his counselors and his clinics. He has been talking about camp almost everyday since we got home. I know his feelings about camp had the potential to be just the opposite considering his behavior. Thanks to your efforts, he was able to turn his behavior around and have a positive experience. You are the best!

I would also like to say that Shannon, Jennifer, and Mariah all did a terrific job. I was so impressed with their commitment. I really enjoyed working with them. I have always enjoyed working with the other nurses in the health center, but they are definitely some of the best.

Thank you again for giving me the opportunity to be a volunteer nurse and a really big THANK YOU for everything you did for Peter.

Thank you,

Angela

My Spirit Home

Camper for 8 summers

For my Advanced English Class, I was given the task of describing my "Querencia," which is a Spanish word. Loosely, it means a place one returns to feel safe, strong, and at home. It is, if you will, one's spirit home. What immediately came to mind for me was camp - no question.

When I'm not at camp, I can still sense it with my mind's eye, my heart, and soul. I can almost taste the clean air, feel the peace amongst those tall trees, walk the dusty back trails, and marvel at the magnificent lake. It's a second home - the people are my second family. When I do return, I wait for that moment when I come around the bend in the camp van and can see that lake . . . then I exhale and smile . . . I know I'm home. Before finding this little Nirvana, I didn't feel at home anywhere. Moving from town to town, school to school, my home was wherever I found my feet for the day. I didn't know there could be such a beautiful place that calmed my soul and fed my spirit. When not at camp, even as a memory, it is my strength touchstone that keeps me grounded.

I know. I know that my time at camp can be measured in a few short months. But time isn't really measured by the mechanical click of the second hand. It is metered by our hearts, and my heart tells me that my seconds at camp have added up to a lifetime . . . one which I'll carry with me in my other life outside of camp. At camp, I have grown more than spending countless seconds at home. The counselors are magic, the place stunning, and the community real. Camp is easy to understand when you're there, but it is impossible to explain it to others; it is like trying to scratch your foot through your shoes.

To a visitor, the lake, meadows, and forest are something out of a picture book. They walk away inspired, but also confused because they could just sense the magic of camp, and yet not really feel it. When I'm at camp, I eat more, laugh harder, cry deeply, and smile more broadly than when I am in my normal home. Even when my gray hairs outnumber my black ones, I'll still know this place like I know my mother. I have felt Mother Earth's heartbeat, and found that it beats in time with mine. The changes to my heart made by counselor's who shared theirs are indelible. Camp has breathed its life into me, and enabled me to move confidently and with purpose.

You haven't been to camp, so I realize that sharing my experience must seem odd, and even implausible. How can such a place be? It is my "Querencia," where my spirit is home. I hope you have your own, where you can get what you desire and need, a place where you are and will always be connected. Truth. Grounded. Peace. It's real. It's me. It's home.

Mission Stories From The Staff Who Experienced Them

Throughout staff training, try having one or two 30 minute periods daily dedicated to celebrating and talking about a camp outcome. The benefits of camp should be talked about all the time, but these are just some specific times. Long-winded explanations of the outcome, how it is achieved, and why it is important could easily take the 30 minutes. Instead, 5 – 10 minutes should be spent on those things, and then followed by past staff telling real stories that illustrated the outcome being received. During story time, people would usually get all comfy, and everyone paid rapt attention. No one dozed or was disinterested.

When discussing outcomes before the story, it is helpful to frame it with the goal/outcome, then the problem, followed by the solution, which is how you are going to help be part of achieving that goal to alleviate the problem. Remember the quote by Margaret Mead: “Never doubt that a small group of committed individuals can change the world - indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.”

Although campers were the main focus, sometimes stories relating to counselor outcomes were told as well. Counselors would occasionally tell them, but more often the village leader would “brag on a counselor” and tell the story, with that person’s permission. Another element along these lines was the village leader reading parts of the staff interviews (roughly transcribed during the interview process), or from their written application. Staff were inspired by the sentiments that came from those around them . . . it reinforced the goal, and that the goal was shared.

I’ll use the example of community for camper outcomes.

Goal/Outcome (ask them to fill in more)

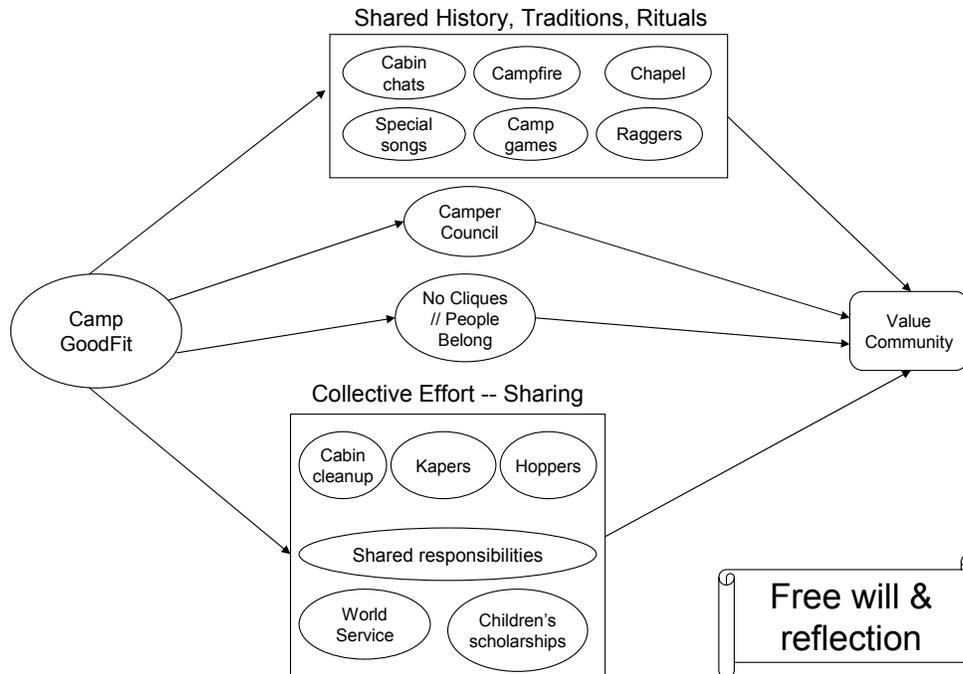
- Shared influence – people vote, neighborhood associations,
- Shared values – care for your neighbor, care for your environment,
- Belong – friendly neighborhood, block parties, wave and say hello,
- Collective effort – community garden, fixing dilapidated areas, watch for crime,

Problem

- How many of you grew up in a neighborhood that had block parties?
- How many of you had a meaningful relationship with your neighbors?
- How many of you would say you had a “neighborhood watch” in effect, even without the signs? I mean where people really looked out for each other?
- How many of you who don’t live in college dorms or communities would say you live in such a place now?
- There is a lack of social capital in this country. People are more likely to stay at home, bowl alone, and generally cocoon themselves up in their homes. People are busier now. People are engaged and entertained with television and the internet and computer games instead of with each other. Maybe that’s one reason emotional intelligence has dropped over the past three decades.
- Take a guess as to how many people vote in this country? It’s about half.
- {Note that camp staff are usually folks who are more community minded, and thus they may have grown up with more community experiences and be more attracted to them now than the average person}

How is the camp going to contribute to that goal to help the problem? (next page)

Community



Kid story – appreciation of community

So, I had this kid in my cabin for four weeks right, and he was from a fairly well off family. Well, this kid was all about him. At home he played video games, surfed the net, and watched tv. At first, he wouldn't make his bed, help clean up, do the camp cleanup tasks or anything. So we talked to him about being in a group, and how our group and he is part of the broader community of camp and stuff. That didn't get us very far and it was a struggle with him all the time. Like all the time. So, after about two weeks right, he went home for the weekend because a relative or someone was visiting and they never got to see this person. Anyway, the kid gets back to camp and the next day he made his bed, did his cabin kaper, and helped clean up the beach. We were floored! That night he wanted to be on the camper council and talk with the director about how camp was going. We couldn't believe it. So we pulled him aside and said, hey, you know this is great and everything, but what happened? How come you're into it now? He said that when he went home he started really missing camp. He said he thought it would be cool if his family cleaned up the house instead of the maid, so he could spend more time with them. He said he really noticed the garden in his neighborhood and the people hanging out together and sharing their food. Then he talked about riding his bike around and that nobody said hi to him. He said he really wanted to come back and hang out with the friends he made here and play around and stuff. It was cool cause we kinda got to see what can happen when a kid goes home from camp.

Bonus Story – Self-confidence & Future sense of self

Kid story – teenager who went through a two-week leadership development program

This kid, he was all like camp is really bad and I'm too cool for this and everything. And, um, you know, we just went through the program and gave him just a little bit of freedom and a little bit of confidence and at the end of the two-week session that we had he said 'I can't wait to get back to school, because the first project that my teacher assigns I'm gonna ask to be on the project with a whole bunch of the dumb kids in class – like the stoners and stuff, cause I'm gonna do all the work instead of picking the smart people.' He said that in the past all the smart people had done all the work for him and he would just sit back. Now he wants all the other kids to sit back while he does all the work. We talked to him about that, but this kid failed his freshman year of high school because he didn't care enough to be there. It was really cool. It was such a complete change, and he had such a good time. That was cool.

Stories of failure, innovation, outcomes, and other stuff the staff share at meetings

The biggest barrier to telling stories at staff meetings seems to be time. Ultimately, that's a question of either structures, priorities, or the cultural norms, but there can be some nice benefits of spinning a yarn with the staff.

Failure

Why celebrate failure? Because it sends the message that people don't have to sweep the failures they do make under the rugs. "The art and science of mistakes" resources will provide an entertaining and useful overview of failure and how to deal with it. There is a difference between good mistakes (best effort, poor result), and bad mistakes (poor effort, poor results). Generally, good mistakes are fun for meetings, and bad mistakes are good for heart to hearts. Even some bad mistakes are opportunities to show the camp has a heart and understands people are not perfect. Below are a few examples of failures to celebrate at the staff meetings.

- ❑ While driving an out-of-camp trip, our canoe instructor drove under a low bridge on the way to an access point. The canoe on the top of the canoe trailer didn't quite fit, and now it resembles an accordion! We've never been to that river before, but now we know! She did go out first without a loaded canoe trailer to scope it out, and of course that was fine. Sarah's not in any trouble . . . we all mistakes, and at least we can laugh about this one.
- ❑ I thought waking all the kids up at midnight for a special party with singing, candy, and dancing would be really fun, but as you all know, it was a total bomb. We had a hard time getting everyone back to bed, some kids were crying because we woke them up, and well, you know all the gory details. Anyway, I'm sorry all that happened, and next time I come up with a bonehead idea, I'm going to try and listen more when a few people offer concerns.
- ❑ So, Brian was sailing out to his cabin's overnight spot across the lake, and the emergency radio ended up in the lake when his sailboat tipped. Those radios are \$300 each, but we know he didn't mean for the radio to sink. Now we know that we should double bag the radio whenever it is on water, so this won't happen again. Thanks for teaching us something Brian!

Innovation

When things stay the same, you get what you've always gotten. That can be a great thing, and indeed we need more of the same than we do something new, but in order for things to get better, change is necessary. When people experiment in the interest of improving something, it's great to celebrate their efforts, even when they don't work out so well.

- ❑ Jennifer gets the "Exalted Order of the Extended Neck Award" (long-necked ceramic piece) this week for her very creative messy Olympics idea. It was so creative and well-planned, but as we all know there were some problems. Some kids threw up while pushing grapes around the tarp covered in ketchup. We were all there. Almost everything went great though, and her spirit, ideas, and execution were fantastic. We've never done anything like that before, and it wouldn't have happened without her great idea. When trying something new, not everything goes perfect the first time, but overall the kids had a blast! Thanks for bringing this great idea to our unit, and we'll use it again next summer!
- ❑ Mark came up with a great idea to help with cabin unity. On the first day, he brought them by the two big trees next to the barn house. As you know, one tree is forked and half of it is dead, while the other half is doing great. The tree right next to it is solid, strong, and provides the most shade of anywhere on camp, which is why everyone hangs out there. He told a story about how the two trees got that way, which I've written up and am passing out now, and then related that story to the cabin group. The basic point was that the cabin group could choose to be a unified group, or divided, and he related all the benefits of being a strong cabin with the strong tree. Beautiful!
- ❑ As you all know, we do camper evaluations every week. Up until now, we didn't have a good way of getting the feedback to you all in a way that you could use it. Well, James came up to me and showed me a sketch of a form we could use that would summarize all the scale and written feedback on one page. I gave you those pages using the new form yesterday, and already some of you have remarked how helpful it has been and how much you enjoyed getting the feedback. All of us, and everyone in all the other units, have James to thank for bringing this innovation to camp!

