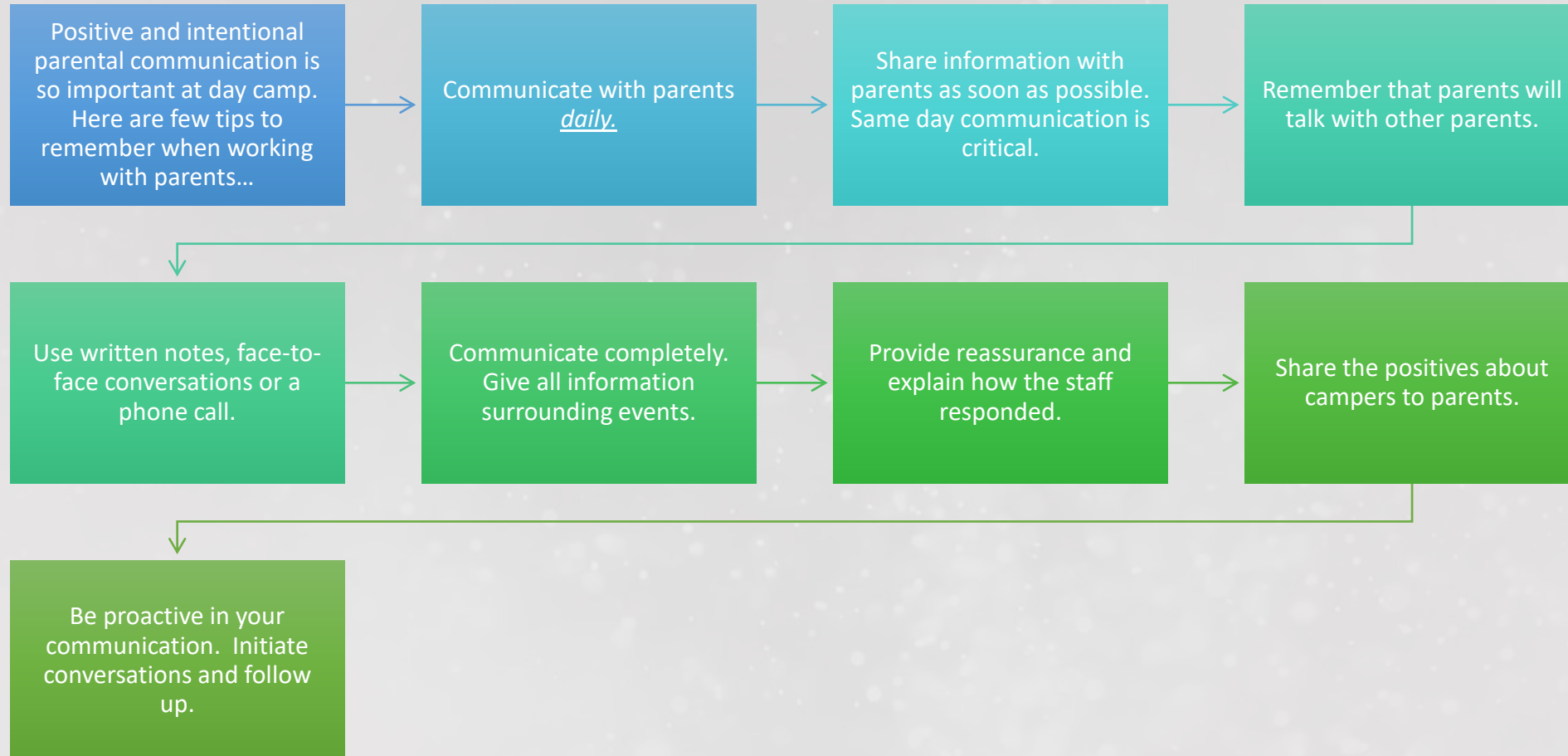




**Overtime Athletics
Summer Training:
Technique**



Parent Communication



Transition and Adjustment

All families face challenges related to transition and adjustment, especially when offering a camp experience to their son or daughter for the first time. Your sensitivity to what families are experiencing when they drop their children off at day camp will help smooth over any rough spots. Expect the transition from home to camp to be emotional for some parents and children. Expect that some parents and children will need time, coaching, and support to adjust to life at camp. When in doubt, ask, "How can I be most helpful?"

Pre-Session Contact?

Some important things to remember...

