



2026 CONTENT GUIDE & HIGHLIGHTED SESSIONS

This is a guide to many of my current sessions/topics. **Highlighted titles** indicate that expanded descriptions and slide samples are also included in the following pages. Most of the highlights are my new and frequently-requested topics. All content is customizable, and I am also pleased to create new content to fit your organization's specific needs. For more details about any session, to discuss custom content, or to book sessions, please email me at emily@brightmoosetraining.com. I look forward to working with you!

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT: CORE SKILLS & BASICS

1. Essential Behavior Skills
2. Positive Behavior Management in Groups
3. Behavior Management Strategies & Positive Foundational Skills
4. Successful Group Management Skills (Relationships 101)
5. Upgrading Your Behavior Toolbox
6. Advanced Dive into Decoding Behavior (Meeting Kids "Where They're At")
7. Crisis Prevention & Response: De-escalating Intense Behavior Situations
8. Behavior Management Role Plays

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT: SPECIFIC TOPICS

1. The Psychosocial Cascade: When One Camper's Sparks Light a Group Fire
2. Homesickness & Transitioning to Camp
3. Addressing Behavior of Middle & High Schoolers
4. Bullying, Social Exclusion, & Relational Aggression (and Creating a Culture of Includers)
5. Conflict Resolution Skills for Campers
6. Restorative Justice & Circles for Conflict Resolution
7. ECE: Behavior & Classroom Management in Early Education Settings
8. OST: Meeting Youth Where They Are & Supporting their Behavioral Needs in Out-of-School-Time Programs
9. Why Can't You All Just Get Along? (a.k.a. The "Awkward Taco" Social Skills Session)
10. Replacing Time Outs with Time In

EXPANDING THE TOOLBOX

1. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, & Belonging at Camp
2. Working with Parents & Guardians
3. Responding to & Debriefing Disclosures (When Campers Share)
4. Structure & Transitions
5. Individual Behavior Plans and Support Systems
6. Understanding & Addressing Summer Learning Loss
7. Risk Management & Staff Judgment

STAFF PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL, & SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

1. Say This, Not That
2. From "I Can't Even With This Kid" to "I've Got This": Coaching Staff Through Camper Burnout
3. What's Your EQ? Cultivating Empathetic Leadership & Emotional Intelligence
4. Managing Decision Fatigue in Camp Leadership Roles
5. Be the Best YOU! Stress, Burnout, & Self-Care Strategies for Year-Round Youth Program & Rec Professionals
6. Self-Care for Stressed out Staff
7. Outsmarting Mind Traps (Cognitive Distortions)
8. Increasing our Bouncebackability (Professional & Personal Resilience)
9. The Uneven Load: Understanding Teamwork & Roles
10. Strategies to Avoid Getting Stuck in the Muck (Avoiding Colleague Drama)
11. Best Staff You Can Be (Professional #Adulting @ Work)
12. Transitioning to Counselorhood (for prior CITs/JCs)

MENTAL HEALTH, NEURODIVERSITY & RELATED TOPICS

1. Understanding & Supporting Neurodiversity (“Neurodivergence 101”)
2. Creating Sensory-Friendly Environments in Youth Program Spaces
3. Supporting Staff & Camper Engagement Through the Lens of Neurodiversity
4. All About Anxiety
5. Autism 101 & Support Strategies
6. Allying Without Enabling
7. An Introduction to Trauma & Trauma-Informed Practices at Camp (& Strategies to Support Youth)
8. Considerations for Implementing Mental Health & Behavioral Supports

LEADERSHIP & SUPERVISION SKILLS

1. Supervisors Crash Course (‘Supervision 101’)
2. Supporting My Team as a (New) Supervisor
3. Avoiding Common Supervisory Pitfalls
4. Leadership Styles & Strategies
5. Ugh, I Have to Call a Parent
6. Leading with Calm in Challenging Moments
7. Difficult Conversations: Constructive Criticism
8. Difficult Conversations: Helping Staff Master High-Stakes Camper Discussions

ORGANIZATIONAL TOOLBOX

1. Not Special, Just Supported: Navigating Parent/Guardian Resistance to Individualized Supports at Camp
2. Recruiting & Hiring Beyond the Stereotypes: Assessing Camp’s Readiness & Adjusting Processes to Welcome an Increasingly Neurodiverse Applicant Pool
3. Behind the Scenes: Behavior Management Policy, Procedures, & Paperwork
4. A Piece, Not the Whole Pie: Core Restorative Practices You Can Implement Now
5. What Does My Board Want from Me?
6. The New Geographic Demographic for Day Camps: Hiring Outside Your Area Code
7. Should they Stay or Should They Go?

FOR PEOPLE WHO HIRE, TRAIN, & LEAD STAFF

1. Mind the Gap: Leading Today’s Staff Across Generations
2. Bridging the Staff Skills/Camper Needs Divide
3. Training Glow-Up: Modernizing 5 Orientation Topics for Today’s Staff
4. Preparing to Successfully Train our GenZ Staff
5. Before Summoning Camper Care: Building a Behavior Empowered Staff Team
6. Please Just Do Your Job: Hiring, Training, & Coaching for Initiative
7. Helping Staff Take Initiative
8. Trauma-Informed Workplaces: Safe Staff Spaces
9. Can’t Supervise Today. Too #Overwhelmed
10. Identifying, Avoiding, & Addressing Staff Toxicity
11. Getting Staff Ready to #Adult at Camp
12. Advocate, Don’t Redecorate: Helping Staff Appropriately Get Their Needs Met
13. Prepare Your Staff to Conquer the Back-to-Work Blues (Mitigating Anticipatory Anxiety & Using Time Off Effectively)
14. Staff Appreciation, Morale, & Mid-Summer “Slump”
15. Post-Camp Unpacking & Reflection for Camp Leaders

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

1. Tackling Thorny Behavior with Confidence
2. The Advocate Generation: Constructive Interactions with Staff
3. Advocate, Don’t Redecorate! (When Staff Give “Advice” to Leadership)
4. Outwit Your Mental Clutter
5. Top 10 Tips for an Amazing Summer
6. We’re Done Getting By! Time to Rediscover our Why
7. It’s Your Move: The Resilience Resource Playbook
8. Motivation and the 4 Es of Youth Work (Essential, Engaging, Exciting, and yes, Exhausting!)
9. Creating Inclusive Environments that Work
10. Navigating a New Normal
11. Weaving Collaborative Care in Youth Programs (Addressing Loneliness & Disconnection)

Essential Behavior Skills

This is a very direct, no-frills “do this when kids do that” behavior session that will give staff immediately implementable, specific behavior techniques and skills in five categories: 1. Building relationships (“meet kids where they are,” “build the relationship bank account”), 2. Language & phrases (“when staff ask you to...”, “what do you need?”), 3. Situational supports (“use natural/logical consequences,” “know what to send up the chain”), 4. Techniques (“put behavior in buckets,” “interpret ‘I can’t’ correctly”), and 5. Group management skills (“set and state boundaries,” “forecast transition times”). While we will discuss briefly why these skills are so critical, there is little theory in this session. The focus is on helping staff consolidate the skills and know what to do. Including role-playing is optional and highly recommended. When the majority of staff implement these strategies consistently, you’ll see immediate and significant positive changes in participant behavior. *This session can be infinitely configured to include the specific strategies that will resonate most with your staff and participants.*

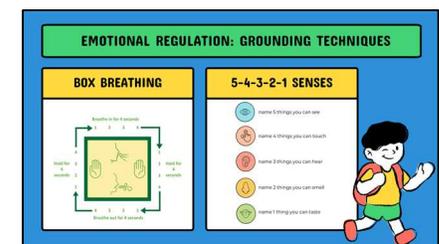
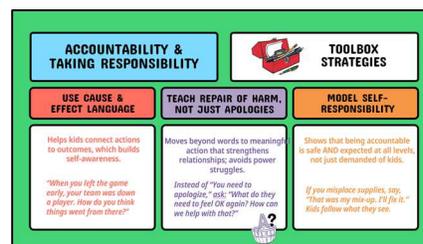
Objectives: Participants will learn (1) a core set of skills and techniques to use for behavior/group management; and (2) the importance of team-wide consistency with application of behavior management strategies.



