



COUNSELLING SKILLS TALKING POINTS 2013

This is going to be a very challenging and very rewarding job. The following discussion points are an opportunity to share ideas, strategies and experiences for situations that you will likely encounter while you are working with youth in a camp setting. Take your time and really explore solutions and strategies for each situation. When campers are not behaving the way we as staff would like, we should take it as an opportunity. We can use our behaviour management and counselling skills to illicit a change in the camper behaviour. When talking about campers, please maintain respectful language. Campers may not be behaving the way we would like, but they are not 'problem children'.

1. Food

- A camper is refusing to eat certain meals served. What will you do to ensure that they don't go hungry?
- A camper has a food restriction and is too shy to go up to the kitchen to get their special meal. What do you do? What types of behaviours were they showing for you to notice that they were too shy?
- Eating in groups is an excellent opportunity to teach healthy eating habits – what are some ways to go about this?

2. Behaviours

- A camper is disruptive in the group and it is affecting your ability to teach program areas
- A camper is being verbally aggressive to others in the group
- What is a good example of a consequence versus a discipline?
- At what point do you let your section director know that a camper is showing negative behaviours?
- When would you need to start documenting it with the YMCA Motivational Behavioural form?
- What might the camper be communicating through negative behaviours?

3. Nighttime

- A camper has been sick in the tipi. What do you do to care for the child?
- Campers are VERY excited to be having the biggest sleepover party of their lives and won't go to sleep when asked. What are some strategies to quiet them down?
- A camper is sleepwalking or talking in their sleep
- A teenage camper or campers are not in with the group, and their whereabouts is unknown. What do you do?
- A camper is really homesick and can't get to sleep. What are some great homesickness strategies?
- At what point do you bring homesick campers to your supervisor?

4. Accountability and Creating a Welcoming Environment

- Why is a Full Value Contract so important to the community we strive to create at Camp Chief Hector YMCA?
- What are some creative ideas for making a FVC?
- How can we help hold campers accountable? How does this help you as a staff member and keep you accountable?
- What are some important things to do and cover in the first afternoon to make the campers feel welcome?
- What are some ways to create a meaningful relationship with each camper as well as with the group as a whole?
- What are some realistic special touches you can do to make them feel valued?

5. Attitude

- Campers have a negative attitude about the weather and don't want to go outside. What do you do?
- A camper is refusing to participate in low ropes because they think it is stupid
- A camper states that they do not want to be at camp, and implies or states that they will leave camp on their own very soon. What do you do?
- A camper is having a negative attitude around other participants. How can we support that camper to have a more positive outlook?



6. Emergency

- A camper is getting picked on by another camper and tries to run home. How could you have been more aware of what was going on and proactively avoided the situation?
- A camper is missing from the group and no other camper has seen them for 20 minutes. What do you do?
- What things have gone wrong, from a staff-responsibility perspective, in that previous question?
- What type of form do you fill out for a camper that was missing from the group?

7. Teamwork and Community Living

- Your group is struggling to work as a team. What are some specific games you can play to help this?
- One camper is being excluded from the group. What can you do as a counsellor to bring them in?
- You have a major language barrier in your group – two campers in the group are new to Canada and have difficulty communicating with you and their peers. How can you make sure everyone is supporting each other?
- Why is teamwork and relationship building so important for the work that we do here?
- Campers are new to changing and showering in front of their counsellors and peers. How can you set the group up for success in supporting positive body images and helping them to feel comfortable with it?
- Why is it important to role model and encourage health, hygiene, care for personal belongings and cleanliness of personal and communal spaces?
- Camper belongings get wet during the week. How do you go about getting them dried with your busy schedule? Can you send clothes or sleeping bags home wet?

8. Counsellors

- All of the female campers have a crush on a male counsellor. That's all they talk about and they go crazy every time they see him. What are some things that the male counsellor needs to do to deal with the situation? What do you as the counsellor need to do?
- None of the counsellors on staff want to work with a certain person. What are some professional ways of finding solutions to this?
- Another camp staff has offered you to participate in a prohibited activity. What do you do? What do you tell them?
- Another camp staff has offered you to participate in a prohibited activity, and you have accepted and participated in the activity. What do you do? What do you tell the other staff member?
- A counsellor is incredibly homesick, finds the job difficult, and feels isolated. How can we support them and what are some things they can do to help themselves?

9. Working with Friends and Communication

- A co-worker gives you feedback that you're not pulling your weight and they are getting frustrated working with you. You ask for some specific examples. After paraphrasing what they have told you, what specific actions can you take to show that you have been receptive to their feedback?
- You don't agree with the leadership style your co-counsellor is using. What steps do you take to deal with it?
- If you are struggling to work with your co-counsellor, what is the first step you should take to opening the lines of communication? At what point do you let your section director know you are struggling?
- A friend and colleague has been given a written warning about changes that need to happen in their job performance. You feel that they are a great counsellor and don't understand where this feedback is coming from. Given the nature of communication in our small community, what is a professional way to express your concern about the situation?
 - How can gossiping about it to peers, with good intentions, not be helpful to the person under review/receiving feedback?



Counselling Skills Part 2 - conversation topics for staff working with campers ages 13 and up

- Campers are conversing about sexuality or drugs/alcohol misuse or violent/anti-social behavior in a way that seems irresponsible or that would put a staff member at risk for being present during the conversation (for seeming to have condoned or participated in the conversation). You know that young people are grappling with many complex issues, and that they typically do not converse on them as an adult care-giver might. What are your responsibilities as a staff member?
 - What do you say?
 - What do you do?
 - How does what you say and do create trust and safety within the group, while at the same time limiting what campers can say? (This question is much like a question regarding the physical actions and choices of campers – how does what you say and do create trust and safety within the group, while at the same time limiting the campers' choices to act in certain ways, to try certain activities?)
- You believe (though you have no direct proof) that a camper(s) has been using prohibited drugs/alcohol or has been having a sexual relationship with another camper. What do you do? What do you do if you have direct proof of any of these behaviours?
- A camper(s) is swearing often, and/or making strong critical comments about any number of lifestyle choices. What do you do?
- A camper refuses to accept OT meal suggestions and is stalling the process. How do you address this?
- Campers want to leave the tipi at night to 'visit friends from another tipi'. How do you address this?
- Relationships between campers from different groups have begun to affect the groups' ability to perform and enjoy camp. How do you handle this? (crushes on each other, dating, etc)
- Your co-counsellor is letting the campers 'get away with' behaviours and attitudes that should be addressed. How do you manage this?
- More emphasis and energy is being put into your relationship with your co-counsellor than with the campers. How do you adjust this?