



AYF CAMP

COUNSELOR SURVIVAL GUIDE

A COMPLETE GUIDE TO AYF SUMMER CAMP FOR COUNSELORS

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INTRODUCTION



WHAT IS AYF CAMP?

AYF Camp is 11.5 acres of beautiful forestland located in the Angeles National Forest near the city of Wrightwood. Since 1977, AYF Camp has become a home to thousands of campers, who spend time participating in activities, learning about Armenian culture and history, and making friendships that last a lifetime. For over three decades, campers and counselors alike have grown to love AYF Camp, returning every year to their summer home.

AYF Camp consists of our dining lodge, twelve heated cabins, renovated restrooms, an updated infirmary, a campfire pit, volleyball and basketball courts, a huge swimming pool, an arts & crafts lodge, an archery station, a rock climbing wall, and more. AYF Camp is our little community, our home away from home. Many of our counselors and staff were campers themselves and have come back summer after summer because of their love of camp.

AYF Camp is a place where everyone belongs and where you can be exactly who you want to be. It's where you spend seven days strengthening your Armenian identity and reveling in both personal freedom and personal responsibility. We come to camp to meet new friends, reunite with old ones, and to be a part of all our favorite traditions. We hope you'll join us.

INTRODUCTION

STAYING AT CAMP

Whether this is your first time at camp or you are a repeat staff member, there are always things to remember during your one week stay. Not only does everyone want to have a good time, but everyone wants and needs to feel comfortable.

We will get into these things more later but just be mindful of why you have volunteered to be a counselor at AYF Summer Camp-your lasting effects on the lives of others and lifelong bonds you will create in this short amount of time. Be ready for around the clock responsibilities, be open minded to learning new things, and lastly be ready to have fun!



CABINS AND BUNKING

CABIN LIFE

One of our favorite things about AYF Camp is that it's a genuine sleep-away summer camp. You show up Sunday morning, stay for a whole week, and in the meantime camp is your home away from home.

Our cabins are simple and cozy. There are enough bunks for campers and counselors and space for each person's belongings. One of the great experiences of summer camp is learning to live with up to many others in a single cabin, sharing and respecting each other's space and habits, and finding what strong friendships grow out of communal living. This may seem difficult, but you will find it rewarding at the end of the week when you've created a special bond with your campers.

A typical day at camp is so jam-packed with activities that you'll spend a lot less time in the cabin than you might think. You'll wake up in the cabin and go to sleep at night, and you might return between each activity to prepare for the next. There will also be selected times in the cabin to prepare for cabin activities (like your cabin talent show). Each morning the cabins will be inspected for safety and cleanliness, and the tidiest cabins win an award at the end of the week. It is the counselors' job to ensure this is done properly each and every single day. This will also ensure your campers are taking care of their personal hygiene.



CABINS AND BUNKING

CO-COUNSELING WITH YOUR FRIENDS

Cabins are divided by gender and age. We do not take any cabinmate requests at AYF Camp for campers but we do our best to accommodate. The way we split up counselors is by gender, age, and experience. We won't necessarily put two first-time counselors together just because they are friends. We may likely pair an experienced counselor with a first-time counselor in order to help teach and prepare the inexperienced counselor.

One of the biggest and best parts of camp is making new friends. If you're paired up with someone you do not know don't be discouraged. Most of our activities happen during RBO (Red, Blue, Orange) activities and competitions. Being paired with someone unfamiliar will be beneficial in meeting someone new, working with others, and making new friends. This will all be beneficial to you in the future.

TEENS AT CAMP

Being a teen at camp allows for some extra privileges in addition to extra responsibilities. Sometimes, teens get to participate in some activities that the younger campers don't. However, their responsibility is to serve as role models to our younger campers. This includes adhering to the dress code, using appropriate language, and adhering to our tenants of respect and kindness. We want campers to be aware that we do not promote dating relationships at camp. Camp is about having fun and making friends, and that's as far as it should go.