1. Be familiar with your camp's website. This is how most families first learn about your camp.
2. If you work at a camp fair, be sure to look sharp and greet families warmly. You are the public face of camp and the warm tone you set can reassure families.
3. Whatever contact you have with families, remember that you are the voice of camp. Be polite and accommodating. Be honest if you don't know the answer to a question and offer to find out quickly.
4. Help kids learn each other's names during any pre-season gatherings. Knowing a few other people who will be going to camp at the same time makes children feel even more welcome.

Transition and Adjustment cont.

First Day of Camp

Make families and kids feel welcome...

- 1. Greet:** Shake hands, make eye contact, smile, and state your name and role. Be sure to have a name badge prominently displayed.
- 2. Orient** all newcomers: Keep it simple. There's lots to think about on opening day, so simply state what the family needs to do next and what the schedule is for the day.
- 3. Comfort:** Let everyone know where the bathrooms are located. Don't wait for them to ask. Anticipate their needs.
- 4. Individualize:** Get each camper's name and what they like to do. The more you can personalize the experience, the more welcome parents and children will feel.
- 5. Integrate:** Get all kids involved in an activity and/or game immediately. Getting everyone up and having fun right away takes away opening day jitters and validates everyone's hope that camp will be fun and lively place that cares for children.
- 6. Connect:** Buddy up new campers with returning campers. Getting kids connected immediately takes away the number-one concern that all campers have: *Will I be able to make new friends?*
- 7. Encourage** participation: Get all kids involved. Provide social support and early opportunities for success. A positive first impression is essential to good adjustment.
- 8. Sheppard:** Let parents know when it's OK to say goodbye. For those who want to linger, provide some gentle coaching to complete the transition. Say, "This would be a good time to say good-byes and we'll look forward to seeing you at the end of the day."

Drop Off/Pick Up

Drop off

Starting the day with a positive drop off sets the tone for staff, campers and parents.

Make sure your body language is communicating positive messages to those around you. Remember,

“You say a lot without saying a lot.”

Have a positive and happy tone of voice. Remember,

“Say what you mean and mean what you say, but don’t say it mean.”

Be sure you are always interacting with your kids. It’s nice to get caught up with fellow staff about what they did last night, but that can wait for another time. You only have one chance to start your day the right way. Remember...

Parents are always watching! Put your phone away, show up on time, and be on top of your game right from the start. Be well organized and be where you are supposed to be to start the day.

Pick Up

- Know when, where, and how your campers are picked up.
- Pick up should be fun.
- Be sure pick up time is organized.
- Be sure you are keeping track of your kids and know who they are or are not supposed to go home with.
- Offer genuine praise to your campers and their parents regarding your camper’s day.
- Be sure your body language and tone communicate that you have had a great day.

Parent Interaction and Strategies

The Sticky Parent: Any parent who sticks around camp or their child *way* too long.

- Provide reassuring permission to go.
- They need you to state “It’s time to say goodbye. We’ve got the situation well in hand.”
- Be positive yet firm with these parents. Tell them, “We’ll look forward to seeing you soon.”

The Entitled Parent: Any parent who needs something special or extra for their child, for no other reason other than it is their child.

- If they have reasonable requests, help out and accommodate them, without compromising your integrity or bending the camp’s rules.
- Special cases become dangerous precedents.
- If parents start to push the limits, that’s when you need to stand your ground by restating camp’s policy and its rationale.

Remember, if parents begin to get irrational or unreasonable, that is a good time to bring them to the camp director for consultation.

The Lost Parent: Any parent who is disorganized, shows up too early or too late.

- Try to help them out as much as possible.
- Be patient and tolerant.
- Parenting is a tougher task than most non-parents realize.
- Your understanding will go a long way toward helping them get their bearings and think through the next step about what to do.

Great Customer Service!

Working with difficult parents comes down to one big issue... GREAT CUSTOMER SERVICE! Think about some of the best or worst customer service you have ever received. How did it make you feel? Parents will respond and react to your customer service in different ways. Always try to leave parents feeling warmly and positively about their interaction with you. However, keep it in perspective as well. You will not please everyone all of the time.

If you are not a parent it may be hard to understand this statement: “The most important child in any parents life is their own child.” Some parents will do everything in the world to provide the best possible situations for their kids. Remember, be patient and positive as you respond to these normal parenting instincts.



Working with Difficult Parents

Partnering with even the most difficult parents has the twin benefits of improving the quality of the camp experience for children and promoting your professional development. Rather than shy away from some of the leadership, policy, and customer service challenges that some parents bring to camp, strive to be a combination of interested, calm, patient, understanding, kind, realistic, practical, strong, respectful, and collaborative.