Upgrading Your Behavior Toolbox

Working with children means encountering moments of defiance, impulsivity, and emotional overwhelm - and those moments are when your response matters most. This fast-paced, engaging session gives staff and leaders a set of clear, practical tools for managing challenging behaviors while maintaining calm and connection. Participants will explore five key skill areas: defiance and power struggles, de-escalation, ADHD and impulsivity, accountability and taking responsibility, and emotional regulation. Each section focuses on what’s happening beneath the behavior, what adults should do in the moment, and how to help children build the skills they’re missing. Staff will leave with strategies that are easy to remember, immediately usable, and designed to strengthen relationships instead of control them. Whether staff have been on the job 3 weeks or 30 years, this workshop will transform the way they approach difficult situations with youth, and set everyone up for success!

Objectives: Participants will (1) understand how underlying regulation and relationship needs can drive challenging behavior; (2) learn practical tools for defusing defiance, managing impulsivity, and supporting emotional regulation; (3) identify common adult responses that escalate situations and replace them with effective alternatives; and (4) build confidence using simple frameworks for accountability, problem-solving, and co-regulation.

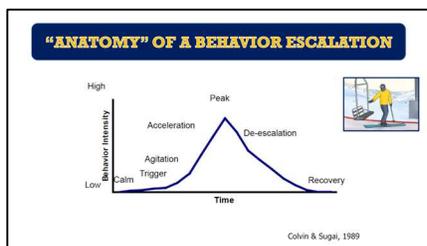


Crisis Prevention & Response: De-escalating Intense Behavior Situations

This session is essential learning for anyone in need of strategies to help manage escalations (situations in which participants are experiencing heightened behaviors), including aggressiveness. Various configurations (based on time available, participant experience level, etc.) are available. At minimum, this session covers the stages of behavioral escalation from calm, through triggers and acceleration, to the peak and back down through de-escalation and recovery. It also explains the various types of escalation such as “tantruming” and “turtling,” how responses vary between these, and what to do in these specific situations. This session can include multiple role-plays so participants can practice their skills in a safe setting.

Additional Options: Addressing suicidal ideation/suicidal language; personal safety skills; safely and effectively intervening between campers in a physical altercation; the four major types of aggression (each utilizes a different and specific de-escalation strategy); determining which escalated behaviors are beyond your staff’s ability to manage and may require professional intervention; activities such as practicing “neutral requests,” coping strategies, and group management during escalations; and the ten domains of de-escalation (practical de-escalation strategy: single voice, offering choices, etc.).

Objectives: Participants will learn (1) to identify the 7 discrete stages of a behavioral escalation, (2) specific step-by-step de-escalation strategies that are most effective for each of four types of aggressive interactions, (3) a framework for determining when professional intervention may be needed to safely deescalate a crisis situation.

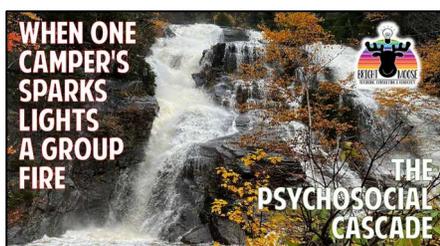


“SUPER HELPFUL. I REALLY APPRECIATED THAT IT COVERED EVERY STEP OF THE PROCESS IN AN APPROACHABLE WAY.”
- AMERICAN CAMP ASSOCIATION NATIONAL CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

The Psychosocial Cascade: When One Camper’s Sparks Light a Group Fire

It starts with one camper’s impulsive outburst or social misstep. Friction ripples through the group: there’s eye rolls, teasing, exclusion, and before long, low-level bullying. Staff do what they can, but they aren’t effective in quelling the drama or the behaviors. Left unchecked, this “psychosocial cascade” drains staff energy, heightens tension, and destabilizes the group dynamic. Leadership is frustrated with staff, staff are frustrated with campers and leadership, and, oh yes, here come the parents, who can’t understand what went wrong and definitely blame someone else’s kiddo, your staff, and you! We will confidently address this frustrating situation, breaking down why these dynamics unfold so quickly, then turning to what staff can do to prevent escalation and rebuild group connections. You’ll leave with strategies to help you check the sparks, equip staff to constructively address all campers’ needs, and navigate the often-tricky parent conversations that follow.

Objectives: Participants will (1) define the “psychosocial cascade” and understand the impact that individual campers’ difficult (but not necessarily camp-inappropriate) behavior can have in the group; (2) identify early warning signs and staff strategies for redirecting group dynamics and resetting group culture; and (3) gain tools for honest, clear, and supportive parent communication specific to group dynamic challenges at camp.



- FIRST STEPS**
1. Identify the “Core” Child
 2. Coach the Group, Not Just the Individual
 3. Address Mistreatment Clearly
 4. Give Tools & Check Ins
 5. Clarify Expectations for ALL

Addressing Behavior with Middle & High Schoolers

Middle and high school youth bring energy, independence, and personality—along with unique behavioral challenges. This session helps staff understand what drives common behaviors at these ages and how to respond with confidence and consistency. Participants will learn how developmental factors shape defiance, attention-seeking, disengagement, and peer dynamics, and will gain age-appropriate strategies for building trust, maintaining boundaries, and creating a positive group culture. The training contrasts what works best for middle schoolers (structure, relationships, and predictability) with what motivates high schoolers (autonomy, relevance, and respect).

Objectives: Participants will (1) identify developmental and social factors that influence behavior in middle and high school youth; (2) learn practical, age-appropriate strategies to address common challenges such as defiance, attention-seeking, disengagement, and conflict; (3) Strengthen staff capacity to balance structure and flexibility when setting expectations; and (4) Build confidence in fostering positive relationships that promote accountability, respect, and belonging.



“EMILY IS ONE OF THE MOST DYNAMIC AND DOWN-TO-EARTH TRAINERS FOR THE CAMP INDUSTRY. SHE HAS A GENUINE ABILITY TO CONNECT WITH AUDIENCES OF ALL AGES THROUGH HER WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE, CANDID STORYTELLING, AND LIGHTEARTED SENSE OF HUMOR. EMILY’S ABILITY TO COMBINE PRACTICAL, HANDS-ON LEARNING WITH EFFECTIVE AND MOTIVATIONAL COACHING IS TRULY REFRESHING FOR FRONTLINE STAFF AND SEASONED DIRECTORS ALIKE.”

