

## Bullying

A lot of young people have a good idea of what bullying is because they see it every day. Bullying happens when someone hurts or scares another person on purpose and the person being bullied has a hard time defending him or herself. Usually, bullying happens over and over. Bullying is...

- Punching, shoving and other acts that hurt people physically
- Spreading bad rumors about people
- Keeping certain people out of a “group”
- Teasing people in a mean way
- Getting certain people to “gang up” on others, known as scapegoating

There are many ways that young people bully each other, even if they do not realize it at the time. The behavior is insidious; it spreads harmfully in a subtle or stealthy manner during times when campers are unsupervised; and often the counselor is not aware that it is taking place until things get out of control.

### *So what's wrong with bullying?*

- It makes the person being bullied feel miserable.
- Bullies are more likely to drop out of school and get into other trouble.
- It is guaranteed to ruin the camp experience for the victim, who will never want to return.
- It happens a lot more than some people think!

All Avid4 staff must be on the lookout for bullying and its effects. We teach our campers to always be sensitive to the feelings of others. Bullying will not be tolerated. Bullies will be dealt with in a serious manner. ***Bullies must be given the message that such behavior is not allowed at CMC. Scapegoating***, a variant of bullying, is the process of singling out one camper that all others persecute. It often occurs when campers are frustrated or angry or when the group is composed of campers with differences they have not yet learned to accept. Although those who participate in scapegoating are always in the wrong, there is often some behavior or idiosyncrasy that the victim exhibits which initiates the process. Sometimes, the victim is not even aware that what they are doing is the trigger.

## Techniques for Dealing with Bullying and Scapegoating

*"Infinite patience for kids who make mistakes; zero tolerance for behavior that is hurtful to others."*

- **Pairing:** A buddy system. Enlist a more mature group mate to befriend the camper being bullied.
- **Giving Information:** Explaining in private how the victim comes across to other campers and how their behaviors, idiosyncrasies and attitudes are projected to others.
- **Diversion and Ego Support:** Helping bullies to find other outlets or alternative ways to express themselves, allowing the bully to feel more secure and less dependent on making others feel inferior.
- **Group Discussion:** Involving all of the campers in a possible solution. Bullying at times may be avoided if feelings can be expressed and problems addressed through open communication.
- **Counseling:** One-on-one with the bully and the victim. Both must examine their own feelings, attitudes, and behaviors to gain insight into themselves and make a change for the better.
- **In-Camp Help:** Seek it from members of the leadership staff, the Camp Director, ACD, Support Staff, and others who have experience and training in this area.

*If these techniques do not "nip bullying in the bud" the bully must be disciplined by a higher camp authority and removed from the group for a period of time. Parents will be called and enlisted in the process of stopping the behavior. If this does not solve the problem, the bully must be sent home.*



## Discussing Sexual Behavior With Campers

### Guidelines for Staff

#### **Guideline #1: Staff do not *initiate* discussions of sexuality.**

Campers are stimulated enough by elements in our society without having counselors add to it. Sex is *not* a topic that counselors should bring up unless it is part of an overall, camp-sanctioned program.

#### **Guideline #2: Preempt talk about sex with talk about *relationships*.**

Teens and pre-teens are almost as curious about relationships as they are about sex.

Counselors could easily have informal group discussions to talk about the qualities of healthy relationships. Doing so would help set expectations about what is appropriate to talk about publicly at camp by modeling it. The following issues are usually compelling ones for teens:

- How you can tell if a girl/boy likes you.
- What it means to respect the person you care about.
- Having your own likes and dislikes separate from the one you care about. Caring about someone does not mean being joined at the hip.
- That a true loving relationship enhances the rest of your life, and does not take you away from other people or your own interests.
- That sex and love and love and affection are not synonymous.
- Seeing the person you care about for who they are, not who you want them to be.

