

How to Support Your Camper with Augusta Being Canceled

Dedicate a little time to talk to them about Augusta specifically.

Your camper's trip to Augusta maybe be one of, if not the most anticipated trip of their entire year. Maybe this is their first time, maybe this is their 10th time... Either way, camp not happening is likely having a major impact on their well-being. Giving them a few minutes of undivided attention can have an immense impact on their ability to process through their thoughts and feelings.

Starting the conversation

Turn off all distractions and find a quiet place to give your camper your undivided attention. Distractions left and right can cut the connection before it even begins. Where to even begin... Sitting down and starting the conversation can often be the most difficult part.

Your camper is likely struggling with the reality that Augusta is not running this year. You are their rock in the world and as a result, the connection you have will likely mean that they are going to want to talk about camp with you. Simply sharing the reality that camp isn't running this year and then sitting with them in that space, is going to be a great start. You could ask them *"How are you feeling right now?"* OR *"What's coming up for you?"* OR *"Tell me about your thoughts at this moment"*.

A couple of the camp philosophies below may be a support to you, as you support your camper.

Active Listening

At Augusta, we practice a philosophy called **"Active Listening"**. All Augustans apply active listening with your camper, especially when they have a challenging experience and may benefit from a dedicated space to process. The table below contains the principles of Active Listening:

Eye Contact	Helpful unless other is uncomfortable with it
Voice Tone and Gestures	Matching these can help build rapport and empathy.
Body Language	Try to open yourself up to listening - Folded arms, turning away, crossed legs... These are all 'closed signals' and can be seen as less desirable when offering connection.
Minimal Verbalizing	Speak when there is a pause, and an implicit request. Be comfortable with several seconds of silence before reflecting/validating/reframing/asking a question.
Clarifying Questions	Keep guesses/questions framed positively. Perhaps ask: <i>"Is there more you want me to hear?"</i> <i>"Sounds like you're REALLY wanting ____, yes?"</i> <i>"Are you wanting/needing/wishing/longing for _____"</i> When your camper is done, and their feelings and needs seem complete, allow 30-60 seconds of silence. This gives time to reflect and if there is more, then your camper has time to share.
Touch	Hugs can speak 1000 words

Give the speaker time – let them speak as much as possible. At the same time, do actively listen and not only by way of non-verbal nods and expressions. Speaking can be listening too. See RRV below.



Allow the Feelings and Reflect, Reframe and Validate (RRV)

Allow your child to have their feelings, let them cry, be angry, be quiet, and then let them cry some more. This is hard, because no one wants to see a child in that state.

Reflect (the emotion) Reflect back the emotion. Allows for venting.

If your camper says, *"I hate that camp is canceled! Now I won't see my friends!"* You could say, *"Sounds like you're really mad that you are not going to be able to see your friends at camp this year."* When the emotion is labeled and acknowledged, people feel understood and reason can sometimes reign again. Sometimes the emotional level/intensity needs to be matched to a degree so they feel felt.

Reframe (the content) Reframe the message so that the content is the same, but you take the sting out.

Receive the daggers and hand them back a bouquet of flowers. Doing so can help the emotional person out of their fixed position and into a problem-solving mode. *"Camp Augusta isn't going to be the same ever again". "The Camp Augusta that you have known is special to you and you are worried that things may be different now". "What if I can't go back to camp next year" "You are excited to be able to go to camp in the future and knowing if you can go to camp in 2021 is important to you. Not knowing that right now is scary for you".*

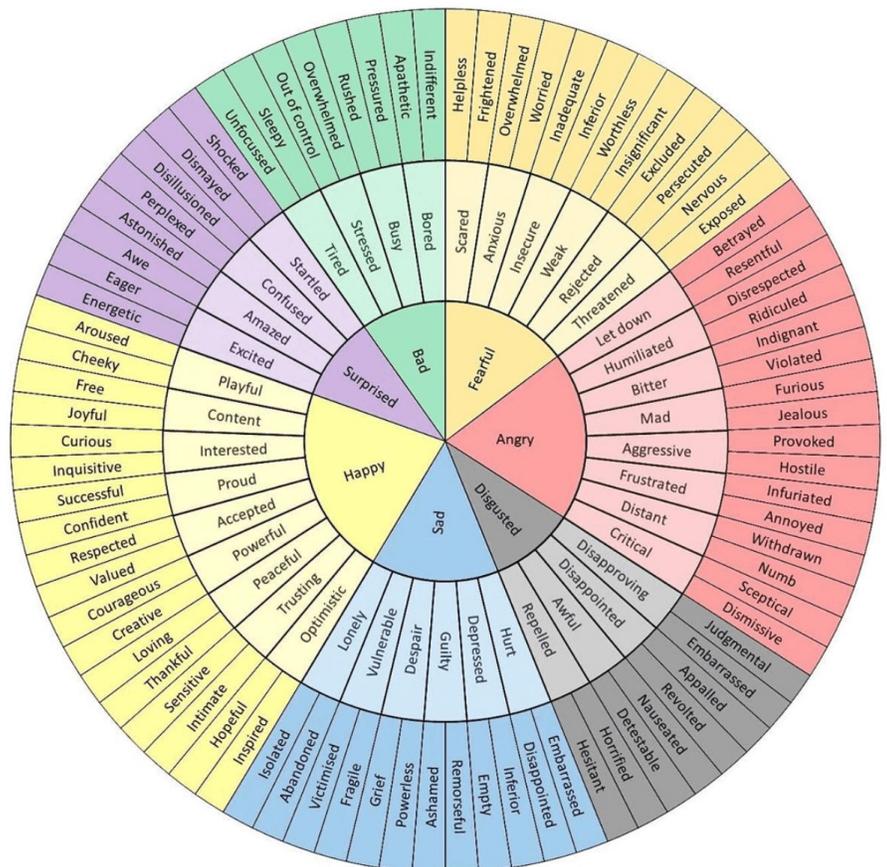
Validate Confirms the value and meaningfulness of another's experience and helps the person to feel safe.

Allows for venting of steam, so that the person can let go of anger or frustration or other strong feelings. It is not talking someone out of their feelings, making everything better, solving a problem, or explaining things. Validating someone else's experience does not invalidate our own experience.

"I understand what you're saying." "You're really wanting to be at camp and have fun with your friends." "It's okay to feel that way." "Oh, that sounds really tough." "Wow, that's a lot to deal with." "Yeah, you are scared for the future of camp."

A Helpful Emotion Chart

This chart is used in our staff training and can be a helpful tool for all to use during this time. Print it out and give it to your camper. You can use it together to identify the emotions that are lying a little deeper under the usual umbrella emotions.



Resist the Urge to compare

Resist the urge to compare the loss of Camp to greater losses. The 2020 cancellation of Augusta is a very real and painful experience for many of us. We all have many things to be grateful for, and although living in gratitude is one of the core pillars here at Augusta and a great mindful living tool, it is important to allow your camper to be in this moment.

Encourage Connection

Encourage your camper to connect with their camp friends, to reach out to others and not wait for others to call. Supporting, and feeling supported by another person, can help them feel a sense of control over a situation in which they have little control.

When ready, encourage your camper to think about ways in which they can support others in the community, this is a great time to display compassion.

Be Patient

Give them time to process. Some campers may need more time to understand. Some might be angry with camp, allow them to feel through that, working with them to identify the deeper feelings. This is part of the grieving process. Using the tools above to reframe their raw emotions may give them the support needed to shift away from that anger.

Reach Out

Camp Augusta is still here. We are still available and all of us are excited to talk to you or your camper if you would like us to. The decision to cancel camp in 2020 allows for the 2021 season to run.

