

Training Tool Sheet for Camp Staff

“Give Me Some Choices” Ways to Debrief With Your Campers

Helping campers “get” that what we do and learn at camp applies back home requires help from you. Shine the spotlight on similarities, differences, effective behaviors, and lessons learned. The following techniques are good options to consider for group discussions with your campers. Remember that each of your camper groups is unique—what works with one group will not necessarily work well with another group. Be flexible and try your own adaptations! If you are unsure or think you might be approaching “deep water” check out your plans with another camp leader . . . a second opinion usually strengthens any plan©.

Open Forum:

Circle up the group up and give them an opening statement that you think will trigger perceptions and thoughts from your campers.

Example statement: “I’m interested in hearing what you thought about our hike to Bald Mountain today.”

Pros: Easy and quick technique that is familiar to many people; works well when kids are excited about sharing.

Cons: Can be hard to get campers to voluntarily “speak up” and share their ideas (may seem like school).

Questioning:

This technique involves some preplanning. You establish objectives that you would like to achieve in your activity then develop specific questions. Generally you sequence your questions by starting with concrete questions then move into more “insightful” types.

Example simple sequence: “What happened?” “What did you learn?” “How can you use this information (in the future/at home/in other groups, etc.)?”

Pros: Provides specific feedback on preset objectives; allows for depth and probing.

Cons: Involves planning; takes some practice to get comfortable probing responses and moving conversationally through your questions.

Rounds:

This technique involves every member in your group, because they are each asked to respond to a stimulus you provide them. The three most common types of rounds are:

- Designated word/number round: member responds with a single designated word or number on a scale.
- Word or phrase round: members are asked to respond with a word or short phrase.
- Comment rounds: members share with more than a few words as a way to express more depth to their response.

Example of designated word/number round: “I would like for each of you to think about your role today in (activity) and say whether you were a “leader” or “follower.” “I would like for each of you to tell me on a scale of 1-10 how safe you felt today when we did (activity) with 1 not safe at all and 10 totally safe.”

Example of word or phrase round: “I would like each of you to pick a word/phrase that describes how you feel right now.”

Comment round: “I’d like to hear a short reaction from each of you on how you feel about your experience on the overnight camp-out.”

Pros: Everyone is involved; quick and easy to do yet can provide depth to insight.

Cons: Can sometimes get into a “negative” mindset if members build on less positive aspects.

Object Metaphors:

Sometimes it is difficult to get campers to verbally respond without some kind of prompt. The use of objects allows campers to focus their thinking and is often a less-threatening way to share their ideas. The object can often serve as a way for campers to draw metaphors from their experiences in camp to other life situations. Collect objects (Dollar Store, craft store, random things around camp, etc.) and place in a special bag or box. During processing, each camper selects something from the “toy bag” (examples: a star, mirror, penny, all kinds of small toys, rock, twig) or you can have the campers all use the same object.

Example of object metaphors: Someone chooses the star from the “Toy Bag”. Each camper talks about a time today when they felt like a star. Another option is to let each camper select an object then let them interpret in their own way the relationship between that object and the point of the debrief.

Pros: Fun for campers; creative; depth and insight to information.

Cons: Need to gather props ahead of time.

References:

Nadler, R.S. & Luckner, J.L. (1992). *Processing the adventure experience: Theory and practice*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing.

Martin, B., Cashel, C., Wagstaff, M., & Breuning, M. (2006). *Outdoor Leadership: Theory and Practice*. Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics.



765-342-8456
5000 State Road 67 North
Martinsville, Indiana 46151-7902

www.ACAcamps.org
www.CampParents.org