– GREG JUTKIEWICZ, CONCORD ACADEMY DAY CAMP

Conflict Resolution Skills for Campers

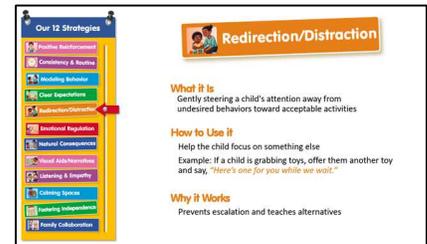
Helping campers learn to work through conflict is one of the most valuable parts of the camp experience, but it’s not always easy. This session gives staff a clear understanding of how independence and support needs differ by age, and how those differences shape the way campers handle disagreements. Participants explore practical tools and language for guiding children and teens through peer conflict in ways that build problem-solving skills and emotional awareness. The focus is on teaching, not fixing: equipping staff to stay calm, model empathy, and coach campers toward healthy resolution instead of stepping in too soon or letting things fester.

Objectives: Participants will (1) understand how developmental stages affect campers’ ability to manage and resolve conflicts; (2) learn specific, age-appropriate strategies for supporting campers through disagreements and social challenges; (3) practice language and coaching techniques that promote self-regulation, empathy, and problem-solving; and (4) strengthen confidence in balancing support and independence during peer conflicts.



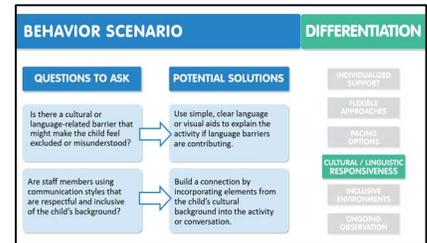
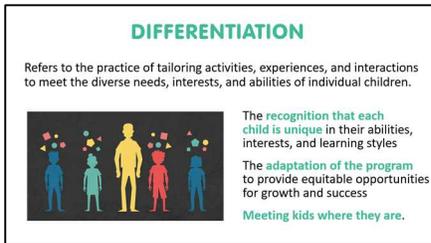
ECE: Behavior & Classroom Management for Early Childhood

Our youngest youth have very different needs to our school-aged participants. In this session staff will identify the ways their needs differ, highlighting the key areas which can cause behavioral challenges for our youngest participants and their classrooms/groups. Staff will gain 12 specific strategies for helping youth thrive in the group setting, addressing both individualized and classroom/group-friendly strategies for supporting their success.



OST: Meeting Youth Where They Are & Supporting Their Behavioral Needs in Out-of-School-Time Programs

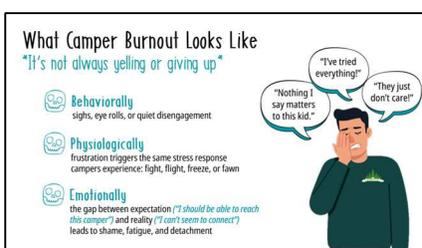
It's essential that we tailor our behavior management and emotional/behavioral support for the children in our care to meet them where they are! We know youth come into our programs with varying levels of need and ability, and with varying levels of home supports. In this session we'll discuss both how to differentiate activities for youth to encourage greater success, and how to manage behaviors that arise during program time during out-of-school (after-school, vacation camp, etc.) settings.



From "I Can't Even With This Kid" to "I've Got This": Coaching Staff Through Camper Burnout

Care fatigue, empathy erosion, compassion crash...whatever you call it, it's the look we've all seen on a counselor's face when they're just done with "that camper." Even the most dedicated staff reach a point where their patience wears thin and frustration takes over; they become emotionally numb, irritated, or even resentful, and they're convinced that they've already given all they've got. This session explores why staff hit that wall and addresses what's really going on - physiologically, emotionally, and relationally, plus how leaders can support staff in regaining their balance. We'll explore ways to acknowledge and normalize these moments (without shame!) and introduce practical, ready-to-use strategies to help staff reset in the moment and re-commit to long-term successful re-engagement with campers. And we'll answer the big question: "What can we do to keep staff grounded and effective when the patience runs out...but the camper's still there?"

Objectives: Participants will (1) identify signs of staff "camper burnout" and its impact on the staff experience; (2) learn supervisory tools for redirecting staff mindset and behavior in a culture that normalizes support without blame; and (3) build a toolbox of coaching strategies for helping staff re-engage with campers who are experiencing repetitive, challenging behaviors.



What's Your EQ? Cultivating Empathetic Leadership & Emotional Intelligence

According to Brené Brown, “empathy is the essential leadership skill of our time.” This interactive workshop helps staff explore their Emotional Quotient or “EQ,” and more specifically, the role of empathy and emotional intelligence in effective leadership. Participants will deepen their understanding of how empathy develops and shows up in professional settings. They will have the opportunity to assess their own strength and growth zones for each of the five areas of emotional intelligence, with a lens on where they want their future EQ to be! We’ll also discuss the challenges of empathetic leadership (including over-identification and decision delay), and staff will leave equipped with practical strategies to navigate those challenges while leading with compassion and (emotional) intelligence. Participants will have an Emotional Intelligence Self-Evaluation worksheet to complete during the session through guided discussion. They will also have the opportunity to reflect in small groups and as part of larger sharing/discussions throughout the workshop. This is a very “do as we go” style session designed to be hands-on learning and highly self-reflective.

Objectives: Participants will (1) learn how empathy is developed and analyze how the concepts of cognitive, emotional, and compassionate empathy apply at work; (2) learn the four remaining components of emotional intelligence and evaluate each of the five as part of a self-awareness activity; and (3) identify (a) several potential setbacks of empathetic leadership, and (b) action steps to minimize their impact.

Mastering Empathetic Leadership and Communication

When someone asks if they can fax me something.

WHY DON'T YOU JUST SEND IT OVER ON A DINOSAUR?

Developing Empathy: 3 Stages

- Cognitive Empathy**: Think It. Understand what someone else is thinking and feeling.
- Emotional Empathy**: Feel It. Actually put yourself in someone else's shoes and feel their emotion.
- Compassionate Empathy**: Be Moved By It. Feel concern about another's suffering with a desire to help the person in need.

The 5 EI Components: **Motivation**

Being driven to achieve goals beyond external rewards. It includes a passion for one's work, a commitment to personal and professional growth, and the ability to persevere in the face of setbacks.

- Motivated individuals are generally optimistic and resilient.

“YOU KNOCKED IT OUT OF THE PARK! THE PRESENTATION (AND OF COURSE, THE PRESENTER!) WAS EXACTLY WHAT THIS NEW TEAM NEEDED. A LOT OF GREAT CONVERSATIONS AND IDEAS HAVE ALREADY BEEN SPARKED. THANK YOU AGAIN!”

