



Monkey Business Camp (MBC) firmly believes in and practices positive guidance techniques. Children will always be treated with kindness and respect.

Positive Guidance consists of:

Connection before Correction- campers are more willing to listen to us, accept our guidance and follow our example when we care about them individually. This can be tricky with new campers each week, to really take time to get to know a little bit about each one, and to connect, but it is part of the task of being a camp counselor and a great skill to take onto regular life too. Even amid correction, children need to know our fundamental desire to connect with and understand them.

Calm presence-camp is a high intensity environment and when we bring calm and understanding to each scenario, rather than overwhelm, anger, or irritation, it helps. Be “underwhelmed” in highly charge situations. Take deep breaths, laugh, do a yoga or other stretch, ask another counselor for support when needed.

Staff that are nurturing and accepting towards each individual child, encouraging building of trust.

Encouraging children to express their emotions in a safe manner and showing empathy. It can be tempting to say to a 5-year-old having hard time when parents left, “You’ll be fine, there is no reason to be sad”.

Instead, if we acknowledge those feelings, it will help children articulate and process them: "It sounds like you are sad and maybe scared. What's sad for you? Where are you feeling the sad in your body?"

Identify Strengths-Our brains tend to focus on the negative, which is a holdover from a more primitive time, when we needed to focus on a saber tooth tiger that might eat us. It takes effort to focus on the positive, and one of our tasks on site each day, with the kids, youth leaders, and each other. building the self-esteem of children by providing positive reinforcements, and encouraging the development of self-awareness, autonomy, and self-expression.

Clear expectations and limits set by camp staff, with input from children. These limits will be stated frequently and kindly to help them to be understood and remembered. Focus will be on what we want from campers, not what we don't want. For example, "If everyone listens right now, we can get more time at the Carnival, or we'll be able to start the ice cream making."

Examples:

- We tell a counselor if we are concerned about ourselves or a friend being hurt in any way.
- We all help with camp clean up after we have played, because we value teamwork.
- We say "please" and "thank you" to show our respect for others.
- When we are annoyed or angry, we calm down before speaking.
- We always ask before going to the bathroom.
- We wear our hat in the sun to show respect for our bodies, as the sun is very strong, and our skin needs shade.

Use of re-direction as a way of helping campers move into a more appropriate activity for the time and place.

- "Misha come sit over here with us at journals right now. Can I do a word search with you?"

- "I'm going to count backwards from 10 to 1 and let's get this entire table cleaned up."
- "Mia, stay on this side of the white buoy." (swim days)



Communicating about privileges campers can partake in when they do important actions, using this formula:

We can _____ after we _____.

Examples:

- "We can play with the parachute after we clean up the art area."
- "You can stay together at lunch if you stay seated until the bell rings."
- "We can leave on our trip after everyone picks up two or more pieces of trash and uses the bathroom."

Having fun with the kids. If it gets too serious, then it's no fun for anyone. If kids are being super loud in a circle, try throwing up a ball and having them be as loud as they can and then when it comes back down and you catch, to be completely quiet (from one of our original directors, Taylor O'Connor). Or another favorite, I learned from Nekhi Foster, to ring a meditation bell and ask them to put their finger up when they no longer hear the sound. Or other favorites, like "And a hush fell over the room"

Being proactive by observing and being near the children to assist with conversations and conflicts before they get challenging. Assisting may include asking them for ideas, to repeat ideas back and encourage listening and negotiation.

When re-direction does not work, focus on the behavior, not the person, but address it, being gentle and clear.

Counselor: "Let's talk about your interrupting a lot at circle and having negative tone"

Camper or Youth Leader: Silence.

Counselor: "Let's figure out how to solve the problem of the interrupting in circle with negative tone."

Camper/YL: Silence, with perhaps a scowl.

Counselor: "What's a good plan for dealing with your being at circle without interrupting and having negative tone."

Camper/YL: "But other kids are doing the same thing." (Excuse)

Counselor: "Thanks for letting me know. Right now, we are talking about you interrupting in circle and having negative tone."

Camper/YL: "I'd rather be doing something else."

Counselor: "Thanks for being honest about that. I can understand that. At the same time, there are certain expectations at camp, and one is to be at these circles and with some kindness and respect, so I am wondering what can be done about your interrupting and negative tone."

This conversation could keep going for a while more, but eventually, if they see you will not be sidetracked from issue you are discussing, they will succumb, so they will not have to keep discussing. Or, you may end up having a lengthier discussion, and make sure to follow up with any ideas or plans. The trick here is that you are keeping focused on the issue, and not raising your voice, or labeling the child. You are talking about the issue.

Sitting out to "cool" down (about one minute per age is good guide). You may need to direct a child to do this, but only before you speak with them more. Reminder that the conversation will be about the issue, not the child, for example, "I want to talk about when you were using a disrespectful tone in circle", rather than "I want to talk about your being disrespectful." It is a subtle difference between these two ways of phrasing, but studies have found this can have profound impact on behavior management.

The 80-20 rule: Campers should be speaking more than us. We can use prompts to support them coming up with solutions:

"How do you plan to fix this?"

"What do you think you could do differently next time?"

"How can you solve this problem?"

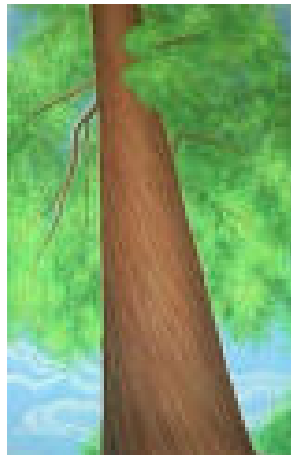
"What steps are you going to take"?

"Make another choice."

Sometimes we can communicate with simple look or hug too. These can remind in simple way and guide kids back onto track.

Environment that promotes behaviors most adults want to see of their kid:

Calm, organized, consistent routine, and balanced schedule of child initiated and adult directed activities, with some surprise. This helps bring about engagement, kindness, grit, cooperation, gratitude, enthusiasm.



When Things Get Harder: A child may be removed from the activities under the supervision of an adult when it is necessary to protect the child and/or other children in the camp from physical harm. The adult will remain with the child in as much as we can provide while also following our "always 2" rule (always having two staff with kids) private space until the child can regain control of his/her emotions and is able

to return to the activities. Children will be treated with respect and compassion at this time, as always.

Physical restraint of a child is used exclusively for angry, out-of-control behavior that endangers the child, other children, or staff. The staff director and parent must be informed.

Counselors are expected to request help when ongoing group management or individual problems occur. Usually, each summer, out of hundreds of kids who attend, there are at least 2 who are too demanding for environment and amount of care we can provide, and the Staff Director will communicate with the parents about this.



We need to look at our own leadership and communication skills and how we are using them at camp. Evaluating without getting defensive can be difficult. At camp, we want a culture where we openly share about successes and mistakes. Doing self-evaluations where we share each week about 3 things that are going well and 3 things not going well, reminds us to look at both aspects, and to set goals to address, and to hone additional skills.

"At camp, I'm always filled with such high energy and such an overwhelming sense of positivity. It is the environment there and the community that give me all that energy, that fuel me to just go on and be so creative and so energetic and so full of life. Every day, day after day, and I get that from the other people I'm interacting with."

~Camp Counselor

This article used ideas and phrases from Monkey Business Camp, Audrey "Sunshine" Monke's book: Happy Campers and social work agencies in Oregon.