O u t c o m e s

From the people

During the summer, the camper stories from the past week can be shared. In village meetings, more stories can be told than with the whole staff, and everyone knows the camper being talked about. The unit leader may start out talking about a story or two, but more often the floor is opened up for counselors to share their kid stories. Again, people enjoy setting achievable, high, inspiring goals, and celebrating meeting some of them in small or big ways can provide motivation.

Staff outcomes

Camp gives staff a world of good too. If there's a story that can be shared that fits the bill, share it!

Letters from campers or parents

Larger staff meetings don't always have time to fit everything in. If there's a letter or note that regards a child in a specific unit, have that director read it out loud to everyone in the group.

This example story is not positive, but it is instructive, and it can also stir people to reach for the mission

I heard from Jimmy's parents. Even though Jimmy was in the unit, you don't know him because I changed the name. Actually, his parents were upset because Jimmy said he didn't like camp. I already spoke with his counselors, but I want everyone else to hear this story as well. The story goes like this . . . Jimmy loves art. He paints at home, draws, and he even got some modeling clay for Christmas. He has heard about arts and crafts at camp and was hoping to spend the week in there. When Jimmy meets the other boys in his cabin, he gets a little worried. Three boys already know each other and play on the same soccer team. Another two boys also like soccer. Two of the boys and one counselor are basketball players and one really big kid likes football. The campers are all nice to Jimmy, but because he can sense that such a large majority favor sports, he never voices his desire for an arts and crafts cabin activity for fear of being ignored or mocked. Jimmy thinks that by going along with the group and keeping his mouth shut that he'll have a good time. By the end of the week, Jimmy is sick of playing sports during free time every day. He signed up for arts and crafts as a clinic, but it was mostly girls and he felt that they did girly projects. By Saturday, Jimmy is ready to go home and not come back, even though no one has wronged him. As a counselor, you cannot always make someone willing to talk. However, you can foster open discussion with your cabin by constantly reminding your campers that your cabin is a safe zone and that all opinions matter. Really talking with each camper and doing those daily check-ins really helps. Everyone here makes mistakes, and I might have made the same mistake when I was a counselor, but this story serves as a good reminder to us. We're going to create more choices in arts and crafts. What else could we do? Does anyone else have any stories that we can all learn from?

O t h e r s t u f f

From the podium

In smaller groups, the examples of speeches in this resource can be used as ideas or templates for providing motivation to the group. Especially if the camp is big, these more intimate meetings can really foster a greater connection.

Thank you circles

These are little stories told by lots of people about the good stuff that happens all over, but that not everyone sees. That would be the "laudables" portion, but the "laughables" side of things is also well worth including, while reminding folks to be camp appropriate.

Continuing education story

A little more information about why a given outcome is important serves to focus everyone's attention. People can also share their personal stories outside of camp, about the environment for example. Either way, storyettes that are educational and inspiring are great additions when there is time.

Pop Quiz

- 1: *Who was Times man of the year in 1995?*
- 2: *Who was the richest person in the world in 1990?*
- 3: *Who won the Miss America Pageant in 1995?*
- 4: *Who won the Oscar for best Actress two years ago?*
- 5: *Who won the Pulitzer Prize for literature?*
- 6: *Or how about the Nobel Peace Prize?*

So, how'd you do? You probably left more than a couple answers blank. Don't worry - you're not alone. Few people remember yesterday's news, and that's what these people are. Sure, they're the best and brightest in their fields, the wealthiest, most attractive and most successful. But sooner or later the applause die, the beauty fades, and the awards tarnish. And the wealth? Well, you really can't take it with you.

Now try this quiz:

- 1: *Who was your favorite teacher?*
- 2: *Who was your best friend growing up?*
- 3: *Name a person who has taught you a valuable lesson.*
- 4: *Name a person who has made you feel loved and appreciated.*
- 5: *Name a person whose company you enjoy.*

And for those of us who went to camp as kids, here's the kicker:

- 6: *Who was your favorite camp counselor?*

Bet this one was easier. The people who truly make a difference in our lives are rarely the ones with the biggest names, the most money or the greatest number of accolades.

They're the ones who care.

Four Letters To The Staff

It's getting close. Not long now! Soon, you all will be arriving by car, plane, train, and bus. You'll pass through small Maine towns and tree-lined roads as you venture into the woods. In the book "The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe," the children push through the clothes, pass through some trees, and then find themselves in the magical world of Narnia . . . greeted by a Fawn.

Although this isn't quite Narnia, and I'm not exactly a Fawn, I will be here to welcome you to the magical world of Camp GoodFit. Some people pass this way when camp isn't in session and say it is beautiful for its lake, trees, flora, and fauna. They would be right, but there are still a very many places that fit that description. From national parks to little pieces of natural nirvana, the world is still blessed with powerful beauty.

No, what makes Camp GoodFit truly magical isn't the things or surroundings . . . it's the people. It's you . . . the one reading this right now. You'll bring your unique spark and spirit that will mingle with the many diverse souls here this summer to create a chemistry that will be both fleeting and unique, and everlasting at the same time.

Unfortunately, my talent is not such of the great writers and poets, so I shall not attempt to describe what for me is indescribable. I'll wait and let you experience it. Somewhat like waiting for Christmas to open your presents under the tree, it's better that way. Trust me.

What I can at least try to tell you is a little about what you can expect. During training, you'll play a lot of games, go camping, explore a cave, watch a few videos, do a few camp improvement projects, get trained in some specialty area, experience a full day like the campers, learn about safety and procedures all over camp, be trained in behavior management, hone your emotional intelligence, and much, much more.

You'll experience children (and staff) who make you laugh so hard you'll struggle to breathe. They'll also step on your last nerve, tug at your heart strings, pull a tear from your eye, and force you to grow and stretch more than you thought possible or desirable.

You'll experience a small, tight community, which is a very rare experience indeed in today's world. The joys (shared values and goals, mutual influence, people belong, home) and troubles (rumor mills, we're stuck with each other) that go along with that will be yours to treasure and endure.

At camp, you will have the opportunity to be someone special to a child. If you work it just right, you can improve their self-confidence, provide fond memories, reinforce character values, help a child discover themselves, instill and encourage a respect and awareness of the natural environment, and offer them a skill they may take with them forever. These certainly won't happen automatically – you'll have to work at it.

Camp is one of those places that campers and staff go back to year after year. The reason is quite simple really. It's because people like who they are at camp. People are excited because they go beyond their own expectations, and they like what they gain and give.

I'll be here . . . waiting for you to pass through the wardrobe. I'll give you a hug (it's camp, get used to it), my heartfelt gratitude for being here to fully share your mind, body, and spirit, and my promise that I'll do everything within my power to create a most magical experience for all.

Welcome.

Camp Director

Dear Magical Being,

Yes, you. Webster says to be magical is to possess hidden wisdom, and that's true for you on two levels. For one, I'm quite sure that you have shown children and your fellow staff the magic that exists inside themselves. Maybe you improved their self-confidence, showed them that they can be someone of stronger moral fiber, helped a child discover something special about themselves, or offered them a skill they may take with them forever. You've probably surprised yourself in what you are capable of.

On another level, I know that camp has changed you. That's a fact. You've grown emotionally, learned a bunch of new skills and games, made memories that will be with you and keep a gleam in your eye no matter what life may deal you, had a lot of fun, made friends, learned a lot about kids, become more creative, and lived an active and (mostly) healthy life. What I don't know is the unique way that camp has touched all of you. There is something that happened to you at camp. In a DNA level sort of way, you are different now. Maybe it hasn't quite dawned on you what "it" is yet, but if that's true, you'll find out sooner rather than later.

I've done my imperfect best to create a magical place for everyone. As I said in the very beginning, this place is so many trees, buildings, grassy areas, boats, frogs, and fish. While that's very nice, there are many such nirvanas in the world. The magic here comes from the sharing of our whole beings – mind, body, and spirit, toward the betterment of children and one another. You've brought your unique spark and spirit that has mingled with the many diverse souls here this summer to create a chemistry that has been both fleeting and unique, and everlasting at the same time. Unfortunately, most people don't find a work that includes such a special place with special people working together toward noble ends. If you come back to feed your soul for another summer, then welcome back to the family. If not, then strive to find work that isn't a job.

You've experienced a small, tight community, which is a very rare experience indeed in today's world. The joys (shared values and goals, mutual influence, people belong, home) and troubles (rumor mills, we're stuck with each other) that go along with that have been yours to treasure and endure. Remember the treasures and learn from the trials.

Finally, thank you for all of your efforts! Being at camp is more demanding than most jobs on the planet. You have worked more in a week than most people do in three weeks. Camp time is measured in dog years. You have my respect and admiration. Thank you for being loving and playful. Smiles, laughter, and joyful optimism are the forge of community, relationship, and our own humanity.

Fare the well, and keep in touch.

Love,

Camp Director

Holly cow! Civilization!!!!!!!!!!

Traffic! Buildings! Lots of people! An airplane! 5000 media impressions in about 8 hours! Junk food galore! Sex in the newsstands! People not wearing only shorts and t-shirts! People who don't smell bad almost 24 hours a day! A car I can drive! Freedom! No bears!

Whew! I'm listening to music that doesn't come from 100 people singing badly! Carpet! A soft bed! No mosquito net! A television! A computer which now seems so state of the art it must not even exist yet! A shower I can use for longer than six turns! No taking a shower by flashlight! I can pass a cup any damn way I please! I don't have to practice behavior or crisis management! News about disasters and tragedies on tv! I don't have to sing taps before going to bed! No one is trying to shave my head! I don't have to be anywhere at 7:00 a.m. or really any other time of the day! I can actually get more than a couple hours off per day and have my weekends as well! No peanut butter and apple butter. No thin, worn mattresses on beds that are too small. No wool blankets! The temperature is 74 degrees here – I forgot the earth could be this comfortable! I can see what it feels like not to sweat for 20 hours every day!

No tight community. No strange characters from all over the world. No great friends I would love to spend hours talking to. No kids doing crazy things. No fun gossip. No lake to swim out to the floating dock and play king of the mountain. No more warm fuzzy notes from staff or awesome, creative thank you notes from kids. No one wants to hear my stories any more or listen to me talk about astronomy. No three bites rule to make me try a ton of new foods I never would have otherwise (the supermarket was a whole new experience). No lemon honey butter for syrup. No hearing my name called about 30 times a day. Exercise, instead of living it, I now have to think about doing it. No driving a 15 passenger van full of counselors who are having a great time. I won't be teaching anyone how to light a fire, or what tinder looks like, or how to cook pita pizzas over an open fire, or how to make ice cream the hard way, or play the games drawing the perfect moon or magic towel or black magic, or lash a table together. No all staff powwows. No swimming to the floating dock. No playing with and listening to a group of kids laugh like hyenas. No forgetting yourself and actually being a kid again as a normal part of the week. No kid powwows and listening to them tell of the growth they've experienced or your actions they've appreciated.

Yes, camp is quite the place. It can suck so bad that you just want to scream at certain people, the kids, the place, and, sometimes, even yourself. It can also be so great that it will be a source of fantastic memories for years to come, which won't be realized for some time yet to come. It can be so great that it changed your life, if you're smart enough to let it, and wise enough to apply it.

Yup, I'm back.

Love to you all. Talk to you soon.
[Reader, insert your name here]

Dear Everyone,

It has been an absolute pleasure working for you all this summer! No day was boring, and some of you made more sure of that than others! Thanks, I think.

I am honored to witness such amazing people give it their all as they try to improve the life of a child. During the summer, I was also reminded how great it is to work at a camp amongst so many new friends, some of whom will be kept for a long time. My two closest friends were met at camp when I was a counselor. My life's mate was also a counselor at camp. The memories that you have from this summer will be more precious to you than you might imagine – even the bad ones. You were stretched through the hardships and disagreements, marveled at the creativity of everyone around you, wallowed in the beauty of this place, and grew to love each other and this camp.

I hope you were able to make progress on the goals you set for yourself before the summer started. Many of you have come up to me and told me how much this summer has meant. Some of you have changed your major, decided you wanted kids after all, decided you didn't want kids, and learned that "Hey, watch this!" usually meant something bad was about to happen. Hopefully you'll look back on this summer and say, "Man, that was awesome!"