- AMY PODOLSKY, CAMP SEWATARO

Managing Decision Fatigue in Camp Leadership Roles

Camp leaders make hundreds of decisions a day - big and small, urgent and strategic. Over time, that constant demand takes a toll. This session explores how decision fatigue affects clarity, judgment, and emotional regulation in leadership roles, and how to prevent it from leading to burnout. Participants will learn how the brain's “decision-making fuel” gets depleted, how stress compounds the problem, and how to build systems that reduce unnecessary choices. Practical tools include strategies for batching tasks, creating decision thresholds for staff, and using templates or SOPs to preserve mental energy for what truly matters, leading to fewer reactive choices, more intentional leadership, and better outcomes for campers and staff alike.

Objectives: Participants will (1) understand what decision fatigue is and how it impacts leadership performance and well-being; (2) identify common sources of decision overload in camp settings and their effects on clarity and consistency; (3) learn strategies to minimize unnecessary decision-making through structure, delegation, and scheduling systems; and (4) apply the “decision threshold” model to empower staff and streamline daily operations.

Managing Decision Fatigue in Camp Leadership Roles

Decision Fatigue: **Exacerbating Factors**

- Too many decisions throughout the day
- Decision Volume
- High Stakes Decisions
- Impactful/Complex decision is part of the day
- Situations that cause negative feelings/emotions
- Stress
- Value Conflict
- Decisions that conflict with personal values or have a great affect on many people
- Conflict Management
- Spotlight
- Addressing disagreements & issues involving other people
- Situations where eyes are on you, including competitions

Decision Threshold: **What It Is**

A set of clear boundaries that define when staff can make decisions independently and when they should escalate issues to a higher authority (like the camp director).

Decision Thresholds → Staff make routine and/or moderate-impact decisions quickly, saving the director from constant interruptions & reducing director decision-making load

- Fosters Autonomy/Confidence
- Increases Efficiency/Responsiveness
- Empowers Staff
- Ensures Consistency in Decision-Making Across the Team

Be the Best YOU! Stress, Burnout, and Self-Care Strategies for Year-Round Professionals

In this industry, professionals give their all to serve others, but that same dedication can leave little room for recovery. This session explores the difference between healthy stress, chronic stress, and burnout, and how to recognize where you are on the continuum before it goes too far. Participants will learn how stress affects the body and brain, why recovery matters, and how to use practical tools like the “recovery triangle” (rest, reflection, and reconnection) to stay balanced through busy seasons. The session includes realistic self-care resets, guidance for post-program decompression, and strategies for supporting colleagues through stress with empathy and effectiveness.

Please note: A related session, “Self-Care Strategies for Stressed-Out Staff” focuses on similar skills and is designed for front-line and seasonal staff, with less of a focus on end-of-season recovery and long-term professional wellbeing. The session can include a “self-care worksheet” that helps staff identify their coping skills during the pre-camp calm, for use later in the season. This session prepares staff to be mindful of their needs, while assuring them that you take mental well-being seriously.

Objectives: Participants will (1) understand the physiological and emotional impact of stress and burnout in recreation and camp settings; (2) identify personal warning signs and build habits that promote sustainable self-care and recovery; (3) apply simple frameworks like the recovery triangle and controllable vs. uncontrollable stressors to restore balance; and (4) practice supportive communication strategies that help colleagues feel seen, cared for, and capable.



IDENTIFY CONTROLLABLE VS. UNCONTROLLABLE STRESSORS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some stressors are within your influence; others are not Effective stress management and self-care means focusing energy on what can be changed and creating boundaries around what can't. 	WITHIN YOUR INFLUENCE How you schedule your breaks The way you communicate with your team Asking for help or delegating tasks Setting expectations with families Saying no when capacity is full
	OUTSIDE YOUR SPHERE The weather during an outdoor event Staffing shortages due to illness Budget cuts or municipal policy changes Participant behavior or parent reactions Emergencies or equipment failures

“EMILY CONSISTENTLY DELIVERS AMAZING CONTENT IN AN ENGAGING WAY, NO MATTER THE HEAVINESS OF THE TOPIC. WE’RE SO APPRECIATIVE OF THE DISCUSSIONS THAT FOLLOW AND FOR THE TANGIBLE TAKEAWAYS. SHE’S HELPED OUR CAMP COMMUNITY BECOME A BETTER ONE!”

— ADAM STEVENSON, CAMP ABNAKI, GREATER BURLINGTON (VT) YMCA

The Uneven Load: Understanding Teamwork & Roles

When one person feels like they’re doing more than the others, it can build frustration and lead to tension or burnout. The reality is that not everyone understands that pulling together as part of a working team is an act of intention. We can’t just tell staff, “work as a team.” We need to coach them to that success, and this session is designed to do that. Through discussion, roleplay and debriefing of activities including “The Uneven Load,” staff identify how imbalance can affect group cohesion and uncover potential dysfunctional roles in groups (such as “the overfunctioner,” “the ghost,” “the resentful helper,” etc.).

Staff practice working through these challenges constructively so their frustration with colleagues doesn’t negatively affect their demeanor, professionalism, or productivity. Additionally, the session looks at the role of empathy and colleague support as a means to help grow understanding of team members’ actions. This session works well as a proactive training (“let’s make sure we’re a productive team of colleagues”) and as a remedy for dysfunctional team dynamics.



“IN MY 18+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD, I FOUND YOUR WEBINAR TO BE ONE OF THE MOST DIGESTIBLE AND APPLICABLE TO THE WORK WE DO...I APPRECIATE THE WAY YOU SYSTEMATICALLY LAID OUT PROTOCOLS AND EXPECTATIONS. WELL DONE!”

-BETH MITCHELL, JCC OF CENTRAL NJ

Strategies to Avoid Getting Stuck in the Muck

Our goal during work time is to be 100% focused on the kids in our care. And the reality is that sometimes our mental energy is diverted as we dwell on difficult conversations, strained relationships, and interpersonal conflicts we are experiencing with colleagues. Join Emily to talk through - and practice! - strategies we can use to keep ourselves focused on safely taking care of the kids while also handling challenges with other adults in a mature, professional, emotionally safe way. You'll build your confidence in tackling tough conversations, advocating for your needs, and partnering with your peers to enjoy the work day.



FOSTER POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

- ASSUME "BEST INTENTIONS"**
approach situations with the mindset that colleagues are doing their best.
✗ "She's not even trying to get here on time!"
✓ "She probably didn't know to add time for Friday traffic."
- REDIRECT GOSSIP**
address concerns directly with the individual rather than with others.
✗ "Janie messed up the schedule AGAIN! He can't even read."
✓ "Why don't we talk to Janie directly instead of speculating about why the schedule changed?"
- CELEBRATE WINS TOGETHER**
take time to recognize when the team pulls together and it goes well.

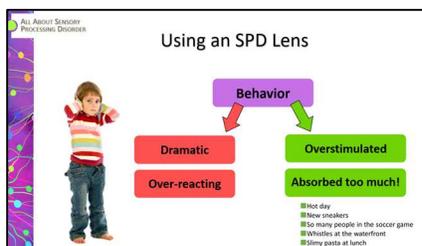
ADVOCATE FOR YOUR NEEDS

- PRACTICE SELF-ADVOCACY**
get comfortable asking directly for support.
✗ "I CAN'T HANDLE THIS ANYMORE! I'M DONE!"
✓ "I'm way overstimulated from that activity and I need a quick break. Can you please cover me for 5 minutes?"
- ROTATE RESPONSIBILITIES**
routinely switch roles so nobody gets overwhelmed with repetitive tasks.
- AVOID GIVING ULTIMATUMS**
explain yourself rationally without threatening.
✗ "If you don't give me the shifts I want I'm just not going to show up."
✓ "Evening shifts are an issue for me because the person who picks me up won't drive in the dark."

