

# Top 10 Reasons Staff Don't Work Out

Why are we showing you this?

1. We want you to be happy
2. We want you to be successful

By showing you the “dark” sides of camp, don't forget that there is the “bright” side as well. See:

1. Top 10 Reasons to Work at Camp Augusta
2. The Modern Hero

## Not able to put their needs behind the children's and camps for the whole summer – 11 weeks or more

They enjoy that kids are everywhere

You will eat with kids, sleep with kids, shower with kids (separate stalls), teach kids, . . . there is almost no escape. They will be so close to you that you will breathe their breath. That should be something that excites you, and not something that aggravates you. If personal time is something you need everyday, you are not going to be happy here.

Communal versus equity/exchange perspective

Equity/exchange perspective

This person does things for others who do things for them. Relationships are roughly tit for tat. If you give 10 beans, and you get back 8 beans, you are okay. If you get back 5 or even 3 beans, you are not okay and you want to even the relationship out. You may feel you are owed time or money as a result of your efforts. You give, so you should get.

Communal perspective

You give 10 beans, get back 3 beans, and you are just as happy as can be. In fact, you never even noticed that you only got back 3 beans. What beans? For example, if you happen to spend some of your money on your kids or camp, you are fine with it and think nothing of it. You don't expect money, thanks, or recognition. You probably can't even remember that you spent money on camp/your kids.

Great staff have a communal perspective.

Bus example

You will be on a bus for 3 hours twice in two days a couple times during the summer. On that ride, you need to be present with the kids, move around, make kids comfortable, play with the kids, entertain the whole bus, and sing songs. While on the bus, sitting by yourself, sleeping, talking to the other staff, reading, listening to music, and anything else that is not interacting with the children is not okay.

Relationships at camp

If you find yourself with someone during the summer, it is difficult to find time for each other, the community, and the kids. There are more needs than can be satisfied, and someone usually gets hurt. It happens, but it is a real struggle. You must agree to spend no more time with your new love (except on your day off or discrete time off) than you would with 45 other people at camp. Your character must stand up to this test. Campers always come first naturally!

You are a servant, and you like being one

## Inability to practice clean communication

Clean communication means that if you have a problem with someone, you go directly to that person and talk about it in an emotionally-intelligent manner. Everyone agrees with this principle, and everyone generally believes that they do this quite well, thank you very much. The reality tends to be quite different, and the result is staff who are upset with one another.

Some examples:

- “I don't feel like the village leader helped with my problem. Actually, I don't think they can help me.” Never brought this up. Maybe the person is right, maybe they are not. Resentment and frustration are what is left.
- “I think \_\_\_\_\_ is hard to approach. He seems a little stiff, and he doesn't take feedback well. I just don't think he ‘gets it.’” Let's say this person is totally right. Maybe this person needs to get some help talking with this “clueless person.” What happens if this person has this opinion, and doesn't do anything about it?

- “I can’t believe he did that to us. That’s really unreasonable. We tried talking to him about it, and it seemed like he didn’t agree with us. Now what? We’ve already talked to him, so we did ‘clean communication,’ so now there is nothing we can do. Ugh, I’m so frustrated!”
- Two counselors: “Man, John, can you believe what Lindsay did? I never thought she could be like that. She really needs to get a clue or no one is going to like her or want to be around her.” Neither counselor approached Lindsay. Later in the summer, they did, but didn’t get very far, and then ended up at the point before this one.
- “Everyone hates it when we do that. Why are we all going to do that again?” Everyone was never polled. A show of hands revealed that it was in fact about 15% who felt like that.

There are few places on the planet that practice clean communication – go ahead, think of a few. Camp Augusta needs to be an exception. Significant lapses here are damaging enough to the community that sometimes the responsible act for the offending party to take is to leave the community.

### Small camps require flexible people happily ready to chip in doing anything

You may find yourself learning an activity that you never dreamed you’d do, and then teach it. You may find yourself doing program enhancement duties. You may find yourself on an overnight backpacking trip, doing dishes, being a games master, doing a shift in the office, cleaning messes you didn’t make, fixing things you didn’t break, and whatever else the community may need. Take the “we don’t exactly know what it is, but you should come prepared to do it” clause seriously and with reflection. Whatever it is, you need to approach it with, “Alright, let’s go get it done and have fun!” If you fake it, you won’t be happy. This is a rare, but vital, quality to possess. If you don’t have it, you will find your happiness severely challenged.

