What you’ll learn:
• Common problems you may encounter at 4-H Camp.
• How to deal with those problems.
• Strategies to prevent problems.

Introduction:
There are certain problems that we can expect to happen at 4-H camp. These are common problems. If you know this in advance and expect them, you can be better prepared to know how to deal with them.

Why this is important:
4-H Camp is fun, but when 15 to 20 people (or more!) live & play together 24 hours a day for 4 or 5 days, problems will happen. Knowing how to deal with the common problems will give you more time and energy to deal with the unexpected.

Unit Goals:
• Identify problems that are common at 4-H Camp.
• Understand how to deal with those problems.
• Use strategies to prevent problems.

HOMESICKNESS

By far, one of the most common problems you may have to deal with at 4-H camp is homesickness. This is often seen in younger campers, but it can strike anyone!

Symptoms of Homesickness:
• Crying for prolonged periods for no obvious reason, especially at bedtime or quiet time in the cabin.
• Complaining of a stomach ache. Some campers don’t understand that their “stomachache” is really a physical response to emotions.
• Wanting to be by him/her self.
• Refusing to participate because “I don’t feel good.”

Ways to Manage Homesickness:
• First have the camper checked by the EMT to determine if s/he is sick. If not, then proceed to:
Managing Homesickness continued:

- Keep camper involved in activities. Don’t let him/her withdraw from others.
- Enlist other campers to be their “buddy.”
- Ask a teen leader to give them extra attention and let the camper “help” with responsibilities. Make the camper feel special (Just don’t over-do it; the other campers may get jealous). Sometimes a favorite camp staff member can help too.
- Find something that interests the camper and talk about that.
- Talk about upcoming fun that the camper can look forward to.
- DON’T promise the camper s/he can call home. If you do, most likely the camper will go home.
- If all this fails, enlist the help of the Dean of Men/Women.

STEALING

Stealing is usually NOT a problem at camp. Most of the time, items are misplaced or left at classes. The best strategy for dealing with stealing is prevention! If you follow the basic camp rules, there won’t be much opportunity for stealing:

- Campers should not be alone in the cabin.
- Campers and leaders are not to visit or enter other cabins.
- Campers should keep personal belongings put away (not out on the bed for all to see).

If Something Does Come Up Missing….

- DO NOT assume anything has been stolen. Assume it is missing. Most “stolen” items turn up in the campers belongings.
- Before you do anything else, a leader and the camper should go through all the camper’s belongings to search for the missing item.
- Retrace the camper’s schedule in case the item was left behind.
- NEVER go through a camper’s belongings without permission.
- NEVER accuse a camper of stealing unless you have absolute proof. If you do, involve the Dean.
• Encourage campers to keep their “stuff” put away. This is especially true for money, cameras, food, anything of value.

CUSSING & PROFANITY

Profanity of any type is NOT tolerated at 4-H camp! The first person that must know this rule is YOU! If adult or teen leaders curse or use profanity, the campers will too. If profanity is part of your vocabulary, start now cleaning it up.

If you have a camper who is using profanity:

• CONFRONT the campers immediately. Let them know cussing & profanity will not be tolerated.
• If the problem persists, a talk with the Dean is the next step.
• Campers will often use profanity to impress peers, shock you, or prove their “maturity.” Help them find positive ways to develop their self-esteem.

BEDWETTING

Bedwetting is a very embarrassing problem for campers. Can you imagine waking up in a room full of people with soaked clothes and bed? Compassion and discretion are needed here.

If a BEDWETTING accident occurs:
• DO NOT tease or ridicule the camper.
• Keep the problem quiet.
• Discreetly help the camper get cleaned up.
• After campers have left the cabin, gather sleeping bag and clothes that need to be laundered. Place them in a trash bag and take to the Dean. These can be washed at camp.

To help avoid a repeat accident:
• limit fluids after dinner
• keep a light on in the bathroom.
Some campers won’t get up in the dark, even if they have to use the restroom.
• Some parents will send disposable “pull-ups” for campers to wear at night.

CAMPER (and Leader) FATIGUE

As camp goes on, the active schedule can take its toll on campers and leaders. You are tired, lose your patience and problems multiply. Take preventative steps to avoid these problems:

• Campers (you too!) should be in bed at lights out. Set limits on talking after lights out.
• Observe campers to ensure they are eating meals and not filling up on junk food.
• Rest quietly during cabin time.
ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD OR ADD)

You will discover campers with an unlimited amount of energy, problems focusing on the task at hand, short attention spans, and difficulty following directions. These MAY be symptoms of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Some of the campers will be taking medication to help overcome these symptoms.

While these behaviors can present a special challenge to leaders, there are several ways to help manage these behaviors.

• MOST IMPORTANTLY, do not LABEL these campers by making statements such as, “He is ADD.” Or, “She is my hyper one.” Children live up to expectations. If you expect them to be “hyper,” they will be.
• Practice PATIENCE with these campers. If you are becoming impatient, let another leader work with the camper for awhile.
• Remind yourself frequently that the campers are not deliberately trying to be difficult. Their brains are wired differently and that causes them to behave differently.

• Give simple, step-by-step instructions --- ONE AT A TIME.
• When you are speaking to the camper, direct their attention to you.
• These children are very visual learners. They focus on what they are looking at.
• Limit your explanations. Details easily overwhelm these children.
• Accept the fact that you will have to repeat yourself frequently.
• PRAISE the campers when they are doing the right thing.
• REWARD the campers for appropriate behavior rather than always punishing the inappropriate.

REMEMBER!

No matter what behavior challenges you may encounter at 4-H camp, NEVER use any form of physical punishment.

How does this apply to me?

• What are the common problems you may encounter at camp?
• What are the recommended steps for dealing with those problems?
• How can you prevent some of those problems?