

# Shielding Shouting Centering

## Story 1:

I was woken up by a camper coughing. I asked him once if he was alright, and he said he was fine. The cabin went back to sleep, but an hour later we were woken up again by louder coughing. I asked a second time if the camper was alright, if he needed any medication. He said he was fine, and stopped coughing and we all went back to sleep. An hour later we were awoken for a third time to his coughing. The entire cabin was awake and not getting any sleep, so I got out of bed determined to get to the bottom of this. I felt an anger rising in me because I was exceptionally tired, and because I had already started to think about how grumpy all the campers would be in the morning as they had essentially lost 3 hours of sleep. However, I Shielded this anger, in the sense that I put on a mask, and took the camper outside. The camper (I believe) didn't know I was angry and eventually told me that he has asthma (which hadn't been on the parent sheet) and so I took him to the nurse's cabin, however, no one was there. I felt the anger rising again, but shielded it. Eventually, I had to wake up Ericka in the staff house to show me where Jen's tent was. I woke Jen up (this process had now taken 40 min) and we went to the cabin and got the camper's inhaler. Jen also told me that he had shown up with the inhaler, but that neither she nor the VL's had been told of it in advance. Again I was angry about this, but shielded and moved on. The camper then went back to the cabin, and I finally got some sleep. In the morning I thought nothing of the incident though my cabin was sluggish and grumpy. By the next night however, it was largely forgotten by myself.

However, in Shielding my anger, I only helped the camper to achieve the goal. I blocked out my own emotions, in order to get to the end. Yet, I was spending all my energy on Shielding, and thus, never got past myself, or the camper's physical need. Because of this, I never was able to stop and think about how this scenario affected the camper emotionally. Did he feel embarrassed? Was he emotionally upset? Was he scared about coughing so much? I also didn't think to check in with my cabin the next morning, because I was shielding my own exhaustion and anger. Did they feel any resentment towards Michael (the camper)? Did they blame him for their mood?

To rewrite the scenario, if I had woken up and Centered myself instead of Shielding myself. If, instead of putting up a shield against the emotions and getting on with the task, I had acknowledged the emotions, understood what need they were expressing (the need for sleep, the need to not be disturbed at night, etc.) I could have then cleared my mind and heart, and allowed my self to be more open to the emotions of the camper. I was too busy shielding, and so I missed an opportunity.

## Story 2:

I had a camper deathly afraid of spiders. One night a spider crawled across his bunk at evening embers. He then refused to sit in his bunk and instead sat in the middle of the cabin with his knees tucked against his chest, with his arms hugging his knees. I felt annoyed by this, because again I was tired and didn't want to "deal" with such a "silly" fear. By the end of embers the camper had apparently "calmed down" and got back into the bunk, but just as I was leaving for my evening off, he asked if he could talk with me. I felt annoyed, but Shielded. We got outside and he just talked about how scared he was and asked if he could sleep somewhere else. Instead of actually listening to the request, I was merely thinking of how best to get this camper back in the bunk, so that I could go work on Parent Letters and have a little time to myself. However, no matter what I tried it didn't work (in retrospect it was probably because I was Shielded and not Centered and thus couldn't understand or hear his real requests.) I left the camper with Jim (who was claim jumping) and headed to the nurses cabin to see if Mother Mary could help. She gave me a bottle of lavender essential oil which she told me would drive away the spiders. I went back to the bunk and covered the area with the oil, then explained to the camper that it drove away the spiders. He went back in and sat on the bunk and remarked "my mom makes the house smell like this. It's nice." Again, I was annoyed that this had taken so long, and so missed this opportunity to discuss the event with the camper as well. In the morning, the scenario was forgotten. Had I centered myself, I could have better understood the requests and the outcome. In retrospect, maybe he wasn't really afraid of spiders, but just afraid of being away from home. I also failed to consider the many levels to his fear, and to really attempt to address it. Finally, I didn't see if this had affected the cabin dynamic.

So I guess my summary from these stories would be:

An emotion can be Shielded to meet a specific outcome, but this only helps you get to the goal. The emotion is still there, and now that it's echoing off your shield, you'll find it difficult to hear anything else.

An emotion can be Centered, which allows you to accept it, and make it a part of yourself. With the emotion recognized, you're free to understand the requests being made of you. You can reach the goal, but you can also realize that maybe there is a different goal to be reached or a different way of reaching it.

--Shielding can be helpful when you don't have energy, because it allows you to quickly deal with a situation. But in the long run, you'll miss opportunities, because you can't see too far hiding behind your shield.

--Centering may require more energy at the given moment, but in the long run it will be more energy-efficient because you'll recognize and hear the needs and requests of the camper or the other staff member.

Imagine how hard it would be to communicate if everyone was behind their shields all day. We may get stuff done, but we won't change hearts and minds. If your emotions are centered and validated then you can throw your shield away.

Shielding is better than Shouting, but Centering is better still.