As a counselor for teens you may find challenges different than those of our 8-10 year old campers. Instead of homesickness and "tummy-aches" you may find that teens focus more on their reputation, looks, and social activities. As much as we want our campers to socialize, it is important that they are not secluding themselves from the activities to sit around and chat. Encourage them to socliaze with younger campers and even act as "big brothers" or "big sisters" to them. This will not only give them a sense of responsibility, but it will also help the younger campers enjoy their time at camp by having someone to look up to.

Teens want to be cool and counselors often want to be cool with their older campers by letting them keep their phones and staying up. This is not the way to handle older campers. Give them responsibilities like quieting the camp during group activities or being a leader of their color group or cohort. Make sure to set boundaries in order to avoid problems down the line.

TYPICAL DAILY SCHEDULE

GENERAL AGENDA

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| 7:00 AM | Wake-up & Wash-up |
| 7:30 - 7:50 AM | Exercise |
| 7:50 - 8:00 AM | Flagpole/Announcements |
| 8:00 - 9:00 AM | Breakfast/Cabin Clean-up |
| 9:00 - 9:30 AM | Cabin Clean up and Evaluation |
| 9:30 - 11:00 AM | Educational |
| 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM | Red, Blue, Orange Day Activities |
| 12:30 - 2:00 PM | Lunch |
| 2:00 - 4:00 PM | Free time |
| 4:00 - 6:00 PM | Red, Blue, Orange Competition |
| 6:00 - 7:45 PM | Flagpole/Dinner |
| 7:45 - 8:15 PM | Cabin Discussion |
| 8:15 - 10:15 PM | Evening Activity |
| 10:15 - 10:45 PM | Wash-up & Clean-up |
| 10:45 PM | Lights out |
| 11:15 PM | Counselor/staff meeting |

COUNSELOR SIGN-UPS

FREE TIME COUNSELOR SIGN-UP SHEET

| ACTIVITY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|-----------------------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
| SNACK SHOP | | | | | | |
| POOL | | | | | | |
| ARTS & CRAFTS | | | | | | |
| FIELD GAMES | | | | | | |
| ARCHERY & PELLET GUNS | | | | | | |
| ROCKWALL | | | | | | |
| SLACKLINE | | | | | | |
| AIRSOFT | | | | | | |
| OTHER | | | | | | |

STAFF DAILY SIGN UP SHEET

MONDAY

WAKE-UP: _____
 EXERCISES: _____
 STEAL THE BACON: _____
 BUTT VOLLEYBALL: _____

TUESDAY

WAKE-UP: _____
 EXERCISES: _____
 KICKBALL: _____
 WACKY OLYMPICS: _____

WEDNESDAY

WAKE-UP: _____
 EXERCISES: _____
 DODGEBALL: _____
 NIGHT HIKE/MOVIE: _____

THURSDAY

WAKE-UP: _____
 EXERCISES: _____
 EGG TOSS: _____
 TUG OF WAR: _____
 SNOW CONE/BOUNCE HOUSE: _____

FRIDAY

WAKE-UP: _____
 EXERCISES: _____
 OBSTACLE COURSE: _____

SATURDAY

WAKE-UP: _____
 EXERCISES: _____

BEHAVIOR

WE ALL TAKE CARE OF CAMP

One of the major philosophies here at AYF Camp is personal responsibility. This means that we all clean up after ourselves (and each other), and that it's all of our responsibilities to take care of the campground. AYF Camp is our home, and we treat it with respect. This means cleaning up after your meal, throwing away your garbage or snack wrappers when you're done, and picking up any trash you see outside of your cabin or around the campground. Throughout the week, each cabin will be assigned to a very important duty, KP (Kitchen Patrol.) When on KP, campers help set the tables, clear the plates, and clean the dining hall for breakfast, lunch and dinner. It is your job to ensure your campers complete this task successfully and that everyone participates.

