

Chapter 4

Campers

Child Development

Camper Goals

Effective Discipline

Homesickness

Age Characteristics

Psychological Suggestions

Psychology to help problem children:

Problem children at camp fall primarily into the following categories:

1. Withdrawal
2. Aggression
3. Daydreamers
4. Sorry for themselves
5. Self-Worshippers

To help these children try the following suggestions:

1. Avoid snap judgment
2. Include in your program an opportunity for each type to satisfy his/her fundamental desires.
3. Realize that your camper's misbehavior is a bid for affection.
4. Try to draw out the reticent camper.
5. Get well acquainted with your campers.
6. Seldom give advice.
7. Do not dwell on misdeeds.

Psychology to help the homesick camper:

We believe the homesick camper is a special problem, the one with which we are most confronted. Before actively dealing with this problem we must first try to understand its cause.

A camper may be homesick because:

1. It is the camper's first time away from home or parents.
2. The camper may be embarrassed at washing or dressing with others.

3. The camper may have a very real fear of the new surroundings—the odd noises of camp at night—and may even have a fear of not being accepted by you and campmates.
4. Rainy, dreary, cold, damp weather plays a huge part in homesickness and the longing for security from parents.
5. Boredom or little interest in an activity also plays a role.

HOMESICKNESS USUALLY REACHES A PEAK ON THE 3RD OR 4TH DAY

To help a homesick camper the following suggestions may help:

1. Make the camper feel at home and wanted.
2. Get the camper a friend.
3. Go out of your way to show the camper little considerations and signs of affection, within the law!
4. Delegate to the camper special chores or responsibilities to increase feelings of usefulness and redirect attention away from unhappy feelings
5. Talk it out with the camper. Try to help the camper see these feelings as not unusual but expected. Try to encourage the camper to stick it out.

Psychology to help your camper through the first day and night:

Your campers' first day and night are an important one in introducing them to a new life. A few suggestions to make this first day and night successful are:

1. Call your campers by their first names.
2. Accompany the campers to their tents and stay with them until they fall asleep.

3. First day activities should include:
 - a. A hike around camp in which you point out and name all the places they should know.
 - b. One or more get-acquainted games followed by another kind of game to help everyone become more at ease with each other.
 - c. Choose tent and/or patrol names, a song or a yell.
 - d. Explanation of yucky duties, how to do them, and why they are important.
 - e. Explain the rules of camp.
 - f. Sing songs and conduct conversations.

Psychology of dealing with fear:

Campers are likely to react to a strange or challenging environment by withdrawing, confronting, or coping. Not all campers can cope well. Fear can play a big part in how a camper deals with this new environment. Camper behavior which is based upon fear of the environment not adequately providing for fundamental desires is shown by:

1. Giving up
2. Bedwetting
3. Feeling ill
4. Becoming timid, shy, or sullen
5. Being loners
6. Lying
7. Becoming overly dependent

Other behaviors arising from fear are:

1. Aggressiveness
2. Overconfidence
3. Attention seeking
4. Profanity
5. Irresponsibility
6. Uncooperativeness

Strive to identify the underlying reason for the behavior, avoid fixing blame or moralizing, and help the camper to understand and discover a better way.

Age Characteristics

6-8: Imitate and copy behaviors of others

Repeat what they hear

Answer questions and solve problems intuitively

Have a concrete understanding of the rules

Older children are able to apply rules

Base decisions on personal needs

9-11: Strong imagination

Love of the dramatic

Tire easily

Tend to over-do

Can be assertive and individualistic

Are beginning to want group approval and like group projects

Are supersensitive to failure and ridicule

Need constant encouragement for new ventures

Need careful guidance on personal neatness and cleanliness

Are interested in acquiring new skills

Need time to wonder about newly acquired skills

12-15: Rapid physical changes cause self-consciousness and awkwardness

Gang feeling is strong - all want to look and act alike

Awakening power to reason and discussion - hate being treated "like a child"

Appreciate high standards and idealism

Developing social conscience

Need plenty of action

Definite interest in the opposite sex

Have a tendency toward self-worship