### Children and camp can be stressful – you need to be able to deal

All of the following have happened in the last three summers. These are not typical or even common, but they did happen here. The vast majority of kids are just fine.

- Child said she was going to commit suicide
- Child said she was raped at home
- Child poisoned another child by secretly pouring bug spray in their water bottle
- Social cruelty – push kids out of the group, teasing, and being verbally and non-verbally hostile
- Teens tried to sneak off together to make out
- Teens tried to play strip poker on an overnight backpacking trip
- Children with learning disabilities, developmentally delayed
- Children can be homesick and crying for four days despite everyone’s best efforts
- Group of kids came to camp to be together and not to be with counselor or do activities. They were not “into camp,” they were into each other. The counselor was treated as a third wheel, so to speak.
- A camper stole things from other campers in the cabin.
- Picky eating, night terrors, rope throwers, refusal to do something, defiance, running away, pouting when they don’t get their way, lying to your face, overly-hyper children, refuse to shower or change clothes, and much more.

Camp life is sometimes stressful – and sometimes everything happens at once

- Yesterday was a weekend schedule, and you were on for 24 hours straight without a break. Because half the staff were off, you had 10 kids the whole time instead of 5. You had to be on your toes the whole time.
- You’ve just taught four hours of \_\_\_\_\_, and now you are asked to teach it again for the Playstation period, even though you are tired and you have a blister. But, you’re the only one who could do it. Those kids need a great experience, even though you are tired and mustering enthusiasm and caring seems like an effort.
- During dinner, you get stung by a bee. It hurts.
- At the evening program, you’re running and you skin your knee. It’s oozing and stinging.
- You’re the last one to shower that night, and the water is a little cool . . . you love hot showers.
- During your evening cabin conversation before the kids go to sleep, the kids just don’t seem to settle down and you can’t get them into the awesome talk you had planned all day. You look for your village leader to help you, but they are involved in another issue, and can’t come to your help. Everyone else unusually happens to be busy as well.
- Right when you are set to finally take a couple hours off now that the kids are quiet and ready to sleep, the village leader comes over and tells you that you can’t have tonight off, even though it is owed to you. A couple big issues came up, and two counselors are sick. You need to stay in your cabin. You can’t make the phone call you wanted to as well. Good night.

## Your praise vessel is a small glass, and not a bucket

Below is the camp philosophy on praise. If this does not fit your needs or philosophy, then this camp is not a good fit.

Using external sources of motivation is the carrot approach. You want people to be motivated by an internal desire, and rewards and praise can shift that focus to external sources. If the cook needs praise and recognition, have him sit with the campers for a meal every now and then. If counselors seem like they could use a little praise and recognition, help them to see how they can recognize their influence in the campers.

Think of a water glass. The degree to which someone is externally motivated, and they feel entitled to certain perks and benefits, is the degree to which the glass is less full. Once the glass is full, or near full, folks look for a better reason than water to expend effort. Like Maslow's hierarchy of needs, they want soul satisfaction, which they'll get through working toward meeting their needs to develop themselves and help develop others. I have a friend in the Peace Corps who is serving in Mongolia. Her only real perk is being given a subscription to Newsweek, and having her very basic needs of food and shelter met. When I e-mailed her and asked her if her effort would change if the Peace Corps gave her a host of perks and benefits that I could think of, she said that she would appreciate any and all of them. But, her motivation to do the best job possible and work her hardest did not depend on getting one or all of them. The Peace Corps woman has a narrow, small glass that was easily filled, and then she stopped thinking about water. Some people come to camp with a bucket instead of a glass.

Helen Hayes offered the following story/quote: "My mother drew a distinction between achievement and success. She said that achievement is the knowledge that you have studied and worked hard and done the best that is in you. Success is being praised by others. That is nice, but not as important or satisfying. Always aim for achievement and forget about success."