And, of course, all cabins have "cabin clean-up time" each morning, where they make sure the inside and outside of their cabins are neat and spotless. The directors go around and judge each cabin on cleanliness, and the cabin with the highest score gets an award at the end of the week. Again, it is your job to make sure that not only your campers clean up, but you do too. It is very important for general hygiene and to teach campers about responsibility, cleanliness and teamwork.



BEHAVIOR

It is our expectation that all of our staff display “camp appropriate behavior.” This includes appropriate language, topics of conversation, and acting according to our camp rules and dress code.

It is very important to us that all campers feel welcome and accepted. To create and maintain this atmosphere, we take any instances of bullying, teasing, or harassment very seriously. We approach bullying as a societal problem, often with no clear good guy or bad guy, and two sides (or more) to each story. We will get more into bullying later.

We hope that camp can help campers and staff learn how to behave with the principles of kindness and respect, and that campers can take these principles back to school and apply them to the rest of their life.

GENERAL CAMP RULES FOR COUNSELORS

- It is strongly encouraged for counselors to be dropped off at camp
- The kitchen prep, cleaning, cooking, serving, and storage areas and refrigerators are off limits at all times.
- Boys’ cabins are off limits to girls and girls’ cabins are off limits to boys.
- Cabins and all surrounding areas must be kept clean and free of debris. Do not discard food or food containers in any receptacle except at the main lodge. Wildlife is attracted to garbage and this will assist in keeping them away from the camp grounds.
- When leaving camp, cabins and general camp area are to be left in the same clean condition upon arrival.
- No visitors will be allowed.

Any staff member that violates any of the above rules or the rules stated (and signed by you) in the Code of Ethics and Conduct can and will be asked to leave camp with further consequences including but not limited to a temporary or permanent participation ban of any future AYF Camp programs .

BEHAVIOR

DRESS CODE

We want you to have the best experience possible, so we have developed a dress code to ensure that no one will feel offended or uncomfortable during his or her stay.

If you choose to dress inappropriately, you will be asked to change. By planning ahead and packing appropriately, you will save yourself the inconvenience of having to change and will be contributing to a pleasant camp atmosphere.

Please be advised that this dress code will be enforced for all individuals attending the camp, including staff and directors.

- Appropriate shoes, shirts, and shorts or pants are to be worn at all times.
- All clothing must be neat, clean, and acceptable in appearance and must be worn within the bounds of decency and good taste as appropriate for all camp events.
- Items of clothing which expose bare midriffs, bare chests, undergarments (i.e. short shorts), or that are transparent (see-through) are prohibited. Tank tops are permitted as long as they cover undergarments.
- Articles of clothing which display profanity, products or slogans which promote tobacco, alcohol, drugs, sex, or are in any other way distracting or inappropriate, are prohibited.
- Excessively baggy or tight clothing and clothing which advertises any gang symbols or affiliation is prohibited.
- For all water recreation: For men-swim trunks only (no shorts, cut-off pants, or Speedos); For women-one-piece suits recommended, but not mandatory. Two-piece suits are allowed as long as they are modestly cut. No string, thong or crochet suits will be allowed.

Common sense in dress will make a better camp experience for everyone. Please note that camper, staff, and director discretion applies to all of the above.

PACKING FOR CAMP

WHAT TO BRING

Ah, the most frequently asked question. The simple answer is: Less than you think! For a full packing list, visit our website. In addition to all the info on the packing list, keep in mind that for the most part, camp is very casual. Bring clothes for a variety of temperatures, as it can switch from hot during the day to chilly at night relatively quickly. This year, we will be holding a majority of our activities outside, so be mindful to bring more warm clothes including jackets and long pants. Also, bring some extra shirts and pants. If you're on a hike and get caught in a rain shower, you'll need some dry clothes to change into when you get back to the cabin. We jump and play and run here, often resulting in mud splashes or grass stains, so you might want to leave some of your newest/nicest clothes at home.

