

PART II

THE CAMP COUNSELOR'S ROLE



CHAPTER 4

BECOMING A SOCIAL SKILLS COACH

Many children have difficulty learning social skills on their own; they need help. Your involvement and guidance as a counselor is essential in helping your campers learn the skills necessary for building friendships and transferring these skills to other real life settings. As a counselor, you already help your campers to develop social skills by modeling good social skills yourself and by creating situations in which your campers can practice these skills. For example, encouraging all the campers to participate in an activity, or encouraging collaboration in a particular game or sport helps them to build social skills.

Through the program outlined in this guide, you take your role a step further and become a social skills coach. As a social skills coach, you and your campers are going to practice techniques, games, and exercises that will help your campers raise their “Social IQ” and ultimately become more socially aware.

Your new role requires you to wear several different hats, some of which will be new and unfamiliar to you. Outlined below are some of the basic techniques you will find necessary to use in your role as a social skills coach.

MODELING – “Actions speak louder than words.”

“Modeling” means demonstrating for your campers how to perform a particular behavior. You are always modeling social skills without even knowing it. The children look to you for clues as to how they should behave or respond to a situation. When you take turns, cooperate with others, “go with the flow,” and say “please” and “thank you,” you are modeling for your camper. For some children, those with an innately

high social IQ, this “passive” modeling is sufficient to help them learn what they need to know to get along with others.

ROLE PLAY

Throughout this guide, you are asked to model the skills being taught. Some of these skills are easy, but some are more challenging skills, and even you and your fellow

counselors may have trouble demonstrating some of them appropriately. When you reach the chapters on conflict resolution, stress management, and anger control, you will need to pay very close attention to how you model these skills for your camper. While you are helping your camper, you also may be learning ways to improve your own behavior.

You will also be asked to *actively model* skills for your camper. This means you will demonstrate each skill through role-play. Here’s how role-playing works:



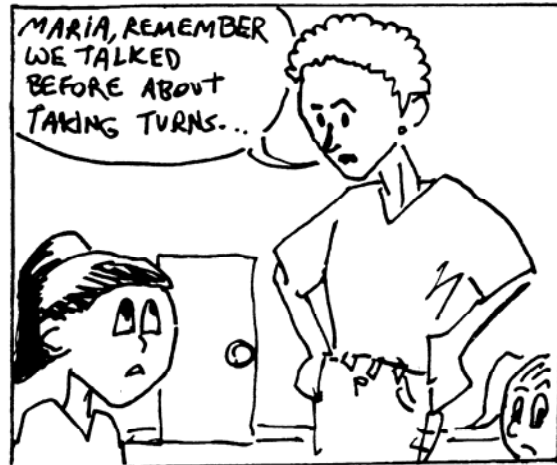
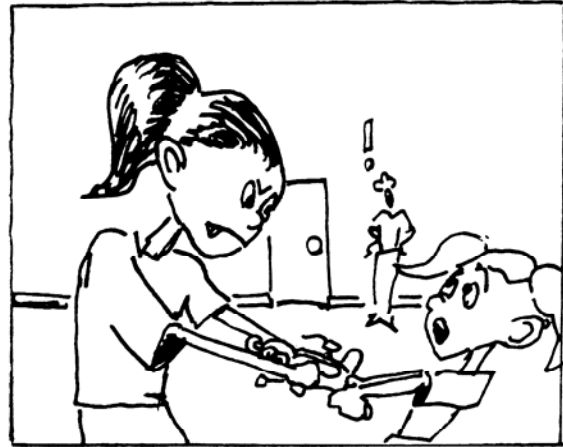
STEPS IN ROLE-PLAY

1. You talk through a sample scenario.
2. Your camper observes you.
3. Your camper gives you feedback.
4. Your camper then tries to repeat the skill.

PROMPTING

There are many opportunities for your campers to use their social skills in the camp setting. But the problem is that they may not always remember to use them. Your job is to gently but firmly remind your campers to use their skills. You will not need to prompt them as much “on the scene” if you can anticipate with them instances when their skills are going to come in handy and you talk about these situations before they happen. Prior to an event, you can review social goals with your campers.

If you are present at an event, observe your campers. If you have given a camper ample time and he or she has not demonstrated a skill (e.g. sharing, compromising), you may need to prompt him or her privately. For instance, away from the other kids, you could say, “Maria, remember we talked before about taking turns?” or “Derrick, remember how we learned to settle arguments?” Be firm when prompting, but do not use an angry tone of voice because you do not want to embarrass or discourage your camper’s efforts. Remind your camper of the personal goal you have set together. “Brad, remember your goal at lunch today is to sit with your friend, Roberto.” Another way to prompt privately is to discuss a nonverbal cue that only you and your camper understand. For instance, you could pull on your ear to tell your camper his or her voice is too loud.