Creating Sensory-Friendly Environments in Youth Program Spaces

Sensory processing refers to how an individual recognizes and uses their senses to experience the world around them. When youth have sensory processing challenges (and you may be surprised how common it is!), this can impact their ability to successfully engage in organized activities and programs. In this session, we'll examine the 7 fundamental sensory elements to understand how each impacts an individual's interactions with the world around them. Then, we'll delve into the many ways to incorporate sensory-friendly environments into our program spaces, including providing staff with several immediately-implementable strategies to support their interaction in groups at camp.

Objectives: Participants (1) will define the seven fundamental sensory elements and their functions, (2) understand how each of the senses impacts individuals' interaction with the world around them, and (3) learn, and be able to immediately implement, multiple sensory-friendly strategies to increase inclusive success for campers.



Sensory-Friendly General Strategies

Create quiet zones/spaces where SSCs can take breaks as needed

- This should include visual and sound protected spaces where staff can see the child but the child feels that they have space to themselves

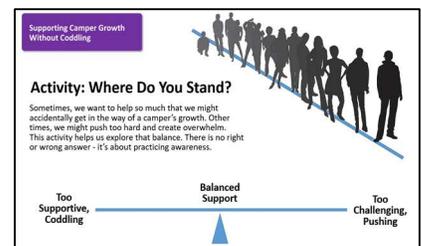
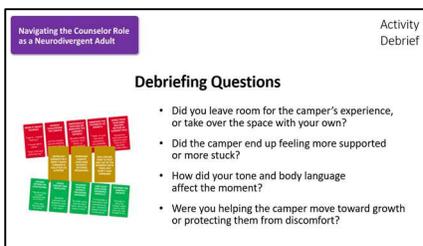
“YOUR PRESENTATION STYLE, ENTHUSIASM FOR ENGAGING OUR YOUNG PEOPLE, AND GREAT DILIGENCE OF BEING INCLUSIVE WITH ACTIONS AND LANGUAGE WAS INSPIRING. I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED BOTH SESSIONS!”

- JOHN R., NJ PARKS & RECREATION CONFERENCE ATTENDEE

Supporting Staff & Camper Engagement Through the Lens of Neurodiversity

Every camper brings their own way of thinking, feeling, and responding to camp life—and staff do too. This session asks staff to discuss questions such as: “What does it mean when a camper struggles with nuance, gray areas, or unexpected changes?” “How do we avoid over-pathologizing behavior or under-supporting needs?” “How can I offer support when my brain works similarly – or very differently – to a camper’s?” and “When a camper says ‘I can’t’ or seems overstimulated, how do we know when they need a break vs. when they need a gentle push?” plus many more. The goal is to help staff recognize the difference between behavior that is developmentally age-appropriate and behavior that may reflect neurodivergent needs, without jumping to conclusions or labels. Staff explore how to balance support and challenge, respect autonomy while encouraging growth, and understand their own neurotype’s influence on how they connect with and engage campers. Through reflection and role play, staff practice concrete strategies for motivation, co-regulation, and helping every camper, regardless of neurotype, feel both supported and stretched in healthy ways.

Objectives: Participants will (1) learn to recognize patterns of camper behavior that may signal a need for support rather than discipline; (2) learn strategies to balance accommodation with gentle challenge, supporting growth without overwhelm; (3) develop awareness of how one’s own neurotype and experiences shape leadership and empathy; and (4) practice tools for guiding motivation, participation, and emotional regulation across neurotypes.



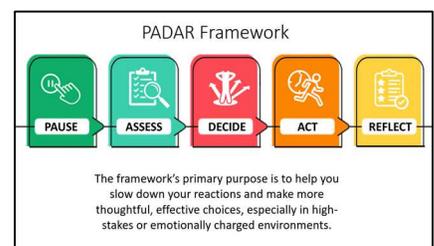
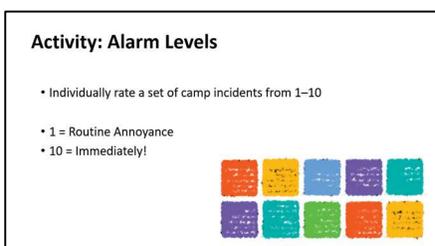
“EVERYONE ON THE LEADERSHIP TEAM, FROM EXPERIENCED TEACHERS TO NEWLY MINTED LEADERS, LEARNED VALUABLE TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS THAT THEY CAN USE IMMEDIATELY. OUR TEAM COULD HAVE LISTENED TO HER ALL DAY.”

— JONATHAN COHEN, COHEN CAMPS

Leading with Calm in Challenging Moments

Every camp has moments that feel intense - a missing camper, a heated disagreement, a sudden change of plans. In those moments, leaders set the emotional temperature for everyone around them. This session helps staff understand the power of calm, confident leadership and how to model it under pressure. Participants explore what “strong leadership” really looks like (spoiler: it’s not about volume or urgency), learn to recognize their own stress patterns in the 4F (fight, flight, freeze, and fawn) response, and practice strategies to stay grounded when things get hard. Using tools like Emily’s PADAR framework (Pause–Assess–Decide–Act–Reflect), practical grounding techniques, and team agreements, staff will have concrete ways to respond rather than react, support one another, and build a team culture where calm is contagious.

Objectives: Participants will (1) recognize how a leader’s emotional tone influences staff, campers, and overall group dynamics; (2) identify individual stress responses and practice tools to stay calm and focused in high-pressure situations; (3) apply the PADAR framework to make thoughtful, effective decisions when challenges arise; and (4) strengthen team culture by normalizing calm, steady leadership as a shared expectation.



Difficult Conversations: Helping Staff Master High-Stakes Camper Discussions

Staff will have varying levels of comfort when it comes to difficult conversations. Some enjoy it, others avoid it like the plague. When campers seek out a particular staff member for a “deep conversation,” they need to be ready regardless! Leadership staff play an essential role in pre-teaching this skill to their front-line staff, helping them understand how essential it is to respect the trust that the camper is giving them, and how to listen effectively *without becoming the child’s therapist*. This session prepares leadership/supervisors to train their staff to manage the strong emotions, unmet expectations, and sensitive topics that often come up in these conversations. Using a 4L framework (listen, label, limit, link) staff will become more confident in helping campers through these important moments. This session also covers teaching staff co-regulation techniques for calming/grounding, normalizing feelings, what to do when campers don’t get what they want and begin to escalate, and at what stage they should ask for help. Role-playing is optional, though highly recommended to help leaders both practice/solidify the skills themselves, and prepare to teach the skills to their team.



STAFF ROLE IN THE MOMENT

- Staff is a trusted adult, not a therapist
- Staff role: listen, validate, set boundaries, and connect campers to more help if needed
- Director message to staff: you are enough just as you are. You don't need all the answers. You just need to show up with care.

GOAL: SAFE, SEEN, HEARD. NOT SOLVED.

