

CONFERENCE NOTES

Notes from the presentation by Scott Arizala



Consultant, Trainer, & Author

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How Culture, Change & Consistency IS Camp: Lessons from Attachment Theory

What is Attachment Theory?

The central theme of attachment theory is that caregivers who are available and responsive to their infant's needs establish a sense of security. The infant knows that the caregiver is dependable, which creates a secure base for the child to then explore the world.

Characteristics of Attachment

Safe Haven: When the child feels threatened or afraid, he or she can return to the caregiver for comfort and soothing.

Secure Base: The caregiver provides a secure and dependable base for the child to explore the world.

Proximity Maintenance: The child strives to stay near the caregiver, thus keeping the child safe.

Separation Distress: When separated from the caregiver, the child will become upset and distressed.

What does this have to do with camp?

Camp & Camp Counselors = Caregiver
Camper = infant

The idea is that we are trying to create Secure Attachment with camp. Campers respond by establishing a sense of security and dependability.

Characteristics of Secure Attachment – Camp Version

- Securely attached campers exhibit minimal distress when separated from counselors. These campers feel secure and are able to depend on their counselors. When the counselor leaves, the camper feels assured that the counselor will return.
- When frightened, securely attached campers will seek comfort from counselors. These campers know their counselors will provide comfort and reassurance, so they are comfortable seeking them out in times of need.
- Campers are able to explore the social world outside of camp and be resilient to many social and emotional challenges because they have a dependable base.

How do we do this?

Take the essential components of creating a secure attachment and develop specific camp culture, techniques and strategies that speak to each need.

- Are available and responsive
- Create a safe haven
- Create a secure base
- Decrease separation distress
- Understand proximity maintenance

Teach Camp Counselors to be Available and Responsive

- Counselor training— What's important and why?
 - Communication, Collaborative Problem Solving, Patience, etc.
- Creative & progressive programming
- The values and characteristics that we promise parents
 - *What am I looking for?*

Secure base

Consistency of camp culture

- Why do we do what we do? Values, mission, philosophy
- What are your details?
 - Songs, chants, cheers, meals
 - Activities and programs
 - Rituals & traditions
 - Respect for history – Camp Dogma
 - What are the “shoulds” at your camp?
- Patterns – How do you find out the patterns at your camp? = cycles, sequences, tendencies, shapes, similarities, behaviors, probabilities
- The reverse engineering strategy – **Do You!**
 - What are you good at? How can you do more of that?
 - What is important (values, experience, character)
 - Break it down into steps, actions, and behavior
 - Look for it everywhere and in every interaction

Change

- New ideas – Timing vs Substance
- How do you honestly evaluate, “*We have always done it this way*”?
 - Check your own emotional space – what do you have invested?
 - Gold & Garbage Dilemma – what is the honest assessment of value for everyone involved (campers, counselors, you)

Instituting Change at Camp

- What are your options – short term and long term?
- What are your assumptions?
- What do you expect to happen? What will be the reaction? Are you prepared for that?
- What are the values of camp or the “have to’s”
- What are the constraints of camp based on the past – right or wrong?
- What do the counselors and frontline staff believe?
- What are their assumptions?
- How can you keep the emotion and belief while changing the substance?

Safe haven

- Creating emotionally, intellectually, physically safe environments
 - Problem solving
 - Conflict management
 - Bullying & Teasing
- Predictable community (consistency)
 - Schedule, rituals, progression, etc.
- Caring adults
- Celebration of diversity and uniqueness
 - Sense of pride in self

Proximity maintenance

- How are you creating community year round?
 - Facebook, YouTube, Twitter
- What’s your brand’s reach? How are kids identifying with you right now?
- What opportunities do your campers have to “stay near you”?
 - Reunions, Year round programs
- What is the connection between your staff and the campers during the year? How does that fit with your mission and values?

Separation distress

We are caring, responsive, attentive, and PRESENT adults / caregivers = culture and community. There is distress when they are separated from us and courage to explore their world when they are with us.

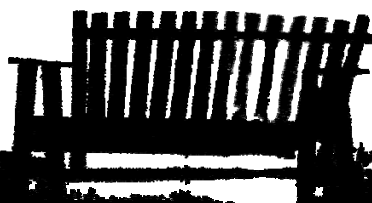
- Ability to try new things
- Make new friends
- Have new experiences
- To be themselves

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Written by Scott Arizala

www.TheCampCounselor.com

scott@thecampcounselor.com

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