PRACTICING/REHEARSING

Practicing social skills is like practicing a musical instrument or a sport. Everyone needs to practice, but different levels of natural talent will require different levels of effort. Children with a lower social IQ are going to require more practice. And for many children, the need for consistent rehearsal is even more crucial. Occasionally, campers will be able to role-play the situation once or twice and then perform the skill in a natural setting. Often times, children need to role-play, then practice in a real-life situation, and then role-play again in order to learn and understand the skill. Even then, this cycle could repeat itself several times before the skill becomes more automatic. Like any other skill, it is the *practice* that actually gives a child the confidence needed to perform the skill.

SETTING GOALS FOR YOURSELF

Listed below are some basic guidelines and goals for you, the counselor, to follow as you assume your role as social skills coach.

1. Be enthusiastic! Enjoy yourself!
2. Learn group members' names quickly.
3. Communicate that each member is important, accepted, and secure.
4. Know your audience. Before you choose your curriculum, exercises, and activities find out if any of the children already know one another so that you can be aware of any group dynamics. Determine the group's cognitive, emotional, and physical capabilities.
5. Create an atmosphere that is safe and non-judgmental.
6. Be flexible and spontaneous. If you do not think an exercise or game is working, be prepared to change it at a moment's notice.
7. Do not worry about all the "bells and whistles." Many of the games do not require any props.
8. Keep it simple. Encourage basic sharing and communication. We want the children to get to know one another better and make friends; **it is that simple.**



CHAPTER 5

PRAISING AND DISCIPLINING YOUR CAMPERS

It may seem obvious that if a child is to develop good social skills he or she must be encouraged. But all too often, we tend to focus solely on discipline, rather than on guidance and encouragement. We tend not to pay much attention when behavior is positive, but we exert a lot of energy when we see behavior that needs correcting. In this chapter, we will discuss when and how to give praise as well as ways to effectively discipline.

CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY

If you are accustomed to giving negative feedback for misbehavior, instead try to praise your campers for good behavior. Praise and encouragement, more than anything else, will help your campers develop social skills. Look for opportunities to praise as your words are very important to your campers. The way you offer praise and deliver criticism can help them develop social skills. Try the following techniques:

Guidelines for Effective Praise

1. Be specific with your praise.

“Scott, you did a nice job helping Cyrus clean up that mess.”

“Julia, thanks for helping me show Elena around camp.”

2. Praise your camper immediately following a positive action. Immediate feedback allows for continued success and let's your campers know that you were watching and appreciated their actions.

"Wow! I told you guys to clean up the bunk, and you finished cleaning up already! Great job!"

"You demonstrated great sportsmanship just then when you congratulated the other team for their win!"

3. Make sure you praise genuinely. Children will detect it if you are being insincere so do not offer false praise. It is OK to encourage them to put more effort into projects.

