



Keys to a Positive 4-H Camping Experience

Positive Relationship with a Caring Counselor

How young people understand what it means and what it takes to be a camper, as well as their belief in themselves depends largely on the role models and connections they have. A caring 4-H camp counselor serves as a guide, mentor and role model. The caring 4-H camp counselor helps set appropriate boundaries and expectations and makes the camping experience a positive one.

An Inclusive/Welcoming Environment

An inclusive and welcoming camp environment is one that allows for a sense of belonging to develop, encourages and supports its campers, and offers encouragement with positive and specific feedback. Healthy 4-H camp groups celebrate the success of all members—taking pride in the collective efforts of all.

Opportunity for Mastery/Competence

These are opportunities for success and achievement for our 4-H campers. Mastery is the building of knowledge, skills, and attitudes and then the demonstration of the competent use of these knowledge and skills. Through developmentally appropriate, hands-on 4-H camp activities, youth gain new knowledge and have the opportunity to immediately apply that knowledge to projects and activities.

Opportunity to Value and Practice Service for Others

Service is a way for campers to gain exposure to the larger camp community. It is necessary to actively practice and treasure service. Service is more than a product; it is a process that provides