English and communication were definitely not my majors, but I just wanted to say that life is a long journey, a book if you will. This summer was but a chapter in your life, and probably a long one! I hope you kept a journal this summer, or if not, that you'll write your thoughts up after you get home. It makes for great reading down the line when the photographs, video, yearbook, and letters are all that you have to kindle our so fallible memories. I know that I'll look back on this summer as one of the best in my life, and I want to thank you all for making that possible and making this camp such a wonderful place and family.

I hope you have a great year at school, and I hope you'll be back for another round of learning to love and changing the world.

Campingly yours,

Camp Director

"There are things that are known, and things that are unknown, and everything in between are the doors." Jim Morrison

Top 10 reasons to work at Camp GoodFit

1. Not a job, a home
People who “work” here are paid well (often netting more than working in the city and paying expenses), but it isn’t about the money. It’s about people – being with them as they play, laugh, learn, struggle, and grow. You’ll live with your fellow staff, and they’ll become your second family.
2. Interested in your personal and professional growth
 - a. Skill enhancement often reported: organization, motivating others, problem solving, leadership, emotional intelligence, prioritizing, decision making, risk management, working with groups, behavior management, project management, first aid, CPR, life guarding, teambuilding, responsibility, self-confidence, child development, skill integration, and knowledge of more games and activities than you thought existed.
 - b. Self-definition / career selection: it is common for staff to say they’ve learned more about themselves in three months than in several years before being here. It is also common for people to change their major/life course after experiencing a summer working at Camp GoodFit. Will this job change your life? Probably. “I think my experience influenced me more than any other job I’ve ever had – had more of an impact than I think any job could have had.”
 - c. Receive over 90 hours of paid training, plus on-going training with supervisors who have the time and ability to help you develop the skills you need for your personal and professional development.
3. Friends you’ll keep for life
Fast and deep friendships are made living and working with your teammates. People often keep in contact for years, and our alumni are a testament to friendships kept for decades. Also, more than a few have found their life’s mate working at Camp GoodFit.
4. Connection with children
Working so closely with children, it is inevitable that you’ll form bonds. You’ll also be instrumental in the development of children. Help foster self-confidence, independence, life-long recreational skills, safe risk taking, an appreciation for community, a healthy lifestyle, caring, honesty, respect, responsibility, environmental awareness, and fun!
5. Memories
Your photo album will be full of pictures that you will treasure for the rest of your life. You will also make memories for others. You will have the opportunity to make friends with people from other countries.
6. Fun!
The time of your life? Well, comments such as those are frequently shared at the end of summer staff banquet, in letters received after the summer, and on the community e-mail listserv.
7. Work and play in a real community
Work with staff from around the world, and children from all walks of life. You’ll be with high-quality staff who survived a rigorous selection process and share the same values. Your suggestions are heard, discussed, and often used. Everyone evaluates each other – it isn’t just from the top down. *Be yourself and be accepted.* People pitch in and share the load. People belong.
8. Healthy living
The days are quite long, the activities are often rigorous, and you’ll sleep well, eat well, and get plenty of exercise!
9. Beautiful
Camp GoodFit sits on a stunning, pristine xxx acre lake. There are also spring-fed trout ponds, miles of hiking trails, nature that sometimes gets too close for comfort, and the smoke of campfires among xxxx acres in the xxxx National Forest. On a clear night, our view of the heavens is simply breathtaking.
10. Creativity
You’ll find that your work offers both an outlet and a challenge to your creativity. Seeing your fellow staff be crazy and innovative adds fuel to the creative fire that amazes us all every year!

Visit our website for more information!

Staff Video

Example content from a staff video

Opening

15 seconds of slideshow with music
Welcome from the director

What You'll Learn

- Camp nutshellled
 - Camp is tough – tired, sunburned, frustrated
 - Time of your life, meet great friends, story of person who changed
 - Interact with all kinds of kids, learn more about yourself, influence kids
 - Crazy things that happen at camp, special things you can do with your cabin
 - Creativity and innovation – your imagination is the limit
- Kid stories
 - Outcome story 1 – self-confidence
 - Outcome story 2 – social skills
 - Camp is home for kids – story
 - Outcome story 3 -- Getting over homesickness
 - Mission talk from director – kids can be themselves at camp
 - Outcome story 4 – extroversion
- It's about the kids
 - We are the kids' servants – their best interests in mind all the time
 - Stressful stuff happens, but when kids are first, just makes it more worthwhile.
 - Draw your happiness from the kids, or it is a tough summer
 - Everything you do, that child can take to heart
- It's about the staff too
 - You look out for everyone else, and they look out for you
 - Develop yourself – confidence, patience
 - Changed her life – became more unselfish, learn about kids, made such great friends, creativity
 - Quiet person – you'll be covered in pudding, singing, be on stage, and love it all
 - Shaped me as a person – outgoing, play sports, do better in school, don't watch tv, expanded life options
 - You can be yourself, and be accepted – you can be real, and everyone can care for everyone else
- The hard life
 - Time off? What time off?
 - Curfew
 - Time crunch – never seems to be enough time to get everything done
 - 24 hour a day job – not enough time to yourself, but responsibility grows you
 - HOT! Some days it is too hot to breathe
 - Get up early – not like college!
 - Tired and often don't get enough sleep
 - Crowded into small space with 10 kids and another counselor
 - Get asked why over and over again, be at the end of your rope, then a kid will give you a big hug and be worth it all
 - Gossip and being too social with the staff, and not staying focused on the kids
 - Kid peed in bed, screaming they want candy, two kids are fighting, and you say, "Oh my God, I no longer love kids!"
 - You are always a role model – you can't just act anyway you want.
 - Kid problems at home, they grow on you, bond, and then have to send them back to a poor environment
 - Team effort – lean on people, don't try and do it all yourself, sit back, and enjoy the ride!
- Wrapping up
 - You're not going to understand it until you get here. You have to see it for yourself
 - Do it for the kids and the experience . . . get back to school, tell your friends, and they'll say you had a great summer
 - Time of your life – so many new memories, friends, camp is one of the most wonderful places in the world
 - Go for it – million reasons not to do it (food, heat, stress, pay, lodging), but just say yes and do it anyway

Closing

15 seconds of slideshow with music
Closing from the director

One-page Assessment of Fit

Do you have the right stuff?

Camp isn't for everyone. You have to put your needs behind the children's and the camp's, and that isn't something everyone is able to do, or able to be happy doing. Although people often leave camp with as much money as if they worked another job and paid their own expenses, you should not take this job for the money, because the money isn't why great staff come here. You must be dedicated, have an open heart and mind, be very patient, and demonstrate an uncommon degree of responsibility in everything you do. Caring, Honesty, Respect, and Responsibility should all speak well to your soul. Our campers and staff come from many countries and backgrounds, and we believe that diversity is a strength.

If being with kids 22 hours a day, 6 days a week doesn't excite you, this probably isn't the right experience. We expect you to pace yourself, know when you need sleep, and work as consistently at the end of the summer as in the beginning. We expect you to be a very good big brother or sister while mixing parental responsibility with the compassion of a best friend.

During the summer, you might get jello dumped on your head, get thrown in the lake, dress up like Mary Poppins or a fierce aboriginal, comfort a homesick child, put cream on poison ivy, work with distressed children, share in contagious laughter, and sleep under the stars every week after cooking an amazing meal in Dutch Ovens.

As a professional role model for impressionable children, smoking isn't really possible. Smoking is hazardous to our campers' health and we don't want a camper to learn that smoking is "cool" from his or her counselor. Alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs are prohibited at Camp GoodFit. Any person possessing alcoholic beverages or drugs, or returning to camp under the influence of alcoholic beverages or drugs, will be immediately dismissed. We have an obligation to keep our campers safe. People under the influence of alcohol and other drugs make poor decisions and place campers at risk.

Popular is often defined by what you wear, what you know, and what you do. With the most overweight nation of children in the world, record child mental illness, and the sexualization of children and adolescents, we believe that it is difficult for children to be and love their true selves. Brittany Spears, Pokemon, Aeropostale, Abercrombie, sitcoms, Teen Magazine, and some hit television dramas have morphed the innocence and potential of childhood into something quite different. We believe that at camp, children should stop thinking about what they wear, what it takes to be cool, and growing up too fast. They should think about canoeing, roasting marshmallows, appreciating community, enjoying true friendships, singing, wondering at the stars, and communing with nature. Thus, we leave popular culture at the door. We believe that imagination is a precious gift to be protected and not trampled by intense media bombardment.

We believe that campers should do their best work whenever possible, and not engage in something half-heartedly. Campers should take pride in their work. The arrow should fly true, the art should be artful, the drama well-rehearsed, and the dining decorum playful, yet reverent.

We believe that children learn best when they discover truths for themselves. Children should explore, create, and challenge. Feeding children answers and giving them facts deadens their thirst and hunger for what is true and possible. Play is a tool for learning, and not something given so many minutes during the day. Through play, children learn social skills, their passions, and their potential.

If after reading through our website and watching the videos you're excited to be at Camp GoodFit, then we will be absolutely ecstatic to talk to you! Please give us a ring, drop by, or e-mail. We'll make the hot chocolate with marshmallows.

Modern Day Hero

What did people say when you told them that you were going to work at camp this summer? Did they laugh? Tell you to get a real job? Ask if you'd seen the movie *Meatballs* one too many times? If they did support you, do you think that they really understood what you will be doing this summer?

If this is your first summer at camp, you may not be aware what you are really doing here. Even after a summer or two, the full scope of what we do may not be totally evident. Whether you really understand it or not though, you have assumed a position of tremendous responsibility. Camp is obviously a place where both you and the campers have fun, but we're playing for higher stakes here than simply showing the kids a good time.

In short, your mission this summer is to be a hero. Not a superhero, because those don't exist in real life. Real heroes usually aren't on the news or in *People* magazine. Real heroes don't care about fame, fortune, or a place in history. Real heroes are just that—real, ordinary people that have an extraordinary effect on the lives of other people. The motivation of a hero is nothing more than the simple fact that being a hero is the right thing to do.

Children need heroes. However, many people think that children need heroes so that they "know what they want to be when they grow up" or "have someone to look up to." While those things are important, that's not the role of a hero.

To be a hero, you must provide a child with one thing—hope. It is your calling to give that child hope wherever they need it. Maybe they've had bad experiences with adults. You show them that adults are not all bad. Maybe people laugh at their dreams. You teach them that it isn't only ok to dream, but essential. Maybe they come from a broken home. We show them, through our Camp GoodFit family, that families can be a positive experience. Maybe they've never really been loved. By caring for them in the proper manner while they stay here, you give them the hope that love is more than just an idea, but rather something real they can experience. Heroes allow children to have hope for themselves and their future. Heroes keep the glimmer that we see in the eyes of children from fading as they get older.

Just being here doesn't make you a hero. It does give you the opportunity to become one. You have a choice to make this summer. There are a lot of distractions here at camp. Will you choose to be remembered forever as a hero in the eyes of your children?

Quotes from Staff

“I am so psyched about coming back. My friends are tired of hearing about it but I never get tired of talking about it. Camp was the most life changing experience I’ve ever had and I just can’t wait for next year. I didn’t realize just how lucky I had been until I got home. A lot of my friends went to various camps all over America this summer and did not have that great a time. They listened to me talkin’ about my experiences and were amazed. Camp GoodFit is a truly amazing place and it’s strange how I can be on the other side of the world and feel at home. But anyways, like a wise man once said, explaining camp to people who have never been is like trying to explain basketball to a jelly fish.”

“I got the chance to work with all these different people that I never would have had the chance to meet outside of camp. The friendships and memories I made at Camp GoodFit are unlike any I’ve ever had. The bond people form at camp is strong and unbreakable. Camp is the safest and happiest place I can think of.”

“I miss camp more than I thought I would and can't wait to go visit those of you who are still around this weekend . . . I can't believe I am driving 8 hours again already--I must be crazy! :-) It's that camp effect.”

“Whenever I talk to someone new for more than five minutes I end up explaining, well, I worked at this summer camp this past summer.... And yeah, they don’t get it.”

“It's good to be back here [home] . . . but the real world stinks! I miss all of you so much and it just seems that NOBODY understands what I'm talking about!”

“I miss you guys more every day than I thought I could miss a group of people that I have only known for 11 weeks. Ah, that’s camp.”

“life isn't camp.....only sometimes I wish it were.”