Here are some helpful sentence stems to get you unstuck when you're in a tough spot with a difficult parent.

Sentences to get you unstuck in a difficult conversation:

1. "This is a difficult situation, but I want to help find a solution. Here are some options to think about."
2. "That's a good question. Let me consult with one of my colleagues over here and I'll be back in a minute."
3. "There's a lot going on today and it can feel really overwhelming. Let's take this one step at a time."
4. "I understand what you want, but I'm in a bind about what to do, given the camp's policy."
5. "I can explain why the rule is set up that way and perhaps we can think together about next steps."
6. "Thank you for telling me about this problem. Let me find out a bit more and get back to you right away."

Different Approaches for Different Subtypes of Difficult Parents

Type	Underlying Needs	Helpful Approach to Meet Needs
OVERWHELMED The overwhelmed parent is stressed by the quantity of tasks at hand and their perceived inability to successfully complete these tasks.	order peace quiet assistance completing the series of tasks at hand	calmly outline how you will help outline the top two priorities to diminish the number of tasks at hand reassure the parent that all the necessary tasks will get completed restate that the staff are here to help
ANXIOUS The anxious parent is imagining the worst case scenario. Because of all the unknowns swirling around in their heads, they become physiologically and emotionally stressed.	reassurance information physiological calm clarity	use a calm tone in all conversations explain policies and procedures repeat explanations as needed try sitting instead of standing to help relax the situation

Different Approaches for Different Subtypes of Difficult Parents

<p>BOSSY</p> <p>The bossy parent is angry that things at camp don't match his or her mental picture of the way things <i>should</i> be. Bossy parents aren't ready to problem-solve until they feel calmer.</p>	<p>to assert authority to express displeasure to get their way</p>	<p>empathize with how the parent feels, even if you disagree with their opinion respectfully explain the rationale behind any policies that upset the parent brainstorm some practical solutions and compromises</p>
<p>DEFIANT</p> <p>The defiant parent is openly (or sometimes secretly) breaking obvious rules in order to shape their child's camp experience just the way they want it to be.</p>	<p>to be different or special to determine the outcome to undermine authority</p>	<p>show interest in their child and emphasize putting his or her needs first respectfully explain the rationale behind any rules the parent is trying to break suggest that a conversation with the camp director may be productive</p>
<p>UNHAPPY</p> <p>The unhappy parent has received unexpected bad news from their child or feels dissatisfied with a staff member's decision.</p>	<p>to express displeasure to be heard / understood to improve the situation for their child at camp</p>	<p>kindly thank the parent for sharing their dissatisfaction with you show interest by gathering information about what has happened share your perspective on what can be done to make things right promise to follow-up with the parent</p>

Rules Were Made to be Positive

A lot of what we say to campers is about *creating expectations*

- Giving instructions and directions
- Stating rules

Why is this important? Don't think about a GREEN ball!

Our brains process negatives differently – so when we use a No, Stop, or Don't campers often have the wrong thing in their brains. Saying “Don't think about a green ball” has most people thinking about a green ball, not *not thinking* about a green ball. Our brains focus on the *thing* not the *negative*.

Stating rules in the positive (turning don'ts into dos), helps create the right imagery in campers' brains – It's the subject we want them to think about! Saying “Think about a red ball” has just the right effect.

How do we do it clearly? It's more than No, Stop, & Don't

- In fact, what we do at camp is more than a collection of things we are NOT doing
- Skilled camp staff can almost always describe rules clearly, using positive language that's easier for our brains to process than negatives.

Rules Were Made to be Positive

Positive expectations and effective directions

1. Start with a positive comment about activity – positive statements and upfront excitement
2. Ask questions – what are we supposed to do? How to do it, different variations, etc.
3. Rephrase, support, and clarify their answers – then gently ask why or how come?

*Asking why or how come gets kids thinking about the consequences and creates ownership and responsibility as well as helps them understand and get more involved.

*They have power to make their own choices

*We tap into their existing common-sense knowledge and understanding

With older campers – same idea, different expression

- Support what everyone says – creating positive expectations
- Go through more in-depth rules or expectations – push or challenge their ideas more
- Keep them engaged and talking, but don't talk down to them... ask Why? and How come?

