

## Basic Child Behavior Management Principles at Camp

### The 5 Most Common Mistakes Adults Make with Kids +2

#### 1) **We talk too much!**

Children today are used to making decisions based on short bits of information. Once we have made our point *clearly and simply*, stop talking! Holding a child's attention keeps them from taking in the message!

#### 2) **Our message is: a) too emotional**

Children react first to our emotion & tone of voice and not to *what we are saying!* While some emotional is helpful in that it can send a helpful message non-verbally, too much becomes a distraction from our message!

#### **...or b) too logical**

Children often lead with their emotional/irrational side. The best way to create a listening or receptivity in them is *first to acknowledge the emotion* before explaining our logic. **First connect, then redirect!**

#### 3) **We tell kids what we *don't* want them to do rather than what we *do* want them to do!**

The brain can't hold a negative! If you say, "Don't run!" a child hears "run!" It is important to tell children what we *do want them to do* (for example, "walk!")

#### 4) **We pick up the rope!**

Perhaps the most commonly made mistake of all, we get into *power struggles* with kids or end up mirroring back to them less "grown up" behavior than we'd like. There are 5 steps for dropping the rope:

- a) Stay calm—emotionally detached
- b) Make kids "right" about what they're "right" about (charity—right brain!)
  - acknowledge a true fact
  - acknowledge a feeling or experience
  - acknowledge a positive intention
  - acknowledge any contribution to the problem you may have made
- c) Pause...and... say, "and..."
- d) Then state what you expect (clarity—left brain!)
- e) Stay out of "traps" and "bait"
- f) Calmly and clearly restate what you expect

#### 5) **We end up in the "Point of Struggle" (POS)**

(Coined by friend and colleague Jay Frankel, *True-to-Life Training*)

The "Point of Struggle" can show up at any age or stage of life.

You want counselors to stay out of POS as much as possible. Children are too emotional to cooperate or respond to anything but containment (stay calmly steady, acknowledge feelings, keep safe, wait it out, avoid escalating). Planning ahead is essential!

**+Redirecting.** Channeling mischievous energy into something less dangerous, worrisome or negative.

**+Replacement.** You can't ask a camper to stop doing something inappropriate and expect them to be successful *unless you give them something else to do in its place.*