4L STAFF/CAMPER CONVO STRUCTURE

- 1 LISTEN** • Give them your full attention. No multitasking.
- 2 LABEL** • Validate & reflect feelings. *"Sounds like you're really frustrated. That's OK."*
- 3 LIMIT** • Set clear and kind boundaries. *"Calling home right now isn't an option. What we can do is..."*
- 4 LINK** • Connect to someone/something supportive (unit head, activity, coping tool, etc.)

Ugh, I Have to Call a Parent!

Okay, so, this is nobody’s favorite task. And, it’s also not as scary/intimidating/bad/your-word-here as you think it will be. Parents and guardians are people too – and you share a common goal, which is for their camper to have the best possible camp experience. Using this united intent as the baseline, we’ll dive into a practical plan for initiating and responding to challenging conversations about campers, including preparing, identifying potential roadblocks, surviving first contact, solving problems collaboratively, and yes, even getting through getting yelled at. If connecting with campers’ adults is on your list of responsibilities, this session will prepare you to approach these necessary and sometimes complicated conversations with confidence, grace, and a solid skill set (rather than dread and angst, so that’s a win right there).

Objectives: Participants will (1) learn to assess the expectations of parents/guardians and predict potential roadblocks they will experience during the conversation; (2) learn to utilize specific collaborative communication skills to approach the conversation without anxiety or fear; and (3) learn to increase positive outcomes in their parent/guardian communications.



3...2...1...REACTION!

ANGRY/BLAMING

- Remain calm and composed during the conversation.
- Listen actively to the parent's concerns without interrupting.
- Apologize for any distress caused by the situation and emphasize your commitment to resolving the issues.

QUESTIONING POLICY

- Explain the camp's rules and expectations clearly and transparently
- Provide rationale for the policies and how they contribute to a safe and positive camp environment
- Offer to address any specific concerns or questions the parent may have about the camp policies.

WHERE IT GOES WRONG

THE 4D'S OF THWARTING PLOYS:

DENIAL	DEFLECTION	DISRUPTION	DUMPING
The other person rejects the information you're putting forward, claims it is untrue, or completely shuts down	The other person changes the subject or attempts to lead you down another path	The other person shouts, swears, sobs, storms out (hangs up), or all of the above	The other person declares it is your fault and tries to steer the conversation into criticism of you or the of the organization

“I WANT TO EXPRESS MY SINCERE THANKS FOR YOUR INSIGHTFUL AND ENGAGING PRESENTATION. I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED “UGH, I HAVE TO CALL A PARENT!” YOUR ABILITY TO BALANCE HUMOR WITH VALUABLE INSIGHTS MADE THE SESSION BOTH ENJOYABLE AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING.

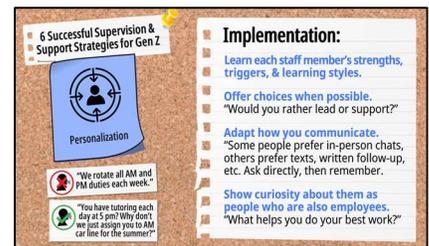
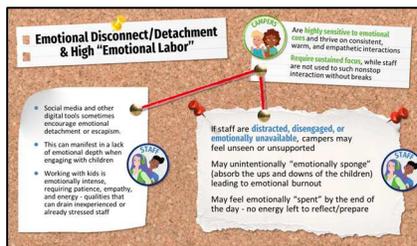
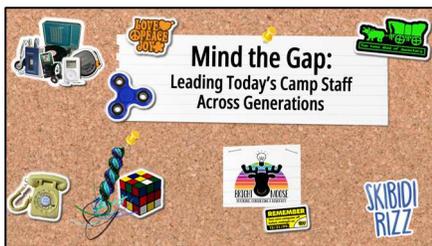
YOUR PERSPECTIVE ON THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WHAT WE WANT TO SAY TO PARENTS AND WHAT WE SHOULD SAY RESONATED WITH ME. I LEFT THE SESSION WITH A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF HOW I CURRENTLY COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS AND WAYS I CAN IMPROVE GOING FORWARD. IT WAS TRULY A HIGHLIGHT OF THE CONFERENCE!”

- KELLY C., BARNSTABLE RECREATION

Mind the Gap: Leading Today's Staff Across Generations

Behind the TikTok dances and the requests for "a quick mental health break" is a generation full of potential. Gen Z staff bring creativity, values-driven motivation, and a need for psychological safety to the workplace (yay!). At the same time, they also (ugh!) challenge traditional supervisory models with their communication preferences and expectations for feedback, flexibility, and purpose. In this session, we'll dig into how our own generational identities shape expectations, interactions, and supervision in the camp workplace, as well as how you can lead confidently with intention across these admittedly challenging differences. We'll also decode what today's staff need to thrive while they support campers, and think through how to help them get those needs met. Whatever your generation and however you lead (including Zs leading Zs!), this session is for you! You'll leave with real strategies to bridge the generational gap, and feeling empowered to help your Gen Z employees be the staff members your campers need them to be.

Objectives: Participants will (1) identify how generational identities (Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, and beyond) shape expectations, leadership styles, and communication at work; (2) decode common Gen Z staff behaviors and communication patterns through a camp-specific lens; and (3) learn several practical strategies that help bridge the generational workplace gap between supervisors and their staff teams.



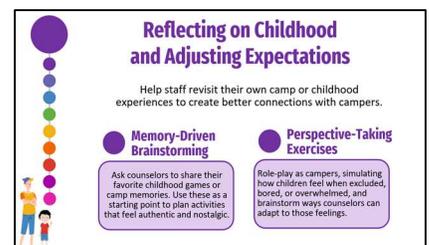
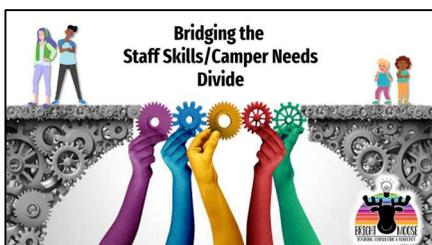
“CAMP AND ITS INNER WORKINGS HAVE CHANGED DRASTICALLY. EMILY TACKLES THESE HURDLES HEAD ON. SHE MIXES HUMOR AND SARCASM WITH REAL LIFE EXPERIENCES AND SPRINKLES THAT WITH AN INCREDIBLE UNDERSTANDING OF WHO KIDS ARE AND HOW THEY WANT TO AND SHOULD BE TREATED.”

- KAPLEN JCC ON THE PALISADES

Bridging the Staff Skills/Camper Needs Divide

Staff say campers aren't listening. Campers don't like how staff talk to them. The gap between them may be only about 10 years, but it spans two generations shaped by vastly different norms, expectations, and emotional languages. Staff assume campers "should know better," while campers are navigating a world that's more anxious, overstimulated, and socially complex than ever. The mismatch leaves kids frustrated and staff unsure how to connect, motivate, and redirect effectively. Join Emily to dive into what's behind the disconnect and how to bridge it through practical, teachable skills. You may still not know what skibidi ohio rizz means or why kids laugh every time you say "67," (this session won't be explaining that brain rot!), but you will return to camp ready to train staff to connect more effectively, engage less reactively, and support the campers in their care with less frustration and more joy.