Please plan to dress appropriately. This means do not wear any inappropriate words or phrases on T-shirts, and any pieces of clothing that do not cover all parts of your body that should remain covered (please refer to our dress code policy for a detailed list). For footwear, as we stated earlier, camp is a place for running and playing and jumping and thus we need the correct shoes to do all of that. Many activities require closed toed shoes (sneakers or hiking boots).

While cellular devices are permitted in the cabin, we encourage them to be left in the cabin unless the camera is being used or the music is needed for an activity (i.e. the talent show). It is not camp's responsibility if these items are lost or broken.

Please visit our website for the most up to date printable packing list.



PACKING FOR CAMP

WHAT NOT TO BRING

Below is a general list of things not to bring to camp.

- Food (i.e. snacks, candy, sodas, energy drinks, your own meals)
- Weapons (i.e. firearms, pocket knives, blades - seriously, you don't need even the smallest knife)
- Electronic equipment (i.e. iPads, laptops - remember, camp is not responsible for this stuff)
- Drugs/cigarettes/electronic cigarettes/hookah, alcoholic beverages (more on this below)
- Fireworks (C'mon. We're in a forest.)
- Expensive clothing or accessories (they may get damaged, lost, or stolen)

Although as counselors you are allowed to have your cell phones, keep in mind that the campers are not. We ask that our staff use their phones in private and after hours (after lights out). It is important that our staff does not go around parading their cell phones, constantly using them, and speaking about the latest social media trend. Please do not record your campers or take photos with the idea of posting it on Snapchat or any social media. This will be thoroughly reviewed at orientation.

Please DO NOT come to camp with food. We have a very healthy relationship with the wildlife at camp and do not wish this wildlife to visit your cabin. Candy is very difficult to hide at camp due to our well trained ants so please do not bring it. If you have questions regarding this policy, please contact the camp office.

A TECH FREE CAMP

Here's one of the greatest things about camp: There isn't contact with the outside world. Camp is your chance to get away from it all. Camp becomes its own world. It is very important to us that you get to make new friends and interact with your Armenian community here at camp without the habits of snapchatting, instagramming, tweeting, and texting.

Our directors will ask you to put your phones away should you violate the rules, but it shouldn't even get to that point. Please do not use our camp office computer for business, schoolwork, or personal use. That computer is there for our directors to access health information on campers, check information regarding any natural disasters, and for any technicalities regarding any camp activities. There is a limit on our internet data usage, and any unnecessary use will impact the following week. Your directors will allow you to use the computer to look up song lyrics, music notes, and information for talent show, song competition and quiz bowl, but other than that you really shouldn't even be in the office. Speaking of the office, keep it clean and organized. If you go in there to access materials please put them back. Do not store your personal belongings in there or leave cups and plates on the desk. This office should be spotless on your departure day for the next week.

BULLYING PREVENTION

Bullying happens way too often, and sometimes we don't realize it's happening right under our noses. When children feel that they don't fit in somewhere, they may resort to bullying to re-establish their social position and make themselves feel superior. Some common characteristics of bullies include:

- Poor problem solving skills
- Low empathy
- Popularity struggles
- Underdeveloped social skills
- Fragile self-esteem

As a counselor, you might find yourself in a situation where you have to deal with a bully. It's better to be proactive and prevent bullying starting on the first day of camp, in order to decrease your chances of having to deal with bullying throughout the week. Here are some steps to help set the rules for bullying with your campers:

1) Set the Tone: Setting a positive tone with your campers establishes an atmosphere of respect. Start with introduction games that include everyone in the cabin. Make it clear that everyone is important and you are excited to get to know each camper.

2) Expectations: As soon as you settle in with your campers, set standards for good behavior. Give examples of good and bad behavior so that everyone is clear about the distinction. Warn them about the consequences for bad behavior and make sure they have a clear understanding that it will not be tolerated.