“I just can’t thank you enough for everything you did for me this summer. You helped me when I was down, and cheered me when I was up. I grew so much this summer, and I can’t imagine what my life would have been like if I hadn’t experienced Camp GoodFit.”

“I can’t tell you how surprised I was about how hard it was leaving camp . . . it was so hard to finally leave! One major reason is that people got to know me for who I really am, and not a facade that I sometimes wear other places. Camp GoodFit is just awesome, and I’ll be back . . . how could I not?”

“Camp time is like dog year time. Every day is like living 7 days, every month is like living 7 months. That’s the only way to explain how so much can happen in such a short time with the development of the kids and myself.”

“Camp impacted my life to the point that I’ve had to rethink what I stand for every day now. I had and used the opportunity to impact 30 kids in a way that I believe makes the most difference in life. I got to show those kids freedom, what it means to have it, and the responsibility that comes with it. It makes me think about every choice I make . . . and how each choice changes who I am as a person. I’ve been able to shape my life based on the message I tried to teach last summer.”

“I could write a book about how camp changed my life. Camp was so much fun I find myself talking about camp all the time. I also lost weight, gained self-confidence, and became a better leader.”

“It always surprises me how much impact three months of camp has over me than the rest of the year which is three times as long. My confidence has increased and . . . I have a better perspective on what’s important.”

“The first thing I did when I got home was start saving to come back. This summer changed me on many different levels. I was at a point before summer where I was discontented and I was waiting for something to happen. And camp was it.”

A Process for Personal Growth (Performance Standards)

Counselor's Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Unit Director's Name: _____ **Early-summer** _____ **Final** _____

Don't Know	Disagree // Unacceptable		Agree // Satisfactory			Certainly Agree // Excellent			Strongly Agree // Outstanding	
N	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

	C	UD
Camper relationships		
1. Makes each camper feel special, and treats each camper with equal attention and caring	—	—
2. Demonstrates real interest in campers by being with his/her campers, being friendly, engaging them in conversation, noticing campers with difficulties, knowing their program, and listening	—	—
3. Is positive, playful, fun, and involved with campers	—	—
4. Uses positive, Level I behavior management techniques when appropriate	—	—
5. Never uses the punishment, guilt, or buddy methods of behavior management. Uses "Success Counselor" method first.	—	—
6. Works to create a level of cohesion and spirit within the unit.	—	—
Cabin management		
1. Camper hygiene and personal care is maintained (showers, clean clothing, brush teeth, tics, bites, allergies, injuries, balanced meals, medications, etc.)	—	—
2. Campers know their program and are on time	—	—
3. Parent letters are managed continuously, so that they aren't a last minute effort	—	—
Communication		
1. Communication between co-counselors happens regularly and efficiently	—	—
2. Co-counselor relationships are managed in an emotionally intelligent manner	—	—
3. Unit directors, Assistant Director, and/or Director are notified when significant problems occur (asks for help)	—	—
4. Suggestions about how things could run better are offered at least once a week (5)	—	—
5. Counselor expresses dissent (not swallowed) quietly, thoughtfully, with respect, and never with campers	—	—
Personal management		
1. Follows camp rules and expectations (e.g., cleanliness, punctuality, language, safe touch, curfew, attire, etc.)	—	—
2. Understands the mission of the camp and how the outcomes are achieved (as well as his/her specific role in such)	—	—
3. Safety and sound judgment are exercised in dealing with campers, staff, oneself, and equipment	—	—
4. Works personal and professional feedback into future efforts	—	—
5. Displays humor / positive attitude in response to stress or change	—	—
6. Good mistakes – best effort, inferior result – are frequently made (this is a positive thing)	—	—
7. The counselor learns from his/her mistakes	—	—

Activities		
1. <u>Cabin activities</u> are well-planned and executed	___	___
2. <u>Unit activities</u> are fully participated in with outcomes in mind	___	___
3. <u>Evening Embers</u> are done in meaningful manner	___	___
4. <u>Bedtime</u> is both orderly and fun	___	___
5. At <u>smorgasbord</u> , counselor is on time, enthusiastic, and provides a quality experience	___	___
6. Counselor is actively engaged in <u>siesta</u> to make it orderly and enjoyable	___	___
7. At <u>meals</u> , counselor facilitates conversation and plays games	___	___
8. The <u>morning wake up</u> and <u>cabin cleaning</u> process happens smoothly and enjoyably	___	___
9. Counselor is creative and enthusiastic about <u>shared responsibilities</u> (community service)	___	___
10. Counselor <u>sings</u> heart and body at flag, meals, campfire, and other times	___	___
11. Makes good use of <u>idle times</u> with games and conversation	___	___
12. Fully participates in <u>campfires</u> , and does everything possible to involve campers	___	___
13. <u>Overnights</u> are well planned and executed in line with all intentions of the program	___	___
Above and beyond		
1. Counselor shows initiative – takes charge and does things without being asked	___	___
2. Creative / Innovative – e.g., new activities, highly decorated cabin, unique problem solving	___	___
3. Aids other staff when time and need arise	___	___
Counselor Goals (personal and professional)		
1.	___	___
2.	___	___
3.	___	___
4.	___	___
Overall performance		

Circle One			
Is extremely happy to be at Camp GoodFit.	No	Sorta	Yes
Has ever exhibited any termite qualities	No	Yes	
Clean communication with counselors <i>and administration</i> . No whining without communication.	No	Yes	

Please offer specific examples that illustrate areas for development

Include how the effect of selection, training, the camp environment, limited resources, supervisors, co-workers, campers, or other situational and people factors might have contributed to this person's weaker performance areas.

Please offer specific examples that illustrate areas of strengths

What can your unit director do to help you? Is there anything your UD is doing that hinders your performance?

Overall / Other comments (goals for the future)

{{NOTE: Such an evaluation form would need an accompanying reference that provided behavioral examples for items so that various scale points could be meaningfully distinguished from one another. Such a reference would be overwhelming to someone who is just working on being hired/selecting a camp.}}

Sample Counselor Week At A Glance

	Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
7am	Day off continued ↓	Wake up & Clean up	Wake up & Clean up	Wake up & Clean up	Wake up & Clean up	Wake up & Clean up	Wake up & Clean up
8am		Flag raising Breakfast	Flag raising Breakfast	Flag raising Breakfast	Flag raising Breakfast	Flag raising Breakfast	Flag raising Breakfast
9am		First clinic	First clinic	First clinic	First clinic	First clinic	Bus leaves Parents arrive
10am	Optional brunch	Second clinic	Second clinic	Second clinic	Second clinic	Second clinic	
11am	Staff meeting	Cabin activity	Cabin activity	Cabin activity	Cabin activity	Cabin activity	Staff meeting
12pm	Prepare for kids	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Day off begins Optional lunch
1pm	Kids start arriving Settle in cabin Make kids at home	Siesta	Siesta	Siesta	Siesta	Siesta	↓
2pm	Play games Cabin contract	Smorgasbord	Smorgasbord	Smorgasbord	Smorgasbord	Smorgasbord	
3pm	Explain clinics Sw im tests	Trading post	Trading post	Trading post	Trading post	Trading post	
4pm	Tour camp Pick cabin acts	Third clinic	Third clinic	Third clinic	Third clinic	Third clinic	
5pm	Activity sign up	Fourth clinic	Fourth clinic	Fourth clinic	Fourth clinic	Fourth clinic	
6pm	Welcome to camp Talk and songs Dinner	Reflections Dinner	Cabin Overnight ↓	Shared Respon. Dinner	Reflections Off for evening ↓	Shared Respon. Dinner	
7pm	Unit meeting	Prep WSC		Unit activity		Unit and cabin time	
8pm	Opening campfire	World Service Carnival				Closing campfire	
9pm	Back to cabins Evening embers	Back to cabins		Back to cabins			
10pm	Lights out main Lights out teen	↓	↓	Evening embers Lights out main	↓	Evening embers Lights out main	
11pm	All staff are on and need to sleep			Lights out teen Staff w ho are on sleep !		Teen candle light ceremony Lights out teen Staff w rite parent letters	↓
12am							

Expectations / Clarification Review

“The Same Page” You always hear people saying that “We all need to be on the same page.” Well, this is that page. ☺ Actually, it is just one of those pages. Please initial each expectation, and sign the back of this page. This will help make sure everyone is pulling in the same direction, and that they are happy to be pulling.

Expectation / Clarification	Initials
Once a week, your cabin will go on an overnight. That means you will cook dinner and breakfast (we’ll teach you) at the campsite, educate the campers about the environment and camping, and do other educational and fun activities. There are no tents, so everyone will sleep on a tarp in the woods, next to the lake. We’ll teach you what you need to know.	_____
No jam boxes or other music playing devices are allowed in the cabins. We believe that campers should listen to each other, nature, and make their own music (sing, instruments, etc.) for the brief time that they are here.	_____
Great counselors get enough sleep. When you are not off at night, we expect that you will go to bed with your campers. When you are off at night, we expect that you’ll sign in at midnight, and that you’ll be back in your cabin, asleep, by 12:30am.	_____
Intoxication on camp property is the equivalent of turning in your resignation.	_____
You have the right to be treated with dignity, honesty, and compassion at all times.	_____
The campers sing at morning flag, campfires, graces at meals, and at other times. We expect that you will sing your heart out enthusiastically.	_____
We expect that you will spend the summer with your given co-counselor. You’ll need to work out personal and professional differences if there are any. Many people find a life-time friend in their co-counselor, and we hope that will be the case for you.	_____
You’ll have about an hour off everyday, and sometimes 2 or 3 three hours. You can go to a local convenience store on an hour off, but there isn’t enough time to reasonably go anywhere else. Once a week, you’ll have one 6 hour night off. You’ll have one day off per week, which might be 23 hours depending on the length of staff meetings. When you leave site, we expect you to sign in and out.	_____
Although there is some variation, you will be teaching 1 clinic, 4 hours a day, for 9 weeks. We need competent clinic instructors that can improve what they are doing over the summer, and enjoy that challenge. There won’t be much switching, especially for clinic directors.	_____
Almost every week, you’ll find yourself down at the Ranch and possibly riding a horse with your cabin. You’ll also likely go through one of our two caves – one appropriately called “Mud Cave.” Enjoy!	_____
We try and train at least half the staff to be lifeguards, so that people can alternate that responsibility. Even if you are not a lifeguard, we will need you to be a “spotter” at times, which means you stand on our swimming dock and help keep the children safe and accounted for.	_____
It will get hot and uncomfortable and you’ll be expected to be positive, enthusiastic, and energetic when you’re tired, sweaty, and dirty.	_____
You will have one person for every 10 counselors that is there to help you with whatever you need. You are not alone in anything you do. We are all here for each other. We are all here to help the children and each other.	_____

O V E R

We work hard to earn your trust. If you feel we are falling short of the mark in being credible, being open with communication, treating everyone with respect, and being fair, please bring it to our attention. We have every intention of being all those things, and we need your help when we make mistakes.	_____
We have three computers for 100 people to check e-mail, so your access to the internet will be limited. We have 3 pay phones close by, and several more about a 7 minute walk away. Children can't call home.	_____
Your hair must stay a consistent color and style within a session. Hair colors must be found in normal human nature – nothing unusual or unnatural.	_____
We are role models for children, so smoking really isn't a possibility. There are a couple places to smoke, but they are out of the way, and not available very often because of your schedule.	_____
The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry. At camp, despite our best efforts, things aren't always going to go as planned. When that happens, don't always assume we know. When we do know, understand that we do try and fix the problem.	_____
Because we are on a lake, and we can't always see the bottom, we must be able to physically search our entire swimming area within 4 minutes. During staff training, we will be calling surprise swim drills (which we will teach you), and we'll call them until we complete the search within 4 minutes. This isn't going to be a barrel of monkeys, but we must be able to save a life when called upon to do it – hopefully never.	_____
When children arrive via the bus, we must have staff on the buses to supervise the children and help with check in and out. The only way to do that is to have some counselors ride the bus to and from camp. Via a lottery, some counselors will be chosen to do that. When campers are traveling to camp, counselors leave camp at 7:30am on Sunday, help with check in, and then ride back with the campers. When campers are traveling from camp, counselors ride up on the bus and help with check out. If they want, they can ride back to camp in a van, or just stay in the city.	_____
There is a "Passion Pot" available to the staff. It is a sum of money set aside for passionate ideas that would contribute significantly to the camp. A panel of counselors will review proposals and vote on whether or not to fund the idea.	_____
Punishment (unrelated consequences) and guilt can never be used as a means of controlling people. Getting children to behave just because they like you or you are their buddy is not acceptable either. We'll teach you a better way to manage behavior that preserves dignity, helps educate, and empowers people.	_____
We expect people to "communicate cleanly." In other words, if you have a problem with someone, it is your responsibility to talk directly with them about it. If you have a problem with the camp or a policy, we expect you to talk to the directors about it. This is important to the health of the community.	_____
At the end of the session, counselors finish writing "Parent Letters." These are short, one-page forms that describes the camper, and their week. If left all until the end to finish, this can make for a late night at the end of a session.	_____
Cabin cleanliness is important. The cabin needs to be cleaned every morning with the children as whole. It teaches children responsibility and cabin pride. Counselors must model cleanliness by keeping their area extra-super clean.	_____
Please understand that the directors will not have as much time as they would like to talk to all the staff, or participate in as much programming as they would like. A one-hour chat with everyone would take over a week. BUT, they ALWAYS have time to talk to people who want to talk, and they do their best to visit with everyone, and play as much as possible.	_____
We appreciate intelligent mistakes, and value people's ability to fail forward. We encourage carefully planned experimentation even if it might result in failure.	_____

Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Bonus Section: 10 Great Ways to De-motivate Your Staff

The reason this section is called “de-motivate your staff,” is because for the most part doing these things will decrease motivation, but not having them won’t increase motivation. Motivation – de-motivation are not along a continuum. For example, we all need food and water, but after we have those things, having more of them isn’t going to make us happier. To offer another analogy, de-motivating elements can add balls and chains to people, but not having them just means you don’t have any balls and chains. Nonetheless, it is important not to de-motivate our staff!