High Impact, Nominally Taxing Leadership (HINT)

- *Working as a youth development professional requires energy and stamina. Energy is needed to ignite enthusiasm, inspire compliance, and keep pace with active children. Stamina is needed to sustain your efforts over the course of a day, a week, a session, and the entire season.*
- *HINT is an energy-saving, stamina-preserving approach to leadership. These high-impact, nominally taxing strategies are best used for day-to-day interactions and routine hassles. They are not a substitute for wild enthusiasm and forceful direction, both of which have important places in your leadership repertoire. HINT leadership should leave you with **more** energy for the times you need it.*

High Impact, Nominally Taxing Leadership (HINT)

HINT Strategies:

1. Give a look that conveys a message
2. Say what you want in a single word
3. Say the name of the camper that probably knows what to do
4. Point to the thing that needs to be done
5. Post a small note in a location that needs a reminder
6. Use humor to draw attention to the problem and its solution
7. Ignore, when safe, and let natural consequences take hold
8. Pause, allow for a moment for campers to figure it out

Good Sportsmanship

Pop culture has celebrated “trash talk” or “dissing” in sports, but that doesn’t mean that because the behavior is common, it is acceptable. What starts as innocent fun for campers may turn ugly and become poor sportsmanship or bullying behavior.

The key to a good camp experience, especially in the sporting world, is knowing how to distinguish poor sportsmanship from good sportsmanship and learn the tools and skills to create positive motivation to promote teamwork, pick fair teams and prevent relational aggression in sports.

Good Sportsmanship cont.

Poor sportsmanship and Foul play:

- Sportsmanship is not something that you can take for granted or think your campers will practice on their own or naturally know how to do.. It has a set of skills that you can teach to help them feel good about themselves and connect to others.
- Kids who experience poor sportsmanship *may show certain upset expressions*. These include a dejected look, slumped shoulders, head turned down, emotional reactions such as tears, anger or irritation, and a growing disinterest in the sporting activity.
- Poor Sportsmanship and Foul Play can be initiated by staff when a staff person ignores the teasing or taunting of a camper towards another camper. If a staff person stands by and does nothing to stop it, the teaser actually gets the message that their behavior is acceptable. This creates a poor example for others.
- Sometimes staff members actually join in and promote poor sportsmanship because they get pulled into immature behavior done by the teasers.
- Other times, coaches may think that winning is the most important thing in a camp sports event and encourage undesirable foul play and bullying behavior just to get the “victory” or to compensate for their own feelings of inadequacy.

Good Sportsmanship cont.

- When a staff member allows poor sportsmanship to occur, it can have serious effects on the camper's interest and future desire to play the sport. A staff person may be contributing to the belief in the camper that they don't belong in camp playing a sport. This creates disinterest and loss of motivation on the camper's future play. The staff negativity may make young athletes feel badly about themselves, in general.
- Staff need to understand that their behavior, even if it isn't meant to hurt a camper, may actually be hurtful, because the staff person does not see the "message" they are giving to a camper who looks up to them. Therefore, you as the staff person need to be clear that your own role-modeling will be observed by your campers and seen as even more powerful than the words you use.
- Be mindful of your acceptance of foul play/poor sportsmanship which you may think is fun or part of a joke and watch the expressions of the camper who may be the target of it to really see how they feel.
- Staff, in their effort to motivate campers through negativity and harsh criticism, may actually be creating a team that is de-motivated. This critical type of motivation, through put downs, yelling and targeting players who didn't play well, can actually hurt your team's performance.

Good Sportsmanship Cont.

Relational bullying in Sports

- Relational bullying is when a camper or group of campers tries to hurt another camper by making them feel excluded by their peers. Exclusion happens frequently on the sports field, usually to less athletic children or to those campers who are very emotional, and usually, when you, the staff person, is not paying attention.
- A staff person who sees that a couple of campers are excluding another by not passing them the ball, frisbee, etc. is allowing relational aggression to occur.
- The staff person must immediately call out the kids doing the excluding for their misbehavior.

Picking Fair Teams

Picking teams can almost always lead to social laddering from best to worst as campers pick teams based on popularity and athleticism. For kids on the bottom of the social ladder, this is painful. Instead of fostering unhealthy team picking, staff should be selecting the teams

Promoting Good Sportsmanship

- The key to promoting good sportsmanship is to use positive motivation to promote teamwork and encouragement.
- Positive motivation is not limited to encouraging members of your own team. It also includes treating members of the other team fairly and even encouraging them.
- Staff members who step in at the first sign of poor sportsmanship (through negative words, gestures meant to hurt, or exclusion) create good sportsmanship.
- A good, talented coach uses positive motivation to encourage teamwork and avoids joining into negativity amongst players.
- What helps campers perform better is the last thing told to them. Remember to provide encouragement to your campers even if you have been critical of their behavior.