

Camp Augusta - A Different Planet

Challenges in a Foreign Land

After dinner you step outside. You start down the sidewalk in the opposite direction than you normally go, though you are not really sure why. You keep walking, farther than normal, but with the inner knowledge that you're headed in a meaningful direction. You soon arrive at a playground that you've never been to before. Which is odd, since it's only a few minutes from where you grew up. You lay down in the dewy grass, which soaks your clothes and chills your skin. You notice the chorus of bullfrogs in the nearby pond, and marvel at the bat darting effortlessly between the monkey bars. An ant crawls across your hand, and you wonder which of the stars, with light still twinkling, may have long ago burned out. You forget about your own discomfort at being cold and wet as your mind and spirit wander through the sensory playground of the night.

Soon a spaceship appears. It is full of friendly, though very odd, people who are devoted to creating a world filled with Wish, Wonder, and Surprise. They're on the lookout for other folks to join them in their mission, although not just anyone will do. Written questions, verbal interviews, videos, and staff manuals are launched in a relentless volley...likely finding out more about you than what even the most intrusive and gruesome tests that aliens perform on humans in the gnarliest sci-fi movie you've ever seen would reveal. Both you and the Augustans agree that Planet Augusta would be a good fit for you, and you are whisked away on an adventure that has barely just begun.

Okay, the bad storytelling is over. The point is that, when you arrive at Planet Augusta, you will be immersed in a world with elements unlike anything you've ever experienced. And there will likely be some culture shock. The intention of this document is to highlight some of the areas that may be the most foreign so that, even if you can't know *exactly* what it will be like, you can at least have an awareness of where you may be challenged when you arrive. That awareness can provide a foundation for positive action in the areas that you find particularly challenging.

Power. . .

Consensus – Learning to give your own perspective, and to passionately advocate for what you believe, while having the perspective and big-picture view to be able to step back and gauge the sense of the group. Consensus, as a process, is about finding the *unified sense of the whole*. Most decision making processes you've been exposed to likely have been based on things like compromise and voting. Consensus may take longer and be more involved than any decision making process you are used to. And it doesn't recognize labels like right and wrong.

Flat Hierarchy – A decision making and responsibility structure different from most top-down hierarchies that you are used to. In a flat hierarchy, people have power over a given area either because the community has given it to them, or accepted that area as something for which they are responsible. Top-down hierarchies have a boss looking over their subordinates work to ensure quality and completion. In a flat hierarchy individuals support and evaluate one another as equals.

Success Counseling – Providing support to children so they can take control of, and responsibility for, their actions. You are likely used to a world that controls children's behavior through external power that includes techniques such as punishment and reward, guilt, and buddy.

Demographic – Quite often folks expect to find people a lot like themselves when they arrive at Planet Augusta. After all, the long and in-depth interview process ensures that there will be lots of like-minded people, right? Maybe not. You may find yourself thinking, "Well sure, I expected some people to be different...but not *that* different!" The community at Augusta is made up of a *wide* range of personalities, all as important as anyone else. It may be helpful to remember that the health of the community organism relies on *everyone* contributing as white blood cells and nurse cells...not just a select few community members. Diversity creates strength and resilience, and we all play a role.

Communication. . .

Clean – Saying what's on your mind, all the time. Even if it's uncomfortable. Always.

Nonviolent Communication – We all have *universal* feelings and needs. The needs that inform your actions are also the same needs that inform everyone else's actions. Seeing yourself in another. It's impossible to be angry if you are focusing on needs. The language of NVC does not recognize terms like right, wrong, and fairness.

Stories – Here's what happened, and here's the story that you attached to it. You have control over that story. Did stepping in dog poo *really* ruin your day? In some cultures it's considered good luck to step in dog poo. It's your story.

Feedback – There's lots of it at Planet Augusta. Feedback will likely reach you more quickly and more directly than in any other community you've been a part of. It is intended to provide opportunities for growth and learning, but it may seem in-

your-face at first (see stories!). You will also be asked to support your opinions and thoughts, and provide feedback to others, more than in the average work environment.

Community Living . .

Needs/wants – Understanding your needs and wants, and how those relate to the larger community. Also understanding what needs you have in the real world that may not get met when you are at camp.

Failing Forward – We celebrate failure at Camp Augusta when it's done in the name of improving our community. In a culture filled with high self-esteem and "great success stories," being encouraged to fail will likely be met with some resistance.

Integrity – Giving your word. Maintaining the agreements that you've entered into, and following through if you are no longer able, or willing, to honor those agreements. Integrity provides glue to life at Planet Augusta. While it may seem obvious that it is important to honor the agreements that you make, doing so in a place that is very busy, and with unfamiliar philosophies, may be much more challenging than you might think.

Service – Community living at Camp Augusta does not come complete with maids and valets. Community living asks you to give a lot, and to give a lot in many different ways. There are also many things that you will *not* be asked, but that would grease the wheels of the community through your action. Someone left their coffee mug at the Throwing Range? It will likely stay there until someone takes it back to the kitchen. That someone can be you. The toilet is clogged in the bathhouse? Toilets do not have a knack for unclogging themselves. The nearby plunger is all you'll need. Things at Planet Augusta get done by people doing them. Do!

This is certainly not an exhaustive list of all the ways that Planet Augusta may challenge you. The examples in this document are intended as an overview, and there are many pages in both the Staff Manual and on the Secret Page that go into LOTS more detail on each topic that will give you an even broader perspective. As well, all of the above areas overlap with each other, and there are not clear-cut black-and-white boundaries between them. (The lack of clear-cut black-and-white boundaries is another staple of Augustan life, and something that may challenge you as well!) The challenges are yours to cherish and to treasure.