The careful reader will note corollaries between some of these elements and other areas of the book. For example, a camp culture founded on trust is unlikely to have a director focused on power, or who uses inhumane discipline. Similarly, an empowered camp is unlikely to have leaders who don’t vary their leadership style. It is hoped that by showing people the other, darker side of the mirror, a new and perhaps more full perspective might be gained while looking back at the light side.

1. Firing Staff Inhumanely and Unjustly (in their eyes, not yours)
2. Allow Termites, Negative Leaders, and Poor Performers To Go Unchecked Immediately
3. Inhumane Discipline
4. Being a Jerk / Ego / Hubris / Greed
5. Don’t Vary Your Leadership Style
6. Personnel Policies
7. Gossip and Politics
8. Disorganization
9. Ask People To Do Things You Wouldn’t Do
10. Do Someone Else’s Job For Them

One

Firing Staff Inhumanely and Unjustly (in their eyes, not yours)

Unfortunately, it is sometimes necessary to dismiss someone from camp. Despite best efforts, not everyone works out. Baring who might be dating whom, a dismissal is possibly the fastest gossip at camp. Who, when, where, how, and why are rifled off like firecrackers around camp. The culture of the camp will determine what the general reaction is going to be, but the more subtle reactions can be managed by following some principles.

- ❑ **WHO.** How popular is/was the person, and how central were they to camp? Canning the cute alpha-male is usually going to be quite different than someone who worked obscurely in the kitchen. Of course, this is irrelevant to the offense and the corresponding action, but it does help inform who needs to know about it first. For example, when firing the boyfriend, it would be wise to get the girlfriend and her best, supportive friend, so that you know if more than one person is leaving, and the girlfriend can be first to have all her questions asked and answered. Her friend is for support. If someone had friends, telling the people closest to that person first is a good idea, but of course telling everyone at the same time is even better.
- ❑ **WHEN.** The person should have some time to collect themselves if they are distraught. Depending on the nature of the offense (e.g., drugs versus a steady performance issue), waiting for a break in sessions, or when it is least disruptive to the campers, would be best.
- ❑ **WHERE.** Not in front of other campers or staff. Although an office offers privacy, it is also formal, and possibly threatening. An office also tends to be near the center of camp. Nature can be soothing and secluded, if that's an option.
- ❑ **HOW & WHY.** These are taken together, as why the person is being dismissed often influences how they will be dismissed. The most common approach to how is the "quick, quiet exit." The person is told in private, and their things are gathered, or they gather them in private, escorted. Usually within an hour, they are off property, having not seen a soul between being fired and being gone. The rest of the staff are then told as soon as possible by the director with time for questions. If the dismissal is going to be quite disruptive, then this method is unfortunately called for. Ideally, the person being dismissed will offer their resignation as a result of a conversation that leads the person to offer it as part of restitution for their mistakes. It takes a wise director to garner such an outcome, and the person and the camp community will be thankful for that end. A few questions may help the decision-making process.
 - ✓ How serious was the offense?
 - Did it involve drugs, safety, blatant character flaw (theft with camper), violence, or child abuse?
 - Was it a performance issue that was persistent or sudden?
 - ✓ Is offering the person another position in camp a possibility?
 - ✓ Has the camp accepted responsibility for the selection, training, and supervision/support errors that lead to this point?
 - ✓ The person wasn't all bad. What can be honored about the good they brought to camp?
 - ✓ How could this become a learning experience for the person and the camp?
 - ✓ How can the camp demonstrate its values of caring, fairness/justice, honesty, integrity, dignity, and respect during this process? How can you avoid fear, anxiety, anger, frustration, and decreased risk taking?
 - ✓ What is this person's character and emotional intelligence like?
 - ✓ Could the staff person be trusted to talk with other staff and tell the truth?
 - ✓ Could the staff person be trusted to talk with their campers and protect the best interests of the camp and the campers?
 - ✓ Are there other people in the same or similar boat? What's going to happen to them? How are the rest of the staff going to be assured that they are not potentially next, even if that thought is totally unfounded?
 - ✓ After the person is gone, are people allowed to talk to and visit the person? Is the camp going to give the person an end-of-summer staff yearbook and photo? Can the person ever set foot on site again?

When you ask and answer those questions for yourself, and for the rest of the staff who are going to want those same answers, you'll hopefully be able to pick a path that will enhance the camp culture, and not de-motivate the staff.

Two

Not Controlling Termites, Negative Leaders, and Poor Performers Immediately

Negative leaders and poor performers need no explanation. Termites are those lovely little insects that weaken the framework. They do so in such a way as to not be conspicuous until it is probably too late. A building (camp) may look okay from the outside, but a closer inspection will reveal the problems. Camps and large organizations alike have the same problem—they all have termites.

A person termite is someone who doesn't really quite buy in to the program. Termites are people who are not "sold" and quietly go around denigrating and subverting the camp—usually in an effort to get people to agree with them even a little. These are the people who whisper walking down the wood paths or in the cabins late at night. "That's what they say, but here's what you can really get away with." or "Let me tell you the real story behind (her, this, the place)." or "This place sucks so bad, man, can you believe the crap they keep pulling?" When the termites are returning counselors, they are especially deadly, because they often set the norms and culture more than you do.

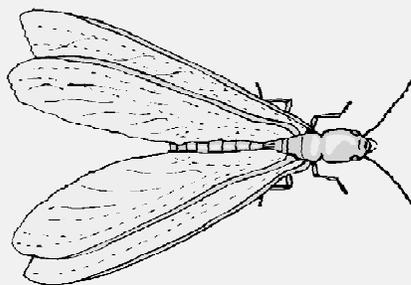
Termites range from weak to very powerful. Following is a recipe for an especially effective termite. A termite with any of these characteristics is bad. At any level, the range of thought and behavior has been expanded merely by their influence, which can create distraction or disruption.

- ❑ They are generally consistent and persistent.
- ❑ They are not overly stubborn, so as not to be viewed as completely unreasonable.
- ❑ They have informal status (returning staff, "cool," appeal to subgroup norms and values, etc.)
- ❑ They have formal status – legitimate power.
- ❑ Their power has not been usurped by being invited to an open, problem-solving discussion in good faith with those whom the termite is denigrating.
- ❑ They have a viral effect (contagious) and create a subgroup/cell of discontent around an issue.
- ❑ Because they are needed, they can't be (or aren't) expelled from the environment after due diligence in attitude change. If they are expelled, they can serve as martyrs for their cause.
- ❑ They can't be discounted because they are being petty, unobjective, or have an illegitimate ulterior motive.

Despite doing everything possible to engender a positive attitude that will translate to behavior, a few termites will eat small holes in your work and may even weaken the attitudes of many. Just like the real thing, catch them quickly!

Any of these three characters (Termites, Negative Leaders, and Poor Performers) will degrade motivation. Put them on the supervisors' standard meeting agenda, and deal with them right away.

Reticulitermes flavipes



"It is the most destructive pest in North America"
US Department of Forestry

Three Inhumane Discipline

What is sometimes as de-motivating as the above people, is a camp's harsh reaction to them. Even with such people, the camp must maintain its values in all circumstances, and not just sometimes. Caring, fairness/justice, dignity, and respect should always be evident. Anger, frustration, guilt, shame, disgust, lectures, moralizing, and various other forms of punishment may be satisfying, but they aren't ultimately effective, especially when taking the entire camp community into account. Even the most vengeful staff will honor the camp for such an approach.

Examine yourself

You might be part of the problem! How would they describe you and the camp to their friends and parents? "What must it be like for someone like that – that is, with that character and perspectives – to have someone like me, with my biases and drives, as a boss?" Are you trying to "tell and sell," convincing the other person of the reasonableness of your arguments? Could anyone, even in jest, call you the hanging judge? You aren't perfect; what are your faults? What are your emotions going into this? Keep in mind the mistakes you've made over the summer, or perhaps when you were that age. Think about offering those as examples, so the person you're approaching sees you as human and fallible as well.

Think about the big picture

The interdependence of people's jobs and wider circumstances are often ignored. Psychologists find this phenomena so pervasive they call it the "Fundamental Attribution Error." Before approaching the person, consider some possible mitigating factors for their behavior:

- ❖ lapses in initial and on-going training
- ❖ error of hiring someone who wasn't a good match (camp's fault)
- ❖ fault of the camp culture
- ❖ effect of limited resources
- ❖ inability to provide the kind of reasonable support needed
- ❖ co-worker issues
- ❖ errors in the processes involved
- ❖ faults of supervisor(s)
- ❖ time issues
- ❖ mismatched goals, or ideas of how to achieve them
- ❖ relevant camper issues
- ❖ inherited situation
- ❖ faulty expectations
- ❖ and other things?

Some or all of those things may have played a part in less than perfect performance, but rarely, if ever, are they brought up as extenuating factors. Keep those things in mind, as you'll want to bring those points up as well. You've likely spent a lot of time thinking about what's wrong with the person, so spend a little time thinking about what's wrong with the situation and what's right about the person. If you interviewed the person, look at your notes, or the notes of the person who did the interview.

What are they lacking?

The person may have a lapse in knowledge, attitude, behavior/skill, or some combination thereof. Develop a theory about what's wrong, but be open to the idea that you might not have it quite right. The danger here is that you convict the person without having spoken with them and gotten their side of the story.

Don't have the knowledge

- What to do
 - Ask, "What is your understanding of (policy, expectation, rule, topic)?"
 - O.W.L. (knowledge) center
 - Tutoring
- Specific examples
 - Reading scary ghost stories
 - Not using the telescope like supposed to
 - Does not have great cabin or unit time activities
 - Forgot a specific camp policy

Don't have the attitude / values (ouch)

- What to do
 - Draw to superordinate goal (values-character, hopes, goals, dreams)
 - Use SEIEM and the “Believing and Doubting Game” resource to expand thinking
 - Tell a curative tale (story that allows the person to see another perspective)
 - Resort to agree to disagree, but follow the policy/expectation
- Specific examples
 - Missed curfew
 - Too cool to wear a life jacket
 - Died hair fire red / pierced nose
 - Supervisor in a relationship with a counselor in her unit

Don't have skills to do part of their job

- What to do
 - Modeling
 - Coaching (scaffolding) counselors, and supervisors as they coach counselors
- Specific examples
 - Pushup master for behavior management
 - Sneaking candy in for the kids
 - Sneaking out of the cabins at night
 - Personality differences between staff (need mediation)
 - Stressed out and walked off (needs emotional intelligence coaching)

Use SEIEM

This technique is for when a conversation needs to happen – a little reminder or brief chat won't do. The behavior management resource offers a philosophy of behavior and approaches for dealing with it. That model is effective with staff, but if the exact same approach is used with adults, people tend to view it as condescending, and they see right through it as you might have trained them on that approach. With the same “engine” underneath, but a different façade on top, SEIEM (Cy ‘Em or Sigh-um) allows for effective, humane problem solving.