3) Be Present: You need to constantly engage with and supervise your campers. Your presence alone will automatically prevent campers from bullying. Also, surely you want to be remembered as one of their favorite counselors ever, and being involved and always hanging out with them is the way to do it!

4) Be a Good Role Model: When your campers see you assisting other counselors, they will do the same with their fellow campers. Let your campers hear you resolve minor conflicts with other staff by using your words. Let them hear you stick up for someone who may be excluded. Lead by example.

DISCIPLINE

We all know how frustrated we can get when a camper bullies others, disobeys us, or acts recklessly at camp. Before we start thinking of how to give them some sort of punishment, we should look at how we can prevent this behavior from happening in the first place. A few easy steps can be:

1. Get to know your campers.
2. Establish rules early.
3. Stay in control.
4. Supervise and always be present.
5. Use positive praise.

Unfortunately, even if you follow those steps, there will still be some campers that don't follow the rules. The good news is, we have some pretty effective ways of handling those situations. Try these:

Time-Outs: We know it sounds childish, but asking campers to sit and think about how they've behaved is a very good technique for kids of all ages. Although your tone will be different depending on how old the camper is, the objective is always the same: to reflect on how their behavior affects them and their fellow campers. When giving a time-out, keep your voice calm and ask the camper to sit quietly for five minutes. At the end of five minutes, discuss the behavior that led to the time-out, its effect, and the alternate, more positive behavior.

Requests + Reasons: Sometimes kids misbehave out of ignorance, not because they intend to hurt anyone or cause chaos. Instead of yelling at them, you should calmly state your request and support it with a reason. For example, saying, "Please ask me before you take my flashlight...I just like to keep track of where my things are," is more likely to have a good outcome as opposed to, "What do you think you're doing with my flashlight? Don't ever touch my stuff again!" Giving campers a reason for your rules provides an added incentive for them to obey next time.

Alternate Behavior + Consequence: This technique combines a clear statement of the positive alternate behavior. For example, tell your camper what you would like them to do instead: "Instead of hitting someone you're angry with, use your words or come find a staff member." And follow that up with a possible consequence: "If you hit someone again, you might not be allowed to participate in the next activity." Avoid anger. Screaming or threatening a consequence that you might not even be able to enforce makes you just as childish. Remember, it is never OK to withhold food as a punishment; it is never OK to use physical discipline; and it is never OK to use profanity.

DISCIPLINE

Logical Consequences: Whenever possible, impose a consequence for misbehavior that is logically connected to the misbehavior itself. It is a good idea to ask a director for permission or advice on a consequence! If you can think of something for campers that can help them make amends for what they've done, even better. For example, it's logical to have a camper sand off the graffiti he wrote inside a camp building.

One-on-One Conversations: This one is very important. Sitting and talking with your camper(s) allows you both to share your perspectives and brainstorm about possible solutions. Stay calm, listen carefully, and make a specific plan. Make the camper believe you're on their side and that you don't want to see them get into any more trouble. They will feel like they can trust you and probably won't want to ruin that relationship by misbehaving further.

CAMPER RULES

Below is what every camper and their parent signs during their registration. They know the rules...

Follow all directions given by the director(s) and counselors.

NO weapons allowed (knives, firearms, look-alike weapons)

NO cigarettes, electronic cigarettes (vapes, Juul, etc.), alcoholic beverages, or drugs

NO leaving the campground

NO food or beverages

NO destruction of or stealing other's property, including the touching of other's personal belongings without their permission

NO fighting

NO use of foul language

NO vandalizing or destruction of camp property (Parents will be liable for any damage done by their children.)

NO writing on camp property (i.e. walls)

NO shaving cream

NO phones

NO electronic devices (stereos, iPods, iPads, etc.)

