

# UNDERSTANDING AND NAVIGATING CAMPER BOUNDARIES, CONSENT, AND HOW IT RELATES TO MENTAL WELLNESS

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<b>SUMMARY:</b>	<p>An introduction followed by 3 role-play scenarios aimed at navigating camper boundaries and consent to activities. There is a short themed break and then a closing discussion.</p> <p>This resource also includes quick-reference cards to help staff throughout camp.</p>
<b>TOPIC(S):</b>	Camper Care, Camper Management, Mental Health
<b>LEARNING OBJECTIVE:</b>	Participating staff will feel more comfortable navigating campers' consent to participate, and they will feel better equipped to recognize campers' boundaries.
<b>AUDIENCE:</b>	Small groups of approx. 10 camp staff (designed with overnight campers ages 9 and up in mind, but could apply to other situations)
<b>TIMING:</b>	1 Hour
<b>APPENDICES:</b>	Deck of "flashcards" with helpful guidelines for approaching a difficult situation and easy suggestions to implement inside the cabin to normalize topics of consent. These can be found here: <a href="#">Pocket Resources</a>
<b>MATERIALS NEEDED:</b>	None
<b>SET-UP DETAILS:</b>	<p>Choose a time, and create an environment, in which participants will feel open and ready to address difficult topics.</p> <p>Choose a space where the group can break up into 2-3 separate locations and then reconvene.</p> <p>There should be one "time keeper" with each small group, participating, but also familiar with this outline and responsible for keeping the group on time.</p>

## SESSION TIMELINE:

**00:00-00:10** HOOK & INTRODUCTION

**00:10-00:25** ROLE PLAY SCENARIO 1

**00:25-00:40** ROLE PLAY SCENARIO 2

**00:45-00:50** SMALL GROUP DEBRIEF

**00:50-00:60** CIRCLE DISCUSSION

## OUTLINE:

### ESSENTIAL GUIDING QUESTIONS:

What should I do when a camper does not want to participate?

How do I balance disrespecting boundaries or causing harm with positive encouragement in a safe camp space?

### BIG IDEAS (LEARNING OBJECTIVES):

Boundaries should be respected and understood when stated.

Campers learn behavior from staff, even when we are not actively teaching.

### HOOK & INTRODUCTION (5-10 MINUTES):

Silent challenges: Instruct the group to attempt completion of the following quickly, **without speaking**. (Once they complete the first challenge as a group, they can move on to the next.)

- Arrange everyone in a single line ordered by favorite color (rainbow order)
- Stand together in groups of 3, 4, 5 based on favorite Jewish holiday
- Rock-paper-scissors, the goal is to use the same object, not to beat the other

After these activities (or when time is up), go around and allow everyone to discuss one way that they communicated or listened without using speech (nonverbal communication and listening).

### ROLE PLAY SCENARIOS (10-15 MINUTES EACH):

After each scenario, consider these follow-up questions:

- What feelings is the camper expressing? (Insecurity, past trauma, low self-image, etc.)
- How can we deal with this situation in a way that positively impacts the camper's life?  
How could this situation be handled poorly?
- Is it more important in this situation to understand what the camper is feeling or why they are feeling that way?

1. **Scenario:** You are the counselor for a bunk of overnight campers who normally sleep in bunks. Tonight, you and your campers (and others) are going on a trip to a campsite in the forest, making their own dinner, and sleeping in tents. It is normal for campers to protest about this, and most of them will seem upset about this experience, but you know campers normally enjoy this activity and it is a big part of the camp experience. Some of your campers seem to object more than normal, and one camper becomes more reserved than usual (and you think they seem scared). Your co-counselor is trying to talk to the whole bunk and get them to pack for the trip. Meanwhile, you take on addressing the camper who seems quiet and upset...

Instructions: Have one person in the group play the counselor, another play the camper.

- The counselor should attempt to determine why the camper seems scared.
- The camper should at first try to play their fear off as disdain.
- If the counselor continues to listen and approaches in a manner that makes them feel safe, the camper should disclose that last year on this bunk's trip, the campsite was approached by bears as they were making dinner.
- The camper may continue by saying they were very close to the bear and found this experience traumatic, as the bear was unphased when the counselors used air horns.
- The counselor should recognize this camper may feel unsafe going to the campsite and work to make this camper feel safe in this conversation and at the campsite.
- It is up to the camper in this role play whether they agree to go to the campsite or continue to feel unsafe, and refuse.
- The counselor must then decide whether or not to continue pushing the camper, or to speak with senior leadership and come back to the camper with a plan discussed with leadership

2. **Scenario:** You are the counselor for a day camp, and you're assigned to a group of 10-year-olds, most of whom have been coming to camp since they were 5. Your group is heading to a sports activity area for the first time this summer. One of your campers, who is new to camp this year, is refusing to participate in sports. They argue with you in front of the rest of your campers, and your co-counselor is on their hour off.

Instructions: Have one person in the group play the counselor, another play the camper.

- Counselor will try to convince camper to participate.
- Camper will attempt to reason with the counselor that they don't want to and should be allowed to sit out.
- Counselor will continue to ask why and attempt to convince camper.
- Camper will state that their parents pay for camp, and they don't want to do it so they shouldn't have to.
- If the counselor continues, the camper will then say that they have a headache, will say they want to go to the bathroom, they want to get more water, and continue to give a new reason every time they're asked.
- Counselor must assess whether or not they should continue to push the camper, and what to do if they agree to let the camper sit out.

3. **Scenario:** You are the counselor at an overnight camp for a bunk of 12-year-olds. It is the first night of camp, and everyone seems to be doing well. All of your campers seem excited about the summer, most of them know each other from last summer, and the two new campers are being included nicely into the group of friends. Programming is over for the day, and you have already helped everyone get ready for bed. As the talking is dying down, you overhear one camper say to their bunkmate, "There is no way they are making me go swimming this year." Swimming and the waterfront in general is usually a big part of camp, and not participating at all would leave a camper out of a great deal. As you fall asleep you determine to talk to them tomorrow about this, but you wonder about the best way to do that...

Instructions: Imagine how this might play out the following day. Have one person in the group play the counselor, another play the camper. The counselor should use care in bringing up the subject to the

camper. We don't want the campers to feel they are constantly being watched or intruded upon during peer conversations.

- If approached properly, the camper should share that they had a negative swimming experience last year: the instructor and older campers made fun of them in the water.
- If approached in a way that makes them feel unsafe, the camper should 'perform' for their friends and try to be funny making a big deal about not following what the counselor says or asks.
- The counselor can practice recognizing past experiences and validating the camper's feelings. They may wish to involve unit leadership, camp's mental health professional for coaching them, and/or consider whether there is new swim/waterfront staff this year.

### **SMALL GROUP DEBRIEF (GROUP BREAK ACTIVITY, 5-10 MINUTES):**

- Have the participants break up into pairs or groups of 3 for the break. They can do whatever they like but must remain together.
  - All the participants should be instructed to try and learn what the other wants to do during the break and help them in getting there.
  - Nobody is allowed to do anything during the break without permission from their partners but they are also not allowed to ask for permission.

### **CIRCLE DISCUSSION (10 MINUTES):**

- What are the outcomes of recognizing campers' autonomy? What are some reasons it is important to show our campers respect?
  - As role models, how might an attitude of "do not take no for an answer" or disrespecting boundaries be harmful?
- What parts of a camper's mental health and wellbeing are connected to expressing consent and boundaries? (Self-image, sense of worth, autonomy/agency, independence, etc.)

### **SIYYUM (CONCLUSION):**

Hand out resource cards and discuss. (see below for printable cards)