

# Selfless

Camp will require that you put your own needs behind the needs of the kids and the camp. That one sentence comes with so much, that it is lost in its simplicity. So, let me offer some examples of the kind of selflessness that goes beyond what people may think of at the outset.

- During rest hour, you'd like to rest, but you know that taking a child aside who has been struggling to get along with the other kids in the cabin would really mean a lot to him. You play cards with him for a little while, and ask him how things are going while continuing to play cards. Finally, you're able to get some thoughts and feelings out of him, support him in those, and help him to create change in his behavior and thoughts that will help him out.
- The staff house could use a little tidying. You didn't make the mess, but you take a little of your time and straighten things out and finally take out the trash – it stinks. You don't do this all the time, and you don't resent spending a little of your precious time off to make a contribution to a community that isn't always perfect.
- On a day off, it is tempting to stay out late and do fun things, but a good night's sleep and some down time are going to leave you in the right mental and physical state for a new week with the campers.
- Wake up everyday with the thought "What can I do today to make the campers feel special?"
- A young girl hasn't had a bowel movement for several days. When she is nervous, she can't seem to go. You know that from the parent confidential, and you've been keeping tabs. You take the child to the bathroom, and lead her through guided relaxation exercises for an hour, after the kids have gone to sleep, and she finally goes.
- Go to sleep thinking "What more can I do tomorrow to make the campers feel even more special?"
- Instead of children sapping your energy, they feed it. The more time you are with kids, the happier and more energetic you feel. Staff are always excited to devote their time to children; it's why they are at camp. *This point is critical, and it defines the difference between people who love camp, and those who struggle with it.*
- In the morning, campers could be awakened in normal ways – tell them to get up, state the time, or make a quick joke. Or, you could do a "special wakeup." You could play an instrument. Sing a song. Write a note the night before and then give it to each camper. Tickle their faces with a feather. There are hundreds of ideas. You need to be creative and then actually do something.
- At night, although you could do some quick evening embers (nightly chat/event with cabin right before lights out) and call it good, you go the extra mile. You care about what you're going to do, how it happens, and the end result. You want your kids to remember these times as special, fun, meaningful, and memorable.
- Although you have specific areas of responsibility, if you see that there are others areas that could use your help, you lend a hand. *There are no bean counters or clock watchers at camp. At camp, you have overall responsibility, and not a job.*
- A wide game of Capture the Flag is being played. You can make the occasional run, walk around, and play the game. Or, you could throw yourself totally into it. You can jazz your kids, plan daring attacks that end in hilarious disaster, demonstrate exceptional sportsmanship, and be mindful of kids who are and are not engaged. Even if you don't like the game, you are 100% in it, and you need to find a meaningful role.
- Dressing up, being wacky, simply playing with the day, your kids, and being fully present and alive. The alternative is to go through the rote requirements of the day, without engaging your full spirit and mind.
- On the weekend, when you are on your time off, if you are around camp and your campers see you and want to interact with you, or need your assistance for a little while, you can't say you are off. If there is a need where we need the assistance of everyone, even though they are off, you need to then be on. If your time works out to 23 hours instead of 24 hours to make the day work, you do it without resentment. There are no clock watchers or bean counters at Camp Augusta.
- Telling a story, singing a song, getting a new campfire skit together, evening embers, special wakeups, really cool cabin activities, creating something extra in clinic areas . . . such things can be done or not. We hope the excitement of creation and giving will inspire you to create excellence.

After 26 years in camping, it has been my experience that it is NOT possible for people to do this as a sacrifice. We don't need martyrs. We don't need people to give food from their own plate to others. That leads to malnutrition. What we need are people who are able to give as a natural part of their being.

"We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give."  
Winston Churchill