NO use of the pool without supervision

Dispose of trash and paper appropriately. You are responsible for the cleanliness of the facilities you are using. The cabins are to be swept and trash is to be emptied daily.

Campers violating any of these rules and regulations can be sent home at the discretion of the director. Parents will be expected to pick up their child should any of these rules be broken.

HELPING KIDS FIT IN

Some kids have a harder time opening up than others. Unfortunately, it can prevent campers from developing meaningful friendships with others. We want everyone at camp to feel like they belong. To identify campers that feel like they don't fit in, we look for these common traits and difficulties they may have:

- Awkwardness during simple interactions
- Physical or verbal aggressiveness
- Impulsive or inappropriate comments and behaviors
- Argumentativeness
- Repetitive questioning

For campers that have difficulties in social settings, we find that talking to them directly and giving feedback are the best ways to handle the situations. It might seem like you're being too forward, but you'll realize how helpful and easy it is to resolve conflict by doing so.

Tips on how to deal with impulsive or inappropriate verbal behavior:

TALKING: Take the camper aside and talk with them in a non-threatening way about what just happened. Don't demand eye contact or seem confrontational. That will just frustrate them. Instead, be casual and supportive. A good idea is to try talking while walking. They will probably feel more comfortable side-by-side rather than face-to-face.

SHOWING: Point out the reaction of the other campers. This helps children develop better awareness of the effect of their behavior on the people around them. Sometimes, children are oblivious to others' reactions.

TELLING: First of all, avoid asking questions like, "Why did you say that?" because many campers with social skill deficits honestly don't know what they said to offend someone. Try telling them exactly what they said, and how it might have made the other person feel. This will help the camper understand why the conflict happened. Tell the camper what strengths they have and how they can utilize them. Building relationships is hard work. Keep this in mind and think about how to maximize a camper's interests and strong points throughout the day. This fosters good self esteem.

HELPING KIDS FIT IN

Tips on how to deal with argumentative or repetitious verbal behavior:

CHOICES: Offer a choice to the camper. Give two realistic options. Use the words “First... then”. For example: “Your choices are to swim or play basketball. Which one would you like to do?” or “First clean up your lunch, and then you can have free time”.

WRITING: If you’re having trouble communicating with a camper because they are being stubborn, ask them to write down why they are mad and then write down a reply. For example: “Jon, can you write down what is bothering you so I can help?” In cases where a camper seems too distressed to even start writing, consider this alternate approach: Write down the camper’s question, then ask him to write down a logical solution

Example: “Jon, I’ve written down your question, I want you to think of how we can work it out and write down a solution”.

CHILL PLACE: Establish a “Chill place”. This is not a time out for unsafe/out of control behavior, but a place to use BEFORE the camper has a meltdown. The ‘chill place’ and a time out place can NOT be the same place. For example: “Alex, you look like you could use a minute to yourself before we begin the next activity. Why don’t you use the chill place?” Also, if a camper requests to take a break in the middle of an activity, you should consider this as a good choice and tell the camper that you will check in with him/her in five minutes.



HELPING WITH HOMESICKNESS

Yes, we know, this is one of the most difficult things to deal with at camp, and you might not always be successful in changing a camper's mind, but we have a few tips to help. A lot of times, you might not even know you have a homesick camper. It's important to look out for these common characteristics of kids with homesickness:

- Being withdrawn
- Being anxious
- Complaining
- Crying

You will probably have at least a few campers who experience some level of homesickness this summer. As their counselor, it's important to know what to say or do. Some ways to try and ease the feeling of homesickness are:

1. Be Welcoming. Get to know each one of your campers. Show interest in their hobbies and things they care about. To make campers feel even more at home, help them customize their bunk and the cabin. Maintain close contact with campers during the first day. You are their substitute parent.

2. Integrate. Make your campers aware of what camp will be like from the beginning. Introduce campers to one another, make sure schedules and maps of camp are posted in visible locations, and tell kids what's coming up next on the schedule.

