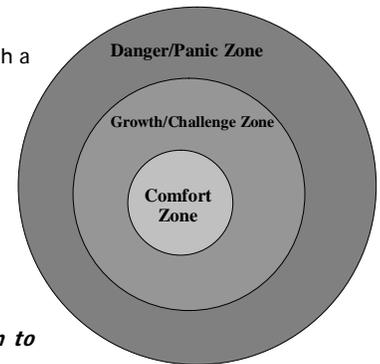


# Challenge by Choice

## What is Challenge by Choice?

Challenge by Choice is a philosophy on how to encourage campers to achieve their goals & provide them with a safe environment where they can go beyond their comfort level:

- It is not our place to push campers further than they are ready for or capable of.
- It's great however, to offer helpful advice and encouragement that the camper may need in order to step outside of their comfort zone.
- This philosophy also applies to how campers treat each other - we do not allow campers to "bully" one another into doing things they do not want to.



## What is the difference between helping a camper and pushing them too far?

- **Camper on Giant's Swing only wants to go half way up. Fellow campers are shouting at them to go higher.**
  - **DO NOT:** Join in or encourage the banter in any way or ignore the camper and keep pulling them higher. Also, do not keep telling them they can go higher and they will be fine. Campers are learning to set their own limits and they will not thank you for this. They need empathy, support and to be heard.
  - **Challenge by Choice:** Reiterate to the campers that we believe in Challenge by Choice and that their friend needs encouragement and support. Talk to the camper directly, give them educational praise and tell them that they can go as high as they like. Ask them once again, "is that the height you would like to go from?" or "how much higher would you like to go?" and let them know that coming down is always an option. With no pressure they are likely to relax and feel more comfortable making a decision which will push them as far as they are willing to go. That camper may have only gone half-way up, but that may be much higher than s/he intended on originally. They just reached a personal goal.
- **Camper at Throwing Range - sets goal, achieves it, now wants to just have fun**
  - **DO NOT:** Push the camper beyond their comfort level to achieve more than they desire or allow their friends to keep pressuring them. This will take the fun out of it, and not all campers care about levels and bracelets.
  - **Challenge by Choice:** Explain to the camper in detail how well they have done to get to that level. Ask them if they would like to keep working on levels and maybe tell them what the next level entails. If a camper is not interested and just wants to enjoy doing the activity, then this is great. We can always help to encourage campers to set goals and keep pushing themselves, but we in no way want to force them - we want to offer possibility, not dogma.
- **CAPP/Overnights - one camper in the cabin does not want to partake**
  - **DO NOT:** Remove the option of choice to participate or allow other campers to bully them into doing what they want.
  - **Challenge by Choice:** Explain one-on-one the reasons for why these are parts of the schedule. Point out the positive points that can be gained from doing them and find out their reasons for not wanting to take part. Let them know that they always have a choice, but that making group decisions is important too (there are other possibilities to them not doing the overnight, and the rest of the group going, if they are adamant, but it's not recommended).

## When does Challenge by Choice NOT Apply?:

- **Safety Issues** - in some circumstances where safety is compromised it is necessary to not offer choice. E.g. Belay commands and communicating with a partner on pods A and B are not choices, they are necessary to safety.
- **Eating** - a camper cannot choose not to eat at camp. They need the energy and sustenance to stay healthy.
- **Washing/Brushing Teeth** - we are looking after our campers, personal hygiene is not a choice!
- **Bed Time** - everyone needs to sleep and get some rest so that we can all make the most of our days.
- **3 Person Rule** - this is a camp rule and is in place for a very good reason (see "3 Person Rule" in this manual).

## Use of Cabin Contract & Embers

For new campers, a perfect time to address Challenge by Choice is during the cabin contract on the first day at camp. Stating expectations is important, and it's good to have something solid to refer back to if a problem persists with a pushy camper. Embers is a great time to talk about setting goals for yourself and about competition. Encourage campers to find intrinsic motivators and do the things at camp they are passionate about or want to learn. This tool is great for supporting & nurturing a campers' growing independence & self-awareness (refer to the "Evening Embers" section in this manual for ideas, as well as the competition document).

## When Parents/Teachers Are Around

On certain occasions, such as family camps, parents or teachers will also be taking part in activities and/or observing the campers. Make sure to mention our Challenge by Choice philosophy before the activity - not everyone supports our view, although all parents are made aware of it before they arrive. If a parent is pushing a camper to the point of being unhelpful/in distress, please reiterate Challenge by Choice to them (remember NVC!). This is often enough. It can be difficult to address this situation as we do not want to border on telling parents how to raise or talk to their own children. However, as activity instructors the wellbeing and safety of the campers is our number one priority, so do not be afraid to stress this.