S	Situation:	
		When you acknowledge the situation, the defensive reaction is subverted. “Oh, they really do understand how hard this is, and how mistakes can certainly be made, and no one is perfect.”
E	Emotions:	
		People desperately want to be understood. “S/he really does understand how I feel, and that my feelings are justified.”
I	Intentions:	
		People are ALWAYS making the best choices they are currently capable of. “S/he knows that I want to do a good job and that my intentions are honorable.”
E	Ends:	
		What is their goal? What are they trying to accomplish? “I'm glad s/he knows that I am working on a solution.”
{Pause}	Get their side of the story.	
M	Means:	
		When people are not being successful, and they see that, they want help. They want to succeed. “I wish I was powerful enough to solve this problem well.”

Example:

“John, I know it is really hot today, and that you didn’t get enough sleep last night. That camper has been getting on people’s nerves for a couple days now, and I’m not surprised that he got to you too. We should have spent more time in training going over this kind of behavior challenge, and I haven’t been around enough to help you out. I also know that your co-counselor is new, and that makes it tough to deal with this kind of thing.”

“It’s really frustrating to have to deal with that kind of disrespect from a child. When they do it for a long time and occasionally strike close to home, it can really make you angry.”

“I know you are a good counselor and you want to do a good job. You care about the kids.”

“You want him to be a better person. You are trying to make him understand how wrong he is, and how he is hurting himself and others. I can see you are working on this.”

“Tell me what’s been going on from your perspective.”

“What about your approach is and is not working? What else could you or we do? What are our options? Which one would you like to try? What makes that the best choice? Do you want my help? Is there anything else we should talk about?”

{Michael Brandwein’s book “Super staff supervision” includes several questions a coach can ask (196 – 202).}

Generally, skill and knowledge problems are more easily addressed, but a true attitude problem presents a more difficult challenge for the camp leader/teacher. The behavior management resource and the change model in the culture resource offer more details about specifically what to say and do in various circumstances. Know that when the hiring, training, and enculturation processes are done well, real attitude problems are exceedingly rare.

When harm has been done, people need to be offered the opportunity to make restitution – make things as right as possible – and feel supported. When imposed consequences become necessary, the culture is weakened and a game of cat and mouse often ensues. Discipline from an external base of power is ultimately not motivating or effective. Consequences are imposed, and restitution is offered – that’s the key difference. When staff are approached by a compassionate teacher, consequences are almost never needed, and restitution flows naturally. In all cases, the use of fear comes from weakness. When discipline (means to teach) is done well ***and combined with meaningful support***, there is security, trust, and internal motivation at the end of these difficult conversations. Make no mistake though, restitution is rarely fun or easy.

A special note about “progressive discipline” is in order. Often it goes something like verbal warning, written warning 1 – 3 times, and then fired. Such a system belongs in maligned Corporate America, but not at camps. Gen X, Gen Y, and pretty much everyone else finds it smacks of power and formality. It is also quite difficult for it not to be pedantic, condescending, and adversarial. Helpful and inspiring don’t come to mind. The same goal of communication can be achieved without the smack in the face. The seriousness of a situation can also be communicated without lecture or reprimands, especially with a healthy leader. If you *absolutely must* have something in writing, try asking for a written account of what happened, with an apology/action plan. Otherwise, a SEIEM conversation would be better; notes can be recorded by you at a later time, if that seems prudent.

Four

Being a Jerk / Ego / Hubris / Greed

This point is perhaps self-explanatory, but I'll include a few examples, all of which were found at camps. As noted throughout, there are ways to work with behavior without resorting to external control/power. A camp that works on the motivation points throughout this resource (especially trust, which is a good antidote) probably won't have leaders who are jerks, or with big egos.

- Anger (throwing things, fist on table, voice tone, cursing, pointing with threat, invade personal space, pacing)
- Guilt
- Shame – embarrass someone, and do it front of others for bonus points
- Disgust, grimace
- Being secretive with no very good, explained reason
- Get on people's case and backs, because if you don't, they aren't going to work hard
- Threaten to fire someone (bonus points for creative and subtle ways to communicate this)
- Threaten to take away privileges, or take them away
- Berate the whole staff – bonus points when it is something only a few people did
- I need to make most decisions, because I know best
- People are lazy, and if you don't watch them, they'll slip up
- Make people sign an official piece of paper about their errors
- Punishments aren't fun, and that's what gets people moving
- I need to show them who's boss around here
- They need to kiss up to me if they want to get it
- I've got my favorites, and we look out for each other
- Snitches amongst the staff are necessary – I need to be able to catch people
- This camp is a kingdom, and I'm the king
- If you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours
- We're the best! We rock!
- If I need to ask you to do something unethical or shady, you had better do it and not argue with me
- Obsess over details that almost everyone but you consider unimportant
- I'm right, you're wrong, and the sooner you realize that the better
- Sometimes you've got to lay the smack down
- Tear him down a notch. Show him who's boss. Teach him a lesson. Put him in his place.
- I'm going to make you wait and stew . . . I'll let you know when I'm ready (or, wait here, I'll be back)
- This is your fault. It was your responsibility, and look how screwed up it is. What are you going to do about it?
- Do you have an appointment?
- If you don't like me, I don't like you and you'll feel it
- Only one person is going to win, and it's going to be me
- I'll let you know what you need to know, when you need to know it
- People come to me to rat on others so I can make them do stuff
- How many times do I have to tell you!?
- I've been doing this a long time. I know what I'm doing. Your knowledge and expertise are of small value.
- Everything's a competition
- That's the way it is. Like it or lump it.
- We're friends. Do it for me.
- Sarcasm – use your wit to abuse instead of amuse. Bonus points for laughing at your own sarcastic remarks.
- I don't have time for this
- Hey, look, sometimes I have to be a jerk. That's my job. I'm the boss. Somebody's got to do it. That's life.
- Give folks a good tongue lashing
- If you don't have a little fear of me, you're a fool
- Look, get over it. Suck it up and deal. End of discussion.
- The fatherly chat where you nicely tell them why you are right and they are wrong. Smile a lot for bonus points.
- Don't worry I'll take care of it (and then don't)

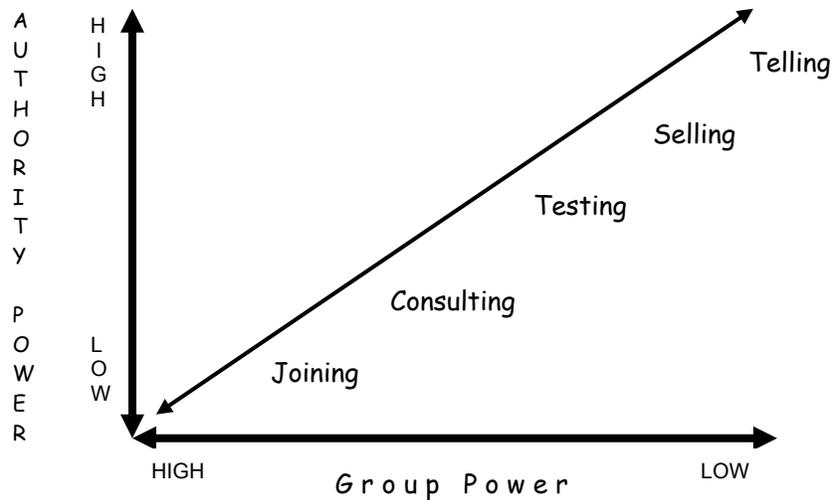
- People laugh at my jokes, even when they aren't really that funny
- Not everyone needs to know the truth. Don't say anything. This is just between us.
- I can make your life miserable (stated or implied)
- Hold something over their head, and then laugh slowly and walk away
- Off-handedly comment about how hard it is to have all this power and people coming to you for everything
- Ask why in a condescending tone, or when the answer is clear to everyone
- I don't care what it takes to get it done, or what you have to sacrifice. Just make it happen.
- It's your responsibility. If you have to work 60 – 80 hours a week (non-summer) to get it done, then do it.
- When the person you're talking about isn't around, very nicely talk about what is/was wrong with them
- Sometimes you have to be like a freight train – that's how things get done
- Don't say another thing. I know all I need to know about this, and this is what I'm going to do.
- Hey, you're getting paid, so be quiet and do your job
- All my favorite people agree with me, so I'm right and you're wrong
- Surround yourself with vestiges of power – sit behind a desk, talk in your office, wear something with your position on it, wear a special piece of clothing, talk down to people from your vehicle, extravagant lifestyle, . . .
- Make people call you boss, sir, director, or by your last name
- Develop a swagger, stately manner, royal face, look through your fingers, smile excessively, . . .

Good! So, almost none of those statements and examples applied to you, right? Excellent, but there is one little remaining problem. In more industries and countries than you might imagine, when managers are given evaluations along these lines, two-thirds of them do not have the same opinion of themselves as their subordinates do. Are you in the one-third or two-thirds? The only way to know is to ask your subordinates (*anonymously if at all possible!*). Go ahead, ask.

A special note on greed is in order. After looking at scores of anonymous evaluations for numerous camps, I'm always surprised when I see a note about the leaders/director being greedy. One director had a license plate on a nice, big suburban truck that said "THNK U." The staff were upset that they couldn't get some things they felt they really needed, and here was this brand new vehicle. The message they got was "The greedy director is robbing money from the kids!" It turned out that the director won the car in a lottery, and he only used it for camp business, but no one knew that. The counselors at another camp learned that the director's salary was \$200,000 per year. They didn't lack anything for the camp program, but they found that to be too much. Another director had a large house, extravagant jewelry, and fine furnishings, which the staff complained about in the end, again because they felt the camp needed more money to effectively meet its mission. An open budget with some explanation can help mitigate the de-motivating feeling of the director as Grinch.

Five Not Varying Your Leadership Style

A discussion of leadership is well beyond a discussion of staff motivation, but nonetheless, not varying one's leadership style can be de-motivating. This is similar to many other points, but seeing it in a different light can be helpful.



Telling

- Identifies a problem, considers alternative solutions, chooses one, and then tells the group what they are to do. There usually isn't discussion. "Do what I tell you."
- Members' views may be considered, but they do not participate directly in the decision making.

Selling

- Makes the decision after consideration of organizational goals and group members interests.
- Explains to the group how the problem or task can be resolved or accomplished.
- Uses persuasion to carry out the decision. "Come with me."

Testing

- Identifies a problem and proposes a tentative solution.
- Asks for the reactions of those who will implement it.
- Makes the final decision after considering the reactions.

Consulting

- Presents a problem and relevant background information. Coaching.
- Invites the group to increase the number of alternative actions to be considered.
- Selects the solution she/he regards as most promising from among those emerging during group discussions. "Try this."

Joining

- Participates in the discussion as a member and agrees in advance to carry out whatever decision the group makes. "What do you think?"
- For a task, jump in and do it, or do it with others and hope other will follow the example.
- May make a decision to make no decision. There may be no clarity or direction.

Six Personnel Policies

If you could only be there when your staff first read the personnel policies and know their true hearts and minds, you would probably learn something that surprised you. Clarifying expectations and the realities of camp life are wonderful things to do. However, there have been a few personnel policies in print that can sap motivation and spirits. Also, for policies that seem draconian or unreasonable at first, take extra pains to explain why the policy is in place, and make the explanation a good one. Finally, if your summer camp policies are more than five pages long, there's probably too much detail. For example, it is unnecessary to detail everything that could get someone dismissed. One camp wrote that encouraging illegal activity by or with campers was cause for dismissal. Camps with strong cultures get by with about three pages.

- If you drive your vehicle on camp property, you'll get a \$20 ticket.
- Staff will be charged for routine medications dispensed from the health center.
- Any staff health issues are that person's own concern. They may not use the health center, and they are responsible for all charges when seeing medical personnel not mandated by the camp.
- If the staff member leaves for a personal emergency, pay is docked for every day absent.
- If a staff member is sick for a day, that day will be docked from pay.
- There can be no guests on camp at any time for any reason. Don't ask.
- Discipline is recorded as follows: verbal warning (documented), three written warnings, termination.
- Staff are not allowed to use camp facilities or equipment for their own use under any circumstance.
- Curfew sign in is at exactly midnight by our clock. If you are one second late, you are late.
- If you are late for curfew, you will lose an evening off. If it happens again, you'll lose a day off.

