

## POTENTIAL PROBLEM CAMPERS

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[Assignment: In a short essay, make a point about work experiences you have had from which you can draw a conclusion which will be of interest to others. Choose the mode that seems best suited to what you want to say.]

(1) Fifteen sets of eyes looked inquisitively at their new camp counselor. The counselor looked at each and wondered what sort of trials and joys lay ahead for the week. All kids need and want attention; they differ in the way they call out for this attention, however. And if the counselor fails to attend to these differences, she may not be able to smooth the problems almost inevitable in her job. A majority of potential problem campers fall under the general categories of Followers, Show-Offs, and Know-It-Alls. Recognizing these categories will help avoid potential trouble thus making the camp more enjoyable for both camper and counselor.

(2) As a group, the Followers are fairly easy to recognize. Because none of the Followers knows how to be an individual, she is always to be found in groups of two or more. There are usually one or two leaders in a peer group who will swing the rest to dote on a particular counselor for attention. Depending upon the sex of the doted-upon counselor, the Followers can be divided into the sub-groups of Groupies and Herds. The Groupies tend to be junior high school age girls who are easily identified by visible signs of intense hormonal activity. A good-looking male counselor may soon become the receiver of romantic notes and glances. It's never good to laugh at or encourage these crushes; they will pass quickly, but not the hurt if the camper's confidence is betrayed. The Herds are usually second to sixth graders who tend to dote on a counselor of their own sex and cling to each other for support and for a sense of identity. If you are one of the victimized counselors you must be careful not to show too much attention to your loyal followers and so forget the less expressive campers. Also, you must watch out for these groups becoming cliquish to the point that they are ostracizing other campers; if this happens, trouble and hurt feelings are never far behind.

(3) Even more trouble for a counselor are the Show-Offs. They tend to have very low self-confidence so they build their self-esteem by winning attention through devious ways. Because of some past successes they generally believe that they can get away with anything. Show-Offs can be divided into the sub-groups of Snots and Delinquents. The Snot is usually a rich kid who can be snobbish and bossy both to other campers and the counselor. Her large monogrammed trunks filled with multicolored Polos can be a clue to her identity. Other kids may not like her but they will certainly pretend to, especially when the snack bar opens. The Delinquent's

rise to popularity comes from her possessing, or her claiming to possess, something not allowed by the camp like firecrackers, cigarettes, or alcohol. While she may not make many friends at camp, she is comforted by thinking that others respect her. Show-Offs need to be watched because fights seems to spontaneously combust around them. After the first incident, she should be approached to prevent other kids from getting hurt or copycatters from joining her. A private word with a possible fitting punishment should be enough; never publicly confront a Show-Off or her fragile identity will fall to pieces.

(4) The most audible of potential trouble campers are the Know-It-Alls. They will try to get attention by talking too much. The problem is that they can get very annoying very quickly, both to their counselors and fellow campers. Know-It-Alls can be divided into the sub-groups of Veterans and Rambos. The Veterans have been to camp since before they were first walking--at least it will seem that way from their stories. No matter what anyone says, the way things were last summer will always be better than this year. They may actually know more about the camp than you, so you can generally let them ramble on harmlessly. It is only when stories about the lake monster start scaring kids to the point that no one will swim that you need have a quiet word with the Veteran to keep her stories more private. Another type of the Know-it-all is the Rambo. These outdoor adventurers are easily recognized by their wide assortment of camouflage. In the woods, the Rambo will be happy to fill everyone in on the various types of plant-life around whether her expertise is wanted or not. Taking the kids for a walk through a swamp early in the week should cure you of the Rambo types pretty quickly. The main problem with the Know-It-Alls is that they tend to get carried away and ostracize themselves. If they become obviously annoying to others, a private talk will usually solve the problem.

(5) These categories do not encompass all campers, nor do they encompass all potentially problematic campers. However, they do give the camp counselor a general idea of the ways in which campers often seek attention. By recognizing and understanding the types, the counselors can take appropriate steps before a problem escalates. If a counselor disciplines all the time, no one will have fun or learn anything and the purpose of coming to camp will be lost. The counselor must also be careful not to play psychiatrist and stereotype campers to the point that they have no chance to prove themselves. The more you enjoy and respect your campers the more they will enjoy and respect you.