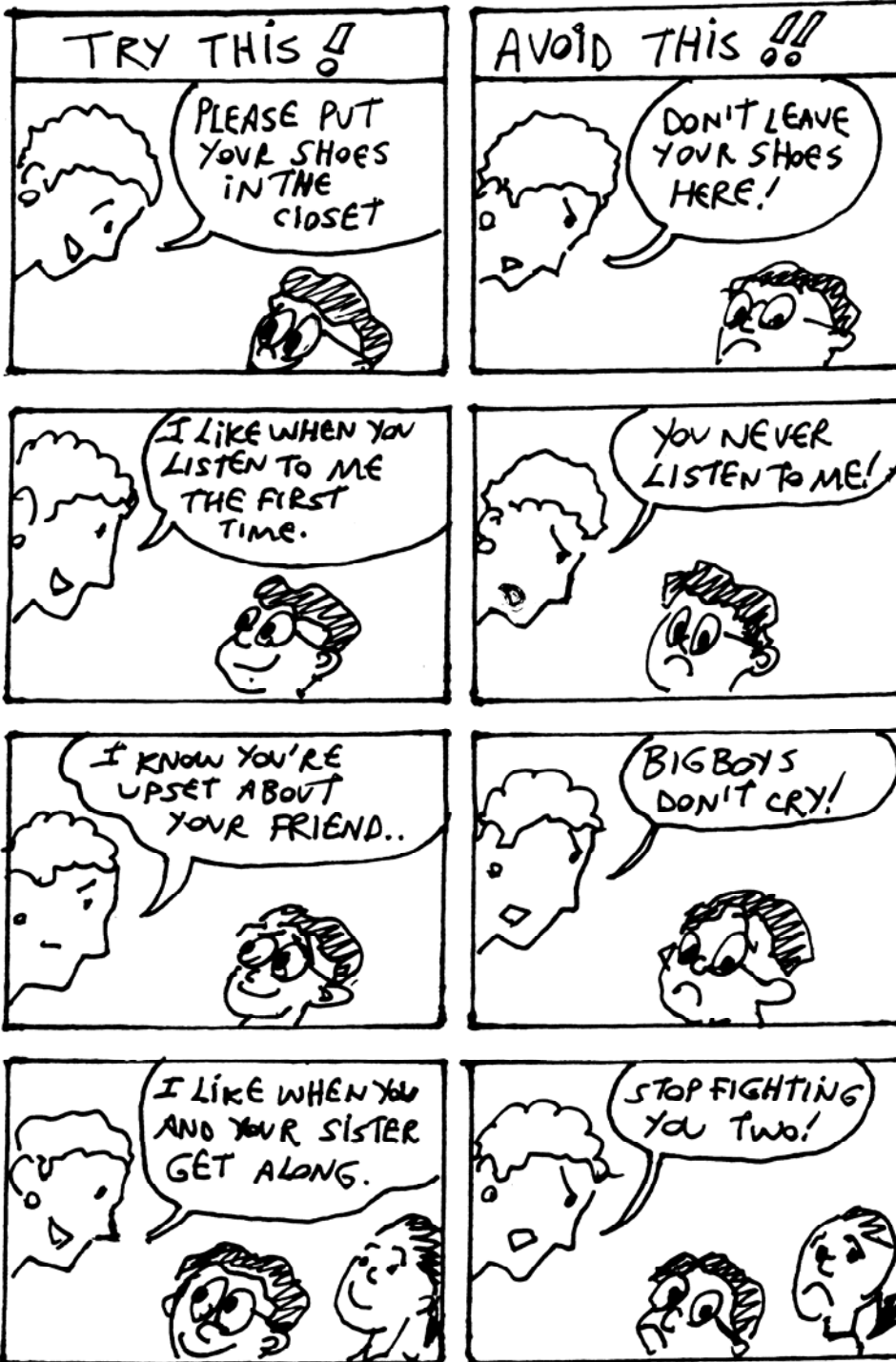
"I've seen you work harder on your craft projects in the past, Jimmie. You kind of rushed through this one."

4. Praise "steps in the right direction" rather than "the end result." By praising in steps you can support the effort and encourage your camper to continue a behavior or work on a project.

"Corey, I can see that you are working really hard on that. It's taking you longer than you thought and you are sticking with it. Good job!"



CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY



Guidelines for Effective Discipline

1. Use positives rather than negatives.

“Keep your hands to your self.” Rather than **“Stop poking him!”**

2. Criticize constructively.

Tell your campers what you expect of them without putting them down or being sarcastic. Instead of, **“They must call you Pig Pen back home. You are a complete slob.”**

Say, **“Your job is to pick up anything you see on the floor around your bed and put it in your cubby.”**

3. Avoid using labels like “always” and “never.”

Instead of saying, **“You are always losing your stuff.”**

Say, **“You remembered your towel after group swim yesterday. I know you can remember it again today.”**

4. Accept a child’s feelings.

No one likes to see a child feeling hurt, but in an effort to stop a child from crying or being angry, you may discount his emotions.

Instead of saying, **“That’s nothing to cry about.”**

Say, **“I can tell you are really upset about this.”**

Instead of saying, **“C’mon. Get over it. It’s no big deal.”**

Say, **“I know it’s disappointing. What do you need from me right now?”**

5. Set clear limits.

Make sure when you give your camper a direction that you mean it. If you don’t, they’ll learn very quickly to NOT take you seriously when you tell them to do something.

“It’s rest time. Everybody back to your own bed.”

Say the command clearly and firmly.

“No cell phones allowed at camp. Hand it over. I’ll get it back to you at the end of camp.”

Do not turn commands into questions.

“Do you want me to take that Game Boy away from you?”

(Your camper will say “No!”)

Avoid the word "let's."

"Hey guys. Let's clean up your bunk. OK?"

"Let's" implies that you are going to help your camper and that he or she has a choice about whether or not it happens.

Before you give a command, make sure you have the camper's attention. Get his or her attention by doing the following:

Look a camper in his eyes.

Then state the command.

Wait silently for compliance (at least 30 seconds).

Impose an immediate consequence if the command is not followed.

Example:

"Stop the card game. It's time for you to brush your teeth."

If the direction is not followed,

"You have not done what I have asked. For each minute I wait for you to stop playing, lights go out one minute earlier."

If the direction is not followed,

"Lights are now going out at 8:59."

Make sure you follow through with any consequence you impose.