## Ego

Your view of yourself is very positive and strong. With pen and paper, you are able to list a great deal of positive qualities, but not so many negative ones; things you need to work on. Although you might imagine what others would say, you've never asked your friends, family, and co-workers to give you critical feedback on areas for improvement personally and professionally. If there is such a list on paper or mentally, you can't readily think of ways you've changed as a result of that feedback. The below are not all or nothing, but they should be taken as examples and things that occasionally happen to the high-ego person. These happen to us all once in a great while, but they happen more frequently to those with higher self-esteem/egos.

- ✚ The speed of their personal growth, on nearly all levels, is stunted.
- ✚ Feedback from others is incomplete, and often not offered
- ✚ Aggression (with wide variation in expression) is a common response to criticism.
- ✚ Without question, you know you have access to the truth. You believe your idea of the truth is absolute. Ironically, the high-ego person would not think such a statement true of themselves, and in fact they consider themselves opinionated, but quite flexible when required. A jury of balanced-ego judges would beg to differ.
- ✚ The task is more important than the feelings of others involved
- ✚ Although there are always those that are better than you in a given area, the high-ego person takes excessive pleasure in their success.
- ✚ When criticized, people with high self-esteem give up more readily than those with more realistic opinions of themselves, unless the high-ego person sees working on the task as a means to get back at, or show, others how wonderful they are; it is less about proving it to oneself than proving it to others.
- ✚ When a real, significant failure is faced, and there is no intellectualizing or rationalization to save "oneself," the downfall breaks major bones
- ✚ Social cues and jokes about the person's ego are more frequently missed than caught. Cutting remarks are rarely made in their presence. These brutal remarks made in the person's absence serve to highlight their dysfunction, but they are rarely made known to the high-ego person.
- ✚ Negative gossip is more prevalent around people with high-esteem
- ✚ Popular people are rarely also humble. They often believe that their fan club means they are pretty darn wonderful. Popular people are unlikely to be able to really, truly entertain perspectives very different from their own.
- ✚ The situation and other people are given more of the blame than the person with ego
- ✚ Consider the clinical definition of Narcissism: Superiority, Vanity, Authority, Entitlement, Exploiteness, Self-sufficiency, and Exhibitionism.

If the above describes you, Camp Augusta may be a rough place for you to work and live. You will be asked about this in the interview, so reflect now.

## Love of camp outcomes

You feel a strong passion towards developing children, and specifically developing the below things. Working towards difficult but possible goals should excite you. You should be able to think of specific examples of times when you have worked on many (most would be nice) of these goals with children. If you receive a phone interview, expect to be asked this question.

- Independence & self-confidence
- Fun
- Social skills
- Activity skills
- Build friendships
- Appreciation for community
- Creativity
- Environmental awareness and appreciation
- Character enhancement
- Healthy lifestyle

## Community is appreciated, but not loved

You'll experience a small, tight community, which is a very rare experience indeed in today's world. The joys (shared values and goals, mutual influence, people belong, home) and troubles (rumor mills, personality issues, we're stuck with each other) that go along with that will be yours to treasure and endure.

Most people would like to think that they love strong, tight communities, but often the feeling is one of appreciation and not love. Just a few of the realities of community are:

- On days off, everyone usually does things together, or in small groups. No one is left out – a community ethos. Sometimes this requires great organization, compromise, and planning, which must arise from the staff.
- When the effort is spread thin due to trips or illness, the community needs more than your already heroic contribution.
- Undoubtedly, you will find people you appreciate and appreciate less, but you must be loving to both. Time must be spent with the whole group, and not a sub-group. That is a powerful human tendency to resist, but the health of the community requires it. For the non-community minded, this is torture. Yes, it will torture you.
- The staff house is the main shared space. It is as filthy or clean as everyone makes it. It is nice for it to be clean, and that requires constant, diligent effort on everyone's part. When you see mess you didn't create, clean it anyway.
- There is one washer and dryer machine (free, including detergent) for everyone. That means that the community must work on this task together. When clothes are wet and need to be transferred across the hall, the next person who wants to wash does it. If you want the dryer and clothes are in it, you fold the clothes, which are not yours, and then put your clothes in. This happens on your time off.
- Emotional support is everyone's responsibility. When this is not done, the community suffers.
- In day-to-day-camp life, when you see that other people need a hand, you are the person to help them, because you noticed. We all do many jobs, and we help each other out.
- Before days off start, there are a series of work projects that need to be completed. It is up to the community to get them all done. When one small group finishes, they need to help another small group, until the whole group is done. If people slack, the group suffers either because it takes longer for everyone, or because not everyone does the same amount of work.