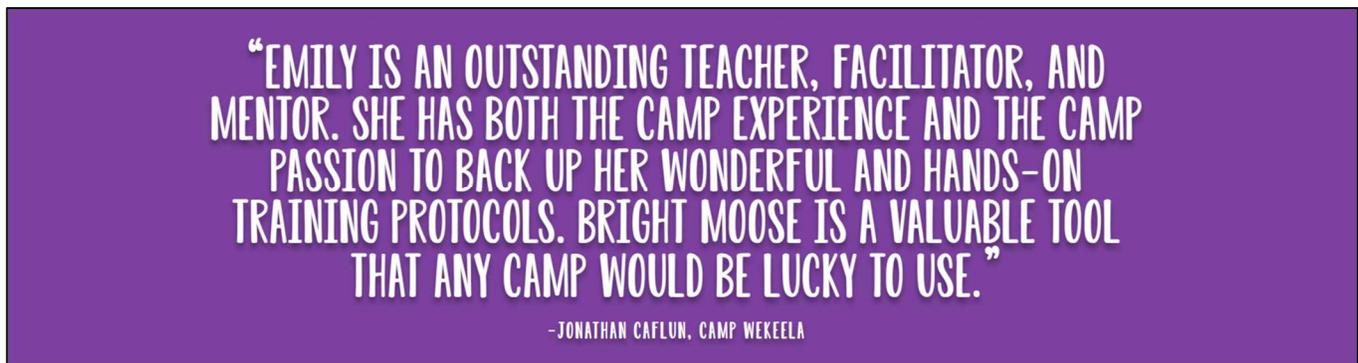
Objectives: Participants will (1) Identify the skills gap between staff knowledge and camper needs based on generational differences; (2) Understand the specific relational and regulation skills staff need to build to meet campers where they are; and (3) Be prepared to lead a staff training session covering these core skills that will mitigate camper challenges with listening and respectful participation.



Training Glow-Up: Modernizing 5 Orientation Topics for Today's Staff

Some topics are on your training schedule year after year because they cover timeless, key knowledge staff need (developmental ages and stages comes to mind, for example). And while the content is still gold, we need to polish the presentation because this generation of young adults learns, processes, and engages differently. This session helps you reimagine foundational staff training topics so they resonate with today's counselors. We'll cover the key principles of engaging GenZ and Gen Alpha learners, then apply those strategies to some of those oldies-but-goodies-but-not-landing-as-well-anymoresies training sessions (see 2nd slide image below for list). Participants leave with ready-to-use, updated, engaging, impactful, relevant staff training content that actually will stick.

Participants will: (1) understand how Gen Z and Gen Alpha staff learn and engage differently from previous generations; (2) practice applying modern instructional strategies to refresh foundational staff training topics with engaging, interactive strategies that stick, and (3) leave with ready-to-use, engaging content that makes timeless lessons relevant and memorable.



Preparing to Successfully Train our GenZ Staff

Today's staff are bright, passionate, and full of potential—but they learn differently than generations before them. This session helps camp and youth program leaders design and deliver staff training that truly connects with Gen Z. Unlike the Glow-Up session above, this session does not focus on any specific topics, but rather explores how digital natives learn best through short, interactive, and purpose-driven experiences, and how to make training feel relevant rather than repetitive. Using frameworks like Michael Brandwein's "Five Essential Questions" for effective training design, we'll look at what engages younger staff - immersion, tech integration, peer teaching, gamification, and feedback loops - and how to weave those elements into both staff week and in-season refreshers. The focus is on practical, realistic changes that boost engagement, confidence, and retention without overhauling your entire training system.

Objectives: *Participants will (1) understand key generational traits that influence how Gen Z staff learn and engage in training; (2) learn the "Five Essential Questions" framework for creating purposeful and memorable staff learning experiences; (3) identify strategies like micro-learning, gamification, and peer-led segments to increase staff participation and retention (4) design training moments that are active, relevant, and immediately applicable to real camp situations.*



Before Summoning Camper Care: Building a Behavior-Empowered Staff Team

No matter what you call them (Camper Care Team, Behavior Specialist, Camp Social Worker, Senior Staff, etc.), the people, systems, and resources you have in place to respond to higher-level camper needs can get stretched thin on busy camp days. So it's essential that front-line staff are empowered to assist campers with behavior and social/emotional challenges that inevitably arise. Today's staff need specific, actionable information to be set up for success, so let's tell them what kind of camper interactions we want them to feel confident handling themselves, and when to ask for assistance. Then, if/when "Camper Care" is on the way, let's make sure staff have skills for supporting the camper's needs in the meantime, keeping things as calm as possible, and successfully transitioning the situation to the arriving support person(s). A behavior-empowered staff team means your situational responders can function more efficiently and effectively – let's make sure your staff is ready!

Please note: A related session, "You're Part of a Behavior-Empowered Staff Team!" is designed to teach the applicable elements directly to staff with a "here's what you are able, expected, and empowered to do!" message.



WHO - IN GENERAL	
COUNSELORS, SUPPORT & INCLUSION	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-key behaviors • Behaviors seen routinely around camp 	
BEHAVIOR SPECIALIST+, LEADERSHIP	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalated/mildly unsafe behaviors • OR repetitive low-level behaviors 	
DIRECTOR	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serious and/or unsafe behavior • OR repetitive unsuccessfully managed behaviors 	

EMPOWERING STAFF WITH SKILLS

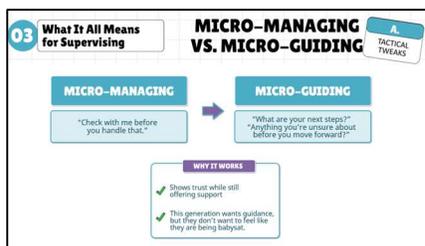
- **Give Frontline Staff a Basic Toolkit**
 - Equip them with quick, effective tools for common situations.
 - Teach staff a basic conflict resolution procedure
 - Teach staff core emotional regulation techniques.
 - Provide them scripts or key phrases to use with campers.
- **Teach Staff When & How to Call for Help**
 - Establish clear indicators for a situation that needs higher level support
 - Have staff practice communicating an issue efficiently
 - Reinforce that asking for help is a strength, NOT a failure

“IT WAS AMAZING TO SEE STRATEGIES BROKEN DOWN IN THAT WAY. I TOOK AWAY SO MUCH. THE INFORMATION WAS A GAME CHANGER IN HOW I WILL MOVE FORWARD WITH OUR DISCUSSIONS ON BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT ON OUR CAMPUS.”

- NAIOKI WOOD, UJCVF

Can't Supervise Today. Too #Overwhelmed

It's true that our mid-level supervisors and managers are overwhelmed. You might have been overwhelmed too, back when you were in the role. There's two major differences between then and now, however: (1) who you were vs. who the supervisors are now, and (2) who you supervised vs. who they are currently supervising. Understanding the generational shift is key to bridging these differences so you can help today's leadership staff lead effectively. Join Emily to look at these frustrations through a generational lens (so we can all share a common understanding), Then, we'll dive into specific, strategic, tangible steps you and your team can take to improve both the supervising and the ability of today's young staff to receive guidance. Instead of despairing over the state of today's young adults (it's a fair point but not productive!), you'll leave this lunch-and-learn prepared to set your 2025 leadership staff up for success.