*If some campers become provocative, which with some is always possible, see Guidelines #3 and #4.*

#### **Guideline #3: Determine whether campers are being sincere or provocative.**

If campers are trying to “shock the counselor” or are getting *over-stimulated* (e.g. silly or provocative), it is important to stop the discussion immediately. The first line of defense is to say, as calmly as possible, “You know that kind of talk is not OK here at camp.” I stress the word “calmly” because the more irate or defensive a counselor is, the more satisfying it is to the camper provoking him/her and the more the camper will persist. If a camper says, as some have, that they talk this way all the time with their friends, the response should be, “What you talk about with your friends in private is your business, but here at camp it is not OK.” If campers still cannot control their own behavior, the second step is to remove them from their audience or their audience from them. If they are still being provocative, arrange (with the ACD or Camp Director) for them to call their parent or grandparent and have *them* say over the phone what it was they were doing or saying. This technique has a deeply sobering effect on most campers. The ACD or Camp Director may need to prep the parents before the camper call.

#### **Guideline #4: Provocative or graphic sex talk is simply unacceptable.**

Allowing campers to continue being provocative or suggestive is not good for anyone involved. The quieter, less assertive campers become embarrassed, uncomfortable, and feel unsafe in the presence of such behavior while the more provocative campers become increasingly unmanageable. Persistent provocative sexualized talk on the part of a particular camper may be a cry for help. Children who have witnessed inappropriate sexual behavior

often signal their distress by being provocative themselves. Likewise, children who are in danger of acting out sexually may signal their need for help by dropping hints through explicit sexual conversation. In either case, if counselors have any concerns about a camper, they should discuss them with the ACD or Camp Director.

**Guideline #5: Counselors should not share their own sexual experiences.**

When counselors live in close quarters with campers and a trusting environment is created, there is a risk that the *boundary* between counselors and campers may become blurred. One way the boundary is blurred is when counselors share details of their own private romantic exploits with campers. There have been times when campers have actually waited up for their counselor to come back from a day or night off out of sheer curiosity. In some ways, camp may be the perfect place for children to get their information about relationships, of which sex is “the icing on the cake.” Unfortunately, as Lynn Ponton points out in her book *The Sex Lives of Teenagers*, we are of two minds about sex in this country – on the one hand, it pervades our society; on the other hand, we pretend it is not there. Neither approach is helpful to campers. At least at camp they might get to talk about it in a sensitive respectful way.

**Facts About Teen and Pre-Teen Sexual Behavior**

- One in seven TV shows featured sexual intercourse, either depicted or strongly implied. The rate is increasing.
- Two-thirds of all shows from 7 am to 11 pm have some sexual content. Four years ago the number was half that.
- The average age of first intercourse in the US for boys is 16.6; for girls it is 17.4
- 9% of 12-year-olds are sexually active; 16% of 13s; 23% of 14s; 30% of 15s; 42% of 16s; 69% of 17s; and 71% of 18s.
- Sexual intercourse becomes significantly more prevalent after junior year of H.S.; before that oral sex is very prevalent.

## Discussing Substance Abuse with Campers

### Guidelines for Staff

#### **Guideline #1: Know the facts.**

The average age of initiation to drugs and alcohol is thirteen. Nationally, 1 in 3 middle school students have tried alcohol and 1 in 6 have smoked marijuana. 13% of high school teens have reported use of drugs such as cocaine, crack, or ecstasy.

#### **Guideline #2: Know the reasons for use.**

34% of teens cite “having fun” as their primary motivation to use drugs and alcohol, while 23% cite stress, 16% depression, 14% boredom, and 13% cite fitting in.

#### **Guideline #3: Your influential role is a key in preventing drug use among young people.**

Talk to your teens about the choices they face. Lay down your expectations for them (zero tolerance at camp). Hold them accountable for their decisions and actions. Keep them active in fun environments that present positive risk-taking to counter reasons stated above for use.

#### **Guideline #4: Talk to teen about their choices, not yours.**

Do not talk about your decisions to use or not use alcohol or drugs. Staff members must simply say, “that is not an appropriate topic, but are you asking because you are facing these types of pressures?” Talk about several facts: 1) there are dangerous effects from use; 2) drugs and alcohol can hamper their brain development (especially in those crucial growing teen years); 3) it can adversely affect their goal achievement (jeopardize academic and athletic performance); and 4) a teenager that drinks alcohol before they are 21 is *four* times more likely to develop an alcohol dependency and one that smokes marijuana is *likely* to use another illegal substance.

#### **Guideline #5: Things you can do.**

Pay attention to how your campers are feeling. Watch especially for anxiety, depression, and stress; but also for boredom. Encourage friend making with peer groups that do not use drugs. Be a good role model.