Seven Gossip and Politics

Again, no rocket scientist needed to know that gossip and politics (e.g., backbiting, curry favor, cliques, rumors, jockeying for position) are de-motivating to staff. Such elements are unavoidable in a social situation like camps. The question is the *degree* to which they happen, and *how* they are dealt with when they are noted. For the latter, handling problems with humane discipline is the only thing that will work. Using power to control gossip is like trying to juggle loose jello. How often they happen is a function of the camp culture (see that resource) and the staff who are hired. Beyond that, it is helpful to have the staff commit to "clean communication." The following information can frame a discussion of not gossiping, and allow people to commit to it.

Part 1: Clean Communication

Skit: Dirty Examples

- ❖ Someone is doing a poor job as a counselor/supervisor. Everyone knows it, but all they do is whine about it and not confront the counselor/supervisor.
- ❖ John said something that offended a counselor. The counselor doesn't complain to someone else, but keeps it inside and creates distance in the relationship

What does Dirty Communication do? {ask for their ideas before offering your own}

- ❖ Triangulates
- ❖ Delays resolution
- ❖ Allows for rumors to start
- ❖ Puts others in a tough spot

Skit: Clean example

- ❖ The camping center messed up a pack-out order. The counselor goes and talks to them directly.
- ❖ The waterfront director broke a rule about diving in the blue section. The assistant waterfront director talks to him about it, and resolves the issue.

What does Clean Communication do?

- ❖ Puts parties in direct contact
- ❖ Opens lines of communication instead of closing them
- ❖ Speeds the resolution process
- ❖ Doesn't put others in tough spots

What are the barriers for communicating clearly? What can be done about them? {lead a discussion}

- ❖ Anger
- ❖ Power (other person has legitimate power over you, like a supervisor)
- ❖ Retaliation / Fear
- ❖ Dislike of confrontation

Part 2: Gossip

Reveal the rumors that you started a day or two before hand

Why is gossip damaging to camp? {ask for their ideas before offering your own}

- ❖ Usually not the whole truth
- ❖ Don't care and respect the other person enough to allow them a defense
- ❖ Used as a means of aggression
- ❖ Sets up an environment where more gossip happens – gossip begets gossip

Ask for a commitment to clean communication (sign a community contract, or verbal agreement)

Eight Disorganization

When people are working hard toward goals for themselves and others, they hate getting tripped up along the way – especially if it's avoidable in their minds. Following are three areas of disorganization, and a few examples under each.

- ❖ Promise things and don't deliver them
 - The program supply they were expecting isn't going to be available
 - The people they were expecting to help them won't be available
 - The time they expected to prepare something won't be available
 - The expected support to help with a difficult camper/situation isn't going to be available
 - The money they expected to carry out a plan won't be available
- ❖ Communication
 - Most people don't know how to play the game
 - People have different ideas of how to play the game – while it's being played
 - No one seems to know what is going to happen next / tonight / tomorrow / next week
 - People don't understand why X happened, and if it will happen again
 - It is unclear what the rule / policy is and there is no easy way to find out
 - When bad things happen, people hear it from supervisors and not the director
- ❖ Systems/process errors
 - A clunky form made it easy for errors and omissions to occur
 - The lack of a manual for the health center facilitated numerous mistakes
 - The time table for completing certain activities is too tight / too loose
 - The shower house is too small to fit that many people through in that amount of time
 - The character development plan isn't an effective one
 - Whose job was that anyway? Were you supposed to do it, or was I? {role clarity}

Ameliorating system problems happens on a case-by-case basis, and general tools for fixing and developing systems are beyond the scope of this resource. Likewise, truly sporadic errors that pop up are best handled with an honest apology and perhaps restitution. What I can offer are some general tools for communication.

- Staff newsletter once or twice a week
- Staff bulletin board
- Promise: 1 week notice for major programs, 48 hours for any foreseeable changes
- Review activity right before it happens with campers and staff, and allow questions
- Village meetings two – three times per week
- All-staff meetings weekly
- Open-door policy and meetings with the director – check box (see empowerment: freedom: suggestions)
- MBWA: Management by walking around

- Meal meetings (successes, camper check in, counselor check in, camp info, how can I help?)
- Mail-box notices
- Community forums with the director – especially when there are problems
- Ask “What can I do to help you?” and “Am I doing anything that hinders your performance?”
Generally, utilizing the “Empowerment: Freedom: Suggestions” ideas will offer a balancing toward communication.

Nine

Asking People To Do Things You Wouldn't Do

Onerous tasks

If the staff are mucking out the ditches, painting cabins, scrubbing graffiti, removing poison ivy, or repairing equipment, get in there and do a little bit with them. When there is a swim drill, get in the water – assign other people to do your job. Think, “if I were deathly ill, who would do my role in the swim drill?” then give it to that person.

Hey, you staff: be fun, playful, creative, open to feedback, patient, and work hard

As the director or senior leader, if there is a big game, be a character or participant in it. If you have a free choice period, offer something yourself once in a while as a symbolic gesture. Be known for what you offer – make it a trademark. When the camp sings songs, sing with them – be known for a special, crazy song. One day, get dressed up goofy. Ask the counselors and other staff for feedback, and respond/react to it. When things go wrong, understand that adults make mistakes too. If the staff are working 14 hour days, they'd like to see you working that hard as well.

Ten

Doing Someone Else's Job For Them

It turns out that problem solving releases a chemical in the brain that makes us feel good – people are wired to desire and work toward challenging goals. When people are stretched (not broken) and given the tools (time, training, people, things, cultural facilitators, etc.) to achieve valuable (in their mind, not yours) ends, they will give it their all. The synergistic benefit is that confronting problems grows your staff, which in turn grows your camp's ability to achieve. The resulting culture attracts and retains better staff, which further enables the camp to reach higher levels of performance.

When we step in and do the job for people, they get the message that (a) they can't be helped, (b) aren't worthy of being helped, or (c) that you just don't want to help them. Modeling how something can be done is a wonderful thing to do (see the “Staff training best practices” resources), but folks sometimes don't see what we're doing as modeling. Let them know before hand, and talk about it with them afterwards. Likewise, if coaching someone involves doing part of the task for them when it is clear they can't do it by themselves, debrief what happened afterwards and try and provide the support necessary so that they can try and do it themselves next time.

Boosting Staff Return Rates

Motivation and return rates

Once you achieve good results in all or most of the motivation elements, staff return rates can be expected to reach somewhere between 60 – 75%. Numerous factors influence the end result, but generally speaking, the stronger the core elements of motivation are, the stronger the return rate will be.

The energy generated from a very-highly-motivated staff may be enough to reach even higher return rates, but often obtaining that synergistic level requires a few more ingredients. Synergy is when there are so many returning counselors, that new counselors get swept up in that culture and start thinking, “Of course I’m going to return.” Synergy is when campers benefit from the continuity in the experience and staff, and they themselves start returning in record numbers. Camps that have 75 – 92% staff return rates often have a few more ingredients, which are described below. Recipes vary though, and entire ingredients may be happily missing. Certainly not all of these are required, but they seem to be the common threads amongst these camps.

Family feel

You hear it over and over again walking the grounds of these camps . . .

“It’s like a family.”

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t know, it’s just like this awesome, big family and it’s just amazing!”

“What makes it so awesome?”

“Well, there’s just so much love and caring, and nobody is fearful and we’re all totally working toward the same thing. People belong.”

It is a difficult thing to describe, and it can look different depending on the camp, because there is a lot of variation in what camps are. However, perhaps the following will help you.

Love replaces fear

The examples in “Being a jerk” don’t happen. Restitution is the law of the land. There is trust – credibility, open communication, respect, and fairness. Discipline is humane. When staff walk around and meet the eyes of another staff person (supervisor or co-worker), there is a warmth and support conveyed, even when times are tough.

Flannel

If you were to ask staff if the camp felt relaxed, comfortable, and enjoyable, they would say most definitely yes. As a counselor at one camp put it, “I don’t know, this camp feels like my favorite pair of jeans turned into flannel, but with that same tight fit. You can be yourself and let it all hang out, but still be supported and have bounds.”

Camraderie

Esprit de corp. People enjoy each other’s company. They like working toward challenging goals with people who help them do more than they could do by themselves.

Deep caring

It is clear that people know who you (staff) are. They know what you like, what you don’t like, what you’re feeling, what you fear, and what you want. That information is used to support you in a low-level, background sort of way. Maybe your favorite cookie will show up in your mailbox. Maybe your laundry got folded because something came up and you couldn’t do it. Maybe when you really need a break, someone comes up to you and offers you one. Maybe you’re a little worried about doing something, and there’s someone there to back you up.

Communal versus equity relationships

Equity means you keep track of things – like with money, or people you don’t know. Tit for tat pretty much. Communal relationships are more like marriages and good friendships – you don’t keep track unless things get WAY out of balance. Turns out that people LOVE to be in communal relationships, and don’t like equity ones, unless the relationship is going to be very temporary.

Generally, camp staff come with communal expectations – they aren't getting paid enough for it be equity. Camps can certainly treat staff in an equity manner, but those camps are unlikely to gain very high return rates, among other things. If a staff member is leaving for a week due to health problems or a death, they still get paid as if they were at camp – communal. If the camp holds a training in the Fall or Spring, staff don't expect to get paid for their time. Even though staff are getting paid squat, they can be seen spending a bit of their own personal money for camp, even after they are told not to do it – they can't help it. Money is just an easy example; the same hold true for other things, such as time. Even though the communal contract is the assumption at the outset, I see camps break that contract all the time, and it is to their detriment.

Deeply shared and held traditions and history

Shared language, rituals, and traditions are facilitating factors for high return rates, and they take time to develop. Although there are some young (5 years or less) camps with 80%+ staff return rates, it is unusual. It takes awhile for the traditions and history to be built up. In an existing camp, a new camp director can mean a new culture, or significant changes to the running of the camp.

Language can communicate something special and shared. Kids will use something like Pig Latin or Double Dutch. Twins often come up with their own language. Adults are not immune either, having developed languages like Esperanto, Klingon, acronyms (e.g., RSVP, KISS, ASAP), computer speak (e.g., IP, Java, Flash, HTML), e-mail lingo (e.g., BTW, :-), LOL), and sports lingo (e.g. for cricket: stumps, bails, bowling crease). Camps tend to have special names for people, places, things, and games.

There is also a shared experience that serves as touchstones. Rituals and traditions are good examples. Staff who were counselors years apart and never met may cross each other's paths randomly a decade later and be able to speak of similar experiences and meaning. Some examples include the way the camp does: openings, closings, rites of passage, dining hall procedure, morning traditions, evening traditions, special events, special games, unique songs, vespers, how to shake hands, campfires, and so many more.

Growing your own

Another common thread is that camps with very high return rates grow their own staff, but not as many as you would expect. There is usually a two-year Counselor-In-Training Program, which goes by lots of different acronyms (CIT/JC, LDP/CIT). To get into the first year of the program, the camp might get 3 applications for every 1 they end up taking. For the second year, they'll often get 2 applications for every 1 spot. Maybe half or even one-quarter of the graduates will become staff the following summer, but more return after some time in college. Although these home-grown staff are wonderful and essential, surprisingly, they often make up about 20% of the overall staff. Camps sometimes have only 10 – 15%, but exceptions dip into the 40 – 80% range.

Staff excellence is a prerequisite

The interview process often lasts 2 – 3 hours. New staff will meet with old staff so that there is an assessment of fit from different perspectives. For staff to be hired, they need to knock the socks off of the director. There needs to be a "Wow!" there of some sort. Returning staff must have met the high mark during the summer. If they didn't, they might have a chance to prove themselves during the off season by jumping through several hoops, but otherwise they won't be invited back.

Year-round contact

The family doesn't like to be cut off for the typical 9 months of the year they aren't at camp. As a result, there is some continuity provided by the camp. Reunions, usually in the Winter, are very common. Some camps do three reunions. One camp takes its entire staff to an ACA conference, and pays their way. That same camp does its lifeguard training in the Winter, and the staff stay with the director or others in the area. Maybe the entire staff will visit a theme park together, or they'll go rafting. E-mail and phone conversations between the camp and the staff happen monthly, and sometimes even more often. Key staff might chat weekly, as they plan for next summer and reminisce about the past summer. Two or three staff newsletters is common. Staff may also help with in-home recruiting and camp open houses. New staff are quickly brought into the communication loop with e-mail and phone buddies and invitations to every event that happens – formal or informal.