04 Action Steps: Setting Them Up for Success

ACTION STEPS FOR THIS SUMMER :

#1

PRE-SEASON TRAINING TWEAKS

#2

MID-SUMMER SUPERVISOR CHECK-INS

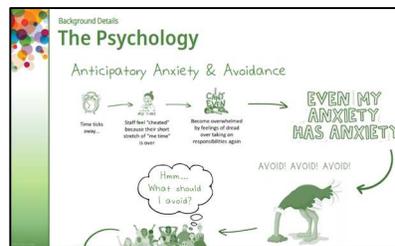
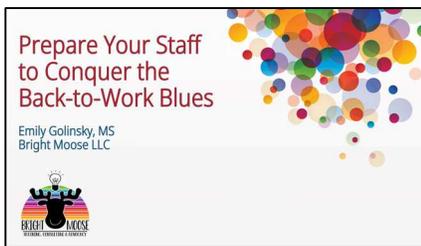
#3

USING THE SANDWICH, MODEL 2.0

Prepare Staff to Conquer Back-to-Work Blues: Mitigating Anticipatory Anxiety & Using Time Off Effectively

“Return-to-Work Syndrome” has been a phenomenon of employed individuals for decades. You might have heard its most recent viral nickname: “The Sunday Scaries.” And, yes, as with many things, our GenZ staff experience this aspect of their work life more intensely, going so far as to express a feeling of “existential dread” when describing the day they go back to work after a break. (Yep, srsly). While it’s normal for staff to want to make the most of their limited downtime, we also need them to return to camp with their staff hats firmly back on, having accomplished both their desire to blow off steam and their need to relax/rejuvenate. In this session we will discuss the psychology behind the “back-to-work blues” and how we can help staff mitigate the anxiety, use their time off effectively, and return to work ready to be awesome. And don’t let the term “Sunday Scaries” lead you astray: this content is explicitly applicable to both day and overnight camp staff, no matter which day of the week they return from time off!

Objectives: Participants will (1) understand the psychological and generational factors contributing to “return-to-work syndrome” and anxiety around time-off transitions; (2) identify signs of anticipatory stress and how it impacts staff focus, morale, and re-engagement; (3) learn strategies for helping staff use their time off effectively to achieve true rest and recovery; (4) implement practical tools and supervisory practices that ease the re-entry process and strengthen staff resilience; and (5) foster a culture that normalizes conversation about stress while promoting accountability, balance, and readiness to return.



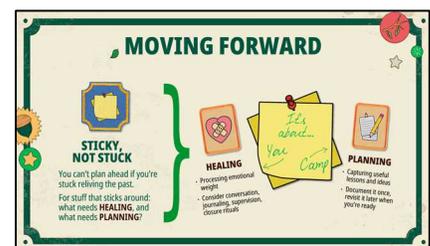
“EMILY IS A WONDERFUL PRESENTER! SHE BRINGS A CHARISMATIC ENERGY, HUMOR, AND CHARM. YOU CAN EXPECT INFORMATIVE, EASY TO UNDERSTAND MATERIAL FOR ALL LEVELS. OUR PARTICIPANTS RAVE ABOUT HER – WE HIGHLY RECOMMEND!”

—JENNA DUNLAY, ACA NY/NJ

Post-Camp Unpacking & Reflection for Camp Leaders

This session guides you to take an introspective look at taking care of yourself as a leader while you continue to unpack your summer camp experiences and look forward to the future. We’ll spend some time acknowledging the reality and normality of the “post-camp crash,” and talk about self-care specific to this post-camp time. We’ll also focus on how to successfully revisit topics from this past summer without reliving them, so you can plan strategies for next summer without an anxiety/stress flare-up. Finally, we’ll talk about how to find and connect with a support network for those things you’re still working through. Sound intense? Don’t worry, we’ll have plenty of fun along the way!

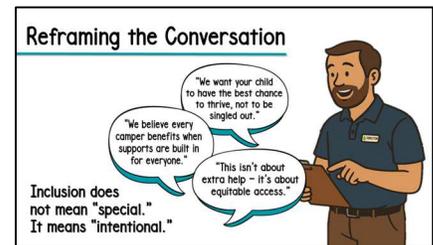
Objectives: Participants will (1) recognize the normal physical, emotional, and mental “post-camp crash” that follows an intense season; (2) learn structured physical, emotional, connection, and professional resets to restore energy and balance; (3) practice techniques for reflecting on the summer’s challenges and successes without reliving stress or burnout; and (4) apply strategies like the “3% Rule” and “Sticky, Not Stuck” framework to separate healing from planning.



Not Special, Just Supported: Navigating Parent/Guardian Resistance to Individualized Supports at Camp

You work hard all year to create environments where every camper can thrive. So what happens when parents resist the very tools that would help their child succeed? This session tackles an emotionally and ethically complex challenge: honoring the perspective of caregivers who say, “We don’t want our child getting special treatment,” while still meeting your responsibility to provide safe, supportive, equitable environments for all campers. We’ll cover why parents push back, how to respond with curiosity, empathy and clarity, and what to do when refusal makes success and/or safety impossible. You’ll gain practical strategies and a framework for balancing camper needs, caregiver dynamics, staff expectations, and community wellbeing.

Objectives: Participants will (1) identify reasons caregivers may resist certain approaches, strategies, or adjustments, and how that impacts camper success; (2) apply communication strategies that blend empathy, clarity, and professionalism, while protecting camp’s expectations and a safe experience for all; (3) implement proactive, values-aligned, inclusive practices that normalize supports for all campers.



“EMILY NOT ONLY HAS SOLID THEORIES BEHIND HER WORK, SHE HAS THE MOST PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS! I LOVE THAT SHE CAN INTERPRET WHAT KIDS ARE DOING AND HELP OUR STAFF KNOW HOW BEST TO RESPOND.”

-TENACRE SUMMER PROGRAMS

Recruiting & Hiring Beyond the Stereotypes: Assessing Camp’s Readiness & Adjusting Processes to Welcome an Increasingly Neurodiverse Applicant Pool

Today’s talent pool includes an ever-rising number of applicants who identify openly as neurodivergent. How can we recruit, interview, and support these potential staff in ways that honor their strengths and address their needs, without falling into stereotypes or avoidance? This session will explore the unique contributions staff who are neurodiverse can bring to camp culture, where they may need targeted support, and how to assess if your camp is truly ready to provide those supports. We’ll also discuss adjustments to the interview process that will set both applicants and camps up for success. Participants will leave with immediately implementable tools, reflective questions, and confidence to expand your hiring lens in ways that support both staff and campers and welcomes a - frankly - feared (and therefore remarkably under-valued) sector of the workforce.

Objectives: Participants will (1) articulate the strengths staff who are neurodivergent bring to camp communities and how these can positively shape culture; (2) recognize areas where staff who are neurodivergent may need specific supports to do their best work; (3) determine if the camp can realistically provide those necessary supports (for example: sensory inputs, executive functioning, communication) and if so, clearly outline what camp would look/feel like for the applicant; and (4) identify common barriers and stereotypes applicants face in standard camp hiring processes and adjust interviews accordingly.