## Mind, Body, Heart, Spirit

### Mind and Body

- ✚ Often worked through school, sport, and exercise. If you can't get up right now and run two miles without being dead at the end, then please find a different camp.
- ✚ Your mind should be disciplined enough that maintaining a solid B or better average in school was (is) readily done.

### Heart

- ✚ Fighting, grudges, angry words, talking behind people's backs, gossip . . . all are not your style
- ✚ People describe you as someone who is warm, a people person.
- ✚ You are upbeat. You brighten people's day. You find the humor, even when it is hard to find, and you laugh at yourself.
- ✚ You are inclined toward the service of others, and you have examples to back up your intentions.

### Values

- ✚ You have little concern for the superficial things in life. Shopping for fun, putting on makeup regularly, and enjoying mindless or dark/acidic media are not your style. You readily find so many other things to do besides watch TV or play video games. Teen magazines and "Cosmo" portray a view of culture and people that seems to you to be shallow, external, and limits our human potential.
- ✚ If you are, have been, will have, or have any connection to the military, police, cheerleading, sorority, or fraternity, it is unlikely that we'll see eye-to-eye on important things. That is not a given, but it is our experience.

### Spirit

- ✚ You've given some thought to what the human spirit is, and how it can be fostered and developed in children and others to create a more beautiful existence. You will be asked this question, and especially with forewarning, you need to be able to speak well to this point.

## Characteristics of staff who work out (generally speaking)

- Have lived away from home before
- Have worked with children a lot
- Have had close, long-term, healthy relationships with a partner
- If you have a partner who won't be here, chances are you will not be happy. You think you'll both do okay, but you probably will not. This has been our experience of staff who have tried it.
- You need to be comfortable with spiders, snakes, mosquitoes, lizards, black-dust boogers, and quickly showering in a partially-open shower house.
- Wake up everyday with the thought "What can I do today to make the campers feel special?"
- Go to sleep thinking "What more can I do tomorrow to make the campers feel even more special?"
- Enjoy the role of being "in loco parentis" – Mommy or Daddy.
- See the weekends as a time to rest for the hard week ahead and leave the "trips" until after camp. As tempting as it is to want to go out and party, or cram as much into the day off as possible, great staff usually chill, play a bit, catch up on a few things, and get a good night's rest for the kids coming tomorrow. The kids coming need your every ounce of energy and attention, and you need to sleep to give them that. You are a servant. Kids come first.
- You either do not have Myspace, Facebook, or Tribe accounts, or you very rarely check them. You spend almost all of your time in the real, not virtual, world. You'd rather be with people in person, or have a fuller contact in voice.
- Besides a razor and hairbrush, you need few personal grooming implements. You don't use makeup.
- If you have a cell phone, it is not an obsession; it is a tool. Photographs, text messaging daily, or playing games, is a strong sign that we aren't a good match for one another. Being with people in the flesh is what you really enjoy. You love conversations, and dislike snippets.
- You would not eat at McDonalds or similar places. You eat healthy food, and appreciate organic food.
- If you are international, know that there will be people here from over a dozen countries, and usually a country is not repeated. You need to be okay without the comfort of your culture, or those who share it.
- You have volunteered, recently. If you are not currently on one, you have been on a "crusade."
- Need to be ready and willing to be covered with slime, dirt, thrown in the lake, hosed down with a fire hose, wear a diaper, get a pie in the face, and sing loudly and by yourself – even if you sing really badly.
- Instead of children sapping your energy, they feed it. The more time you are with kids, the happier and more energetic you feel. They are always excited to devote their time to children; it's why they are at camp.
- Energy level is proven working 16-18 hour days, for six days in a row, for 11+ weeks. Sprinters crash and burn at camp, and find themselves exhausted for the rest of camp, and unhappy. You can be happy running a marathon.

Reflect on these writings. You want to live, work, and play in a place where you will be happy and successful.