3. Provide Social Support. Homesick kids are lonely. Normalize their experience and empathize with their feelings. Show you care. Encourage homesick campers to get involved in all aspects of camp life. Try pairing them with veteran campers who can also provide social support.



HELPING WITH HOMESICKNESS



4. Find Out How They Cope. Learn how your homesick campers are coping by asking this simple question: “Tell me all the things you think or do to help make things better when you’re feeling homesick.” This tells you their coping method. Help campers cope in adaptive, realistic ways.

5. Analyze the Coping. Is your homesick camper coping by trying to change something that can’t be changed? Or have they given up completely, thinking that nothing will help? The most effective way to cope is to adjust to things you can’t change (such as the actual length of a camp session) and change what you can (like whether you participate in activities or not). It works, but it takes time and your help.

6. Teach Coping. Here’s what kids say works best: doing something fun to forget about sad feelings, doing activities that they enjoy doing at home to feel closer to home, talking with someone to help them feel better, trying not to think about home and loved ones to forget about homesickness, and thinking about loved ones to figure out what they would say to help. What doesn’t work? Wishful thinking, giving up, getting mad, running away.

7. Encourage & Follow-Up. Saying things like, “I’m sure that if you keep trying hard, you’ll be less homesick by this time tomorrow. Let’s check in then and see what worked the best. For now, let’s get going to the next activity.” Staying busy is one of the things that help most kids feel better. And don’t forget to follow up with that camper in the next 24 hours.

KEEP IN MIND...

1. Always maintain an air of maturity and responsibility, and treat the campers with RESPECT in order to gain their friendship and respect.
2. Participate in all scheduled activities. Be on time! Don't sleep in, and make sure all your campers are involved as well.
3. Be proactive. Prevent bad situations whenever you can. SAFETY is our first priority.
4. Cabin discussion is a MUST.
5. Set a good example. This includes all that you do and say, as well as your appearance.
6. Clean the tables after every meal.
7. Use a buddy system at all times! During daylight hours, use a buddy system. After dark, a counselor must accompany campers.
8. Turn off the lights and close the doors when you leave the cabin.
9. When you are unsure of how to deal with a situation with a camper, enlist the help of the director.
10. Armenian camp means Armenian music.
11. We know you will all have your cell phones. DO NOT use them openly in front of the campers.
12. Take care of yourself or you can't take care of the kids. Remember, as fun as it is for us, we're there for the campers.
13. Be prepared before you come to camp. Think of talent Show ideas, small group games, and cabin bonding activities ahead of time.
14. Remember the basics. Make sure your campers drink lots of water, eat enough at each meal, use their manners, and practice good hygiene!

HOW TO BE THE BEST COUNSELOR

Summer camp is an experience that millions of children enjoy every year. It's also a time where parents are transferring all of their caretaking responsibilities to you. It sounds scary, but that's the reality of overnight camps. You may encounter obstacles - your campers may come from an unknown background, they may have had experiences you don't know about, and some will bring problems that you do not have the experience or training to address properly. In spite of these disadvantages, you are in a position to become their sympathetic caretaker away from home.

The relationship between camper and counselor can be hard to navigate. As a counselor, you should be close to the camper in order to be able to counsel and guide them, yet there must be a difference of position between the two, like a student and teacher type of distinction.

Being with your kids at all times is important. We mean being there physically (sitting with them at meals and campfire), psychologically (anticipating their needs and listening to them), and emotionally (extending friendship to all).

As a counselor, you have the responsibility to learn as much as possible about the physical, mental, social, and emotional development of your campers. Make friends with each and every camper, especially the ones in your cabin. Find out what they like and don't like, what their hobbies are, and what makes them happy. Share your personal experiences and hobbies, too. Connect with them and build a trusting, fun relationship. After all, surely most of you can remember certain counselors from when you were a camper. Be that counselor that they will never forget.

