

Problem Solving Training for Counselors

Objectives:

As a result of their participation in the problem solving section of counselor training counselors will:

- Know physical and emotional safety of campers and staff is the number one consideration when evaluating problems/issues at camp.
- Be able to demonstrate steps in and understand the importance of problem solving in their roles as counselors.
- Be able to recognize some issues counselors have faced in the past at camp to help them in dealing with future issues.
- Understand the importance of discipline at camp.

An Introduction to Problem Solving

As the primary caretaker of campers counselors inevitably will face some problems that they will need to deal with at camp. Some issues will be routine and simple while others have potential to drastically affect their enjoyment of camp or even their emotional or physical safety. Due to this importance it is vital to discuss problem solving, conflict resolution and discipline with the counselors during training. The following sections are some suggested ways to cover these three subjects.

- I. Safety of campers is paramount in making decisions.
 - a. Physical safety
 - b. Emotional safety
 - c. Why should safety be paramount?
 - d. Things campers experience at camp become memories which will last with them for many years.
- II. After considering safety in your problem solving now take a moment to ask the following questions. It's okay to take time for analysis unless safety will be compromised by a delay.
 - a. What is the actual problem? Many times problems or problem behavior in people has an underlying cause. Ask some questions to get to the heart of the actual problem.
 - b. Who is involved? Identify the participants and those impacted.
 - c. Consider possible solutions.
 - d. Consider the impacts and outcomes of each solution. Try to discover the unintended consequences of each solution.
 - e. Pick the best solution based upon the best outcomes and least negative impacts and/or consequences.

Read through these pages at least three times. Read in a way in which you will remember these things – you are not reading for speed but for comprehension. Highlight or circle a few things on each page which you think are important.

- III. What are the advantages of a thoughtful approach to problem solving instead of just telling campers what you think they should do?
- IV. Possible scenarios:
 - campers want to have a milk drinking contest at breakfast
 - campers keep losing cabin clean-up, so decide to make cabin messy
 - campers decide to sabotage another cabin for cabin clean-up
 - ga-ga ball gets heated and there is a lot of arguing
 - campers do not like one of the campers in your group and he/she gets their feelings hurt by being left out.
 - you and your co-counselor disagree on how to manage your students
 - during a game several campers accuse one another of cheating
 - your campers complain that one of the other campers is repeatedly using profanity
- V. When do you notify an adult leader?

Conflict resolution

- I. Conflict resolution is about teaching people new ways to work through and resolve disputes that don't involve violence.
- II. Why is conflict resolution important at camp?
- III. The steps involved in conflict resolution are:
 - a. Setting ground rules. Agree to work together and set rules such as no name-calling, blaming, yelling or interrupting.
 - b. Listening. Let each person describe their point of view without interruption. The point is to understand what a person wants and why they want it.
 - c. Finding common interests. Establish facts and issues that everyone can agree on and determine what is important to each person.
 - d. Brainstorming possible solutions to the problem. List all options without judging them or feeling that they must be carried out. Try to think of solutions where everyone gains something.
 - e. Discussing each person's view of the proposed solutions. Negotiate and try to reach a compromise that is acceptable to everyone involved.
 - f. Reaching an agreement. Each person should state his or her interpretation of the agreement. Try writing the agreement down and checking back at a later time to see how it is working.
- IV. In addition to the above steps keep in mind that camper conflicts can be loud, heated interactions that can escalate without intervention. It is your responsibility to maintain a calm and even tone in order to help cool the situation while you attempt to resolve it. Sometimes you may need a brief camper cool down period before attempting resolution.

Mega Days 2022
HS Servant Team - Training 3 (continued)

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think a parent signs their kid up for mega days?
2. What do they expect from a camp counselor at mega days?
3. How can camp be helpful for students who struggle at home / school / church?
4. What does a “superstar” staff member at this camp do differently as compared to other staff?
5. What does a “slacker” staff member at this camp do differently as compared to other staff?
6. What advice do you have from being a DA / counselor or from being a camper?
7. What is a best memory you have from being a DA / counselor or from being a camper at Mega Days?

Two important values for Mega Days:

1. We want Mega Days to be God-centered.
2. We want Mega Days to be focused on campers.

Don't be a DA / Counselor like this:

1. The “I’ll let my co-DA’s / co-counselor do it” DA / counselor.
2. The “takeover” DA / counselor.
3. The “my way or the highway” DA / counselor.
4. The “involved in gossip” DA / counselor.
5. The “matchmaker” DA / counselor.
6. The “I’m better than everyone else” DA / counselor.
7. The “stressed out” DA / counselor.

Do be a DA / Counselor like this:

- 1. Christlike**
- 2. Faithful and Faith-filled**
- 3. Joyful**
- 4. Positive**
- 5. Patient**
- 6. Helpful**
- 7. Team player**
- 8. Have a students-first mindset**
- 9. Servant hearted**
- 10. Cooperative**
- 11. Aware**
- 12. Thoughtful**
- 13. Respectful**
- 14. Fun**

Safety First – emotionally, physically, spiritually (cabins, games, free time, quiet time, swimming, inflatables, crafts, worship, Bible study, meals, walking to/from things)

Think about the difference:

Leading songs well during group singing time with counselors/DAs up front

Leading songs not well during group singing time with counselors/DAs up front

A counselor/DA who genuinely cares for their students

A counselor/DA who just does their job

A counselor/DA who is there to serve and help students

A counselor/DA who is there and seems more interested in spending time with other HSers

Read through these pages, at least 3 times before Sunday, June 5. When you have finished reading through these three pages, write down the date and time here:

Date and Time #1: _____

Date and Time #2: _____

Date and Time #3: _____