

# CIRCLE Journal Guidelines

Greetings, and welcome to the CIRCLE program! Most of you have probably been to camp before, and are well aware of the extroverted wackiness that we all participate in daily. Oatmeal fights, singing out of key, watermelon seed-spitting...the list could go on, and on, and on. But what is the purpose behind this chaos? Is everything here done simply in the interest of fun and zaniness? Do the crazy and potentially dangerous activities (fire spinning, throwing range, riflery, etc...) really fit with Camp Augusta's mission "to reclaim and foster the beauty, wonder, awe, potential, and innocence of childhood"?

What do you think? There's not necessarily a right answer to the questions above, and one of the great things about camp is that your thoughts, perceptions, and opinions are ALWAYS encouraged. And there have been hours and hours of reflection and conversation by the Camp Augusta staff trying to answer those questions. Though it may be difficult at first to think of an oatmeal fight as being significantly important to helping us achieve our mission, for Camp Augusta it IS important. Introspection and reflection are instrumental in helping our staff create and maintain fun, healthy activities, while always keeping in mind Camp Augusta's mission.

So what? Well, it is easy to get caught up in the daily craziness of camp life and never really take the time to think about what all these experiences mean. Participating in the CIRCLE program will give you a new look at camp and how things are done. You will be pushed and challenged in many ways, and will learn things about camp and/or yourself that may surprise you. Journaling can help to harness what you are learning, and assist in applying anything that you find valuable into your own life.

It may be helpful to think about the journaling process using four steps: experience, reflect, process, apply.

- **Experience:** the direct act of participating in any aspect of the program. For example, the act of watching the videos, or listening to "This I Believe", or planning your evening program. Experience will also mean anything that you participate in during your time at camp.
- **Reflect:** after the experience, thinking back on the task and remembering your thoughts/emotions/behavior while you were experiencing, as well as the emotions and behavior of others. Essentially just replaying the video of what happened.
- **Process:** how did the experience work for you? What lessons did you learn? Did you enjoy it or find it meaningful? How did the experience impact other people involved? Processing the thoughts and emotions your reflections uncovered, and deciding how they impact you.
- **Apply:** from your processing, is there anything from the experience that you would like to incorporate into your own life? What changes will you make? When you encounter new things, how will your experiences from the CIRCLE program help you empathize or relate to future situations?

The parts that the CIRCLE program is most concerned with are the Processing and Applying aspects. Writing while Reflecting is a good way to go back and re-live the experience, but we are looking more for what you are learning from the experience. You are certainly encouraged to tell a story or relate an experience in your journal entries, but you do not need to explain the 4-step process or give a chronological timeline of events. For example, if you were going to write about your experience with creating an evening program, a sentence like this would not be acceptable: "And then I got up on Saturday morning and worked on my Last of the Mohicans evening program for Camp Augusta, and I came up with 5 games and an introductory skit, and it was really challenging". We would be looking for *what* made it challenging? What did you learn about camp or yourself from coming up with those games? Why are the games significant,

and how are they related to your overall theme? Have you learned anything from planning the program that you can incorporate into the rest of your life?

In our hyperactive and overly-stimulated daily lives, many of us are not used to having to sit still with our thoughts. This is why the 12 reflection questions during Phase One were so important, and also why we are incorporating journaling into Phase Two. These will help us get to know you better still, and also give snapshots of your thoughts at different points throughout the process, which will be helpful both for us and for you to look back on.

The Phase Two journal process is as follows:

- One “e-journal” per month, January through May (e-journal meaning a typed journal emailed to us)
- 600 words minimum per journal, 5 total journals, 3000 words total
- The first journal topic will be for your thoughts on what is discussed in the “Evaluations” document
- The other journal topics will not be mandatory topics...there are some suggested below, but you may write about either the CIRCLE program, or your life in general if you feel inspired
- You will receive feedback from us on each journal

You may keep a separate paper journal during this time, which is not required, but you may find it useful. Journaling is also intrinsically personal, and we can empathize with this. Your confidentiality is guaranteed, and nobody except for Randy and the CIRCLE counselors will read your entries. You may also keep a separate journal for yourself if there are some things you don't want to share, and that's entirely cool. You will also receive some sample journal entries from us, to give you an idea of what we are looking for, and also to get to know us better.

Here are some potential topics and questions that may inspire you. And make sure that you are writing for you, not for what you think we might want you to say. Please remember these are only suggestions...you may write about whatever you want, keeping in mind that we are looking for Processing and Applying, and not just Reflecting:

- How has camp impacted your life?
- What has been your greatest personal accomplishment at camp?
- What are your expectations of Randy or the CIRCLE counselors?
- What are your specific personal and professional goals for the program?
- What has been the most challenging part of the program so far? Most rewarding?
- When did you realize that Randy/the counselors/Camp Augusta weren't perfect?
- What are some important choices you've had to make through the application process?
- What have you learned about yourself throughout the application process?
- What is it like growing up right now?
- What is the worst injustice you notice around you?
- Write out your goals for the world/your lifetime/tomorrow
- Write out something that upset or angered you
- Write a letter of protest
- What have you done to make a difference in the world thus far?
- How will you make a difference in the next 3 months? In the next two years?
- Are you happy with your goals?

In the interest of clean communication, please contact us if you have any questions or concerns about the process. We look forward to this being an interesting and rewarding part of the CIRCLE experience!