Dangers - not all roses

As you may have gathered, there are some drawbacks and dangers to having a very high staff return rate. The implicit assumption is that a very high return rate will help the camp better meet its mission. It is doubtful that the difference between a 70% and a 90% staff return rate would make a remarkable difference in the achievement of the desired outcomes, and it may even hurt. Some potential problems are noted below. Nonetheless, there are advantages to high return rates. If those are important, then such a goal is a worthy one, but be vigilant against the dangers.

Danger – the staff culture

It is possible to maintain a camp focused on the outcomes for the campers, but with a very high return rate, a staff that focuses too much on each other is a real concern. Staff can get so into each other and the camp as their playground that they forget that the campers come first, and staff come second. Newcomers may also struggle to fully break into the group.

Danger – the cult of the director

One test of a healthy camp is a staff that is dedicated to the camp and the campers – not the director. The values, mission, and culture should continue, and the director leaving should not send the camp into a tailspin, or even a level of real concern. Great leaders create great organizations. Directors are servants, and not the served.

Danger – being insular and group think

The selection process brings in people who are a good fit. These folks are then placed in a situation that encourages certain behaviors and thoughts. Via this process, the camp gets a uniformity that helps create a consistent experience for all concerned.

The downside is that innovation and creativity are often difficult to consider and implement. Typically, a strong culture with a solid enculturation process believes that it has great innovation and good room for new people to maneuver. Within the world view of those in the environment, that is probably the case. The point is that the world view is *purposely and often effectively limited by the strong culture* and through the enculturation process. People at the camp can't see how they are constrained and limited, because in their minds, they aren't. The very nature of the enculturation process limits the diversity of thought, experience, and behavior the camp will experience. They are blind, and yet they believe they can see.

I've painted the picture as an extreme, when in reality it is more a question of degree. Through a comprehensive cultural assessment, the level of encapsulation present can be discovered. The antidote is to create a learning organization. Those principles are thoroughly discussed in "The learning camp" resource.

Danger – get a life

Staff can derail or delay their life's path, because they get stuck at camp. They become addicted to all the wonderful things camp can be, but it's a bad addiction. Staff can sometimes make poor long-term choices, because they really want to go back to camp. Or, they may take some year-round job at camp, but that really isn't their life's calling.

Danger – return rates equal effectiveness

Six camps. Six camps with very high return rates decided to look at how well they were achieving the outcomes (their mission) they desired for their campers. Two of them were doing a good or pretty good job. The other four were making a very small impact, and with some outcomes no impact at all. It turns out that return rates are not a very good indicator of whether or not a camp is meeting its mission and to what degree, because there are so many factors influencing return rates. Further explanation can be found in "The learning camp" resource on pages 34 – 39, or in the "Organizational culture at camp" resource on pages 64 – 69. Thus, don't fall into the dangerous trap of assuming that return rates equal effectiveness.

Notes / Feedback / Sharing / Action Plan

When people like you offer critique, additions, suggest conceptual issues, or generally offer feedback, everyone benefits. With small contributions by many people (community), the whole is more than the sum of its parts. I'll post additions and answer questions via my website – www.visionrealization.com. E-mail me at randall@visionrealization.com. I respond to all e-mails.

Notes / Feedback / Sharing / Action Plan

What will you do before the summer?
What will you do during the summer?
What will you do after the summer?
What things can be implemented now? What is the timeline for the other elements?
What needs to be taught during administrative training?
How will you follow up on your action plan?

Resources and References

All of the below resources can be downloaded free from www.visionrealization.com. In addition to these resources, you'll find more on evaluation, what it takes to go from good to great, finding and implementing best practices, information about at-risk youth, uncommon knowledge about self-esteem, and program knowledge ranging from pick-up games to archery to special days.

Title	Description
360 degree evaluation	Follow the Fortune 1000 in using this tool to develop your staff. You will get an overview of 360 degree evaluation, understand why it is so beneficial, understand how to conduct them, and become aware of the pitfalls and stumbling blocks.
Behavior management	This resource is an extensive behavior management plan that is firmly rooted in developmental and counseling psychology. Elements of plans that work and don't, bases of power, 5 approaches to counseling, parenting styles, and a full description of a systematic plan for working with children are all included.
Believing and doubting game	Play this useful "game" when you are having almost any kind of controversial discussion, or are trying to increase creativity. Place the one-page description in front of everyone at the meeting, allow everyone to read it, and get ready to have a more open, creative, and, ultimately more productive discussion/meeting.
Emotional intelligence	Brief information in presentation format on what Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is, why it is so important, and how to develop it. Also includes information on how to measure EQ in a valid and reliable way.
Knowledge management	Knowledge management will save you time, money, be a staff perk, and help you achieve your mission much more effectively. Simple idea, difficult to implement well, profound results. More specific implementation advice and lists are provided as well as models to help organize efforts. Once you engage this tool, you'll wonder how you ever did without it!
Organizational culture at camps	From a fuzzy and nebulous concept to a concrete, useful framework. Understand clearly what makes a camp culture and how far reaching it is. Determine how yours rates. Discover best practices in creating an exceptional culture. Learn how to develop or change your current culture without hitting the land mines. Understand why Bob Ditter called this approach "the next level" in camp performance.
Organizational factors	The topics presented here are definitely considered by camps, and often agonized about at length. The goal is to hopefully offer a nugget or two of new information, or new lines of thought. Addressed are camper return rates and session length, staff return rates, appropriate staffing levels, and staff quality.
Process maps	Utilizing this knowledge will help you understand and communicate what your camp does in an unprecedented way. The staff and campers will benefit enormously from this knowledge. Reach a new plateau of understanding and effectiveness about your mission, and how to achieve it.
Staff training best practices presentation	Learn how to take your camp training from good to best practice. Understand how to convey information so that it will be remembered and used. Learn how to capture the heart in addition to the mind. Understand how to make in-the-trenches training as effective as possible - includes guidelines for supervisors. Fortune 500 leadership training, Parent Effectiveness Training, and camp orientations don't achieve their objectives at an alarming rate. Learn why orientations, special trainings, and in-services fail and what to do about it.
The art and science of mistakes	Directors, staff, and campers all make plenty of slip-ups. Learn the differences between mistakes and failure and how to find the humor and wisdom in life's disappointments. Teach children, staff, and your organization how to "fail forward." There isn't a single aspect of organizations or personal life this doesn't apply to!
The learning camp	The book "The Fifth Discipline" made learning organizations popular, but a lot has happened in the decade since that research was done. There are eight pillars of a learning organization. Understand what they are and how to assess where you stand on each pillar by using an administrator and counselor survey - provided.

The scientific journals, academic texts, and popular books referenced for this book on staff motivation would be several pages long listed out, and of concern to few. The interested reader may contact me for more references. Instead, here are the references for the books and articles specifically noted in this resource.

- Boffey, B., & Boffey D. (November-December 1993). Success counseling. *Camping Magazine*.
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 Ditter, B. (1997). Trail signs and compass points. Available through the American Camping Association. www.acacamps.org
 Gossen, D. (1996). Restitution: Restructuring school discipline. New View Publications. ISBN: 0944337368.
 Kohn, A. (1999). Punished by rewards: The trouble with gold stars, incentive plans, A's, praise, and other bribes. Houghton Mifflin.

Services

Organizational development

- Assessment of camp culture – the life blood of every camp
- How does your camp rate on organizational best practices (detailed report)
- Harness what your camp learns and knows to better the experience for everyone
- Find the better wheel someone else already created – benchmarking for success
- Innovation and continuous improvement review and development
- State-of-the-art camper and parent satisfaction surveys and reporting mechanisms

People power (recruiting, training, motivating, and developing)

- Novel and effective means of recruiting quality staff – achieve 10 applications per 1 hire
- Thorough review of orientation before campers arrive (including staff manual)
- On-going staff training review against best practices
- Review staff motivation strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- Enhance your camp's ability to manage the mistakes everyone makes
- Utilize emotional intelligence assessments to develop key staff

Meeting your mission

- Examine your outcomes (benefits) through easy to understand and communicate graphics
- Assessment of the degree to which your camp is currently meeting your mission
- Program, process, and system development to better meet your mission
- Return rate analysis – digging way beneath the surface (multi-page report based on your data)

Marketing and communication

- Create a graphical map that analyzes where campers come from, and learn how to capitalize on that information
- Implement a “Partnering with Parents” program to better position your camp, and serve your youth development mission
- Website analysis and development -- meet or exceed current best practice
- Examination of camper recruiting practices and results (including newsletters)

Program development

- General clinic/activity review and development
- Expanding and innovating free-choice programs
- Camper activity selection process
- All-camp games and special events
- Cabin activities
- Community service
- Ceremonies and rituals
- Pickup games to energize down times

Speaking engagements / Training

Interactive presentations are also possible on all the resource topics, as well as other areas such as: ritual, community, media influence, a multitude of staff training topics, child development, and more.

Thanks for reading this, and all the best in enriching lives and changing the world.

About the Author

Randall Grayson, Ph.D.

Camp Background

- 18 full summers at camps across the country (e.g., from California to Maine) and world (i.e., Australia and New Zealand)
- Held virtually all positions at camp from counselor to director
- Camp characteristics included: both centralized and decentralized camps; from 1 - 8 weeks; camp sizes from 60 children to over 400; single gender and coed camps; affiliations - agency, religiously affiliated, independent for profit, and independent not for profit; and from free to \$1000 per week.
- Has been a director of a camp with 400 children and 115 staff, and a camp with 100 children and 40 staff
- Given more than a dozen ACA conference presentations, consulted with numerous camps, and presented at ACA section meetings
- Wrote acclaimed book series entitled "Creating Exceptional Camps"

Academically

- Doctorate in psychology with concentrations in developmental, social, and organizational psychology
- Conducted several original camp outcome, research evaluations
- Taught at 3 universities, including child development at Westmont

As a child, camp was a place where Randy gained a lot of self-confidence, social skills, independence, creativity, physical skills, and leadership while having more fun than he thought was possible. As an adult, Randy has dedicated his life to providing exceptional camp experiences where children and staff can thrive and grow. He is committed to creating a special, magical world that helps to create fine people in a safe, fun environment.

Dr. Grayson passionately believes that camp can give staff a world of good too, as he has personally benefited enormously from his years at camp. After spending over a year recovering to 95% from a severe cervical spinal cord injury (total paralysis for months), Randall feels that the summer camp environment helped channel and challenge his new found zeal for life.

Some fun facts about Randy include: he is a master balloon artist, he worked as a cowboy on a sheep ranch in New Zealand, he's handy with both broad swords and fencing swords, he built a life-sized fully functional catapult, he has broken 16 bones, he just missed being on the Olympic archery team, he is an amateur hang glider pilot, he is a certified massage therapist and hypnotist, and he used to own an 8 foot boa constrictor named "Cuddles."

A complete camp staff motivation manual!

Realize a Proven Strategy for a 70 - 90% Staff Return Rate

If you want to learn how to motivate camp staff to be their very best, this book is for you! It cuts to the heart of the issue, yet remains comprehensive. The author's extensive hands-on experience keeps it camp focused. Inside, you'll find both useful explanations, and loads of specifics such as:

- 16 inspirational speeches that range from prompting tears to raising hopes
- 50 perks and benefits – the most exhaustive, camp-specific list anywhere
- 8 ways to at least double the amount of suggestions you get every summer
- 13 moving pages for your staff manual or posters
- 28 best-practice interview questions to help you select outstanding staff
- 9 ready tools to create improved staff expectations for the summer
- 15 questions for yourself to help you pick your best level of staffing
- 20 welcome-package elements to include before staff get to camp
- 25 staff re-interview questions to set expectations and increase excitement
- 11 ways to enhance praise and recognition at your camp
- Trust – what is it really and how much of it do you inspire? Use the included survey!
- Dozens of camp stories and examples to drive the ideas home

You'll also learn how to:

- increase good judgment and communication
- enhance the staff's understanding of your mission
- promote passion and innovation
- dismiss staff and actually strengthen your community and their motivation
- develop and implement an excellent staff growth plan
- avoid specific administrative behaviors that drag staff down
- conduct performance reviews that are effective, fair, motivating, and not scary
- and yes, lots more!

“Motivated people make the difference for any mission or business. Motivate yourself to read this engaging, USEFUL, and powerful book. It will make a difference!”

Carla O'Dell, Ph.D., CEO
American Productivity & Quality Center
Voted top 10 national consulting firm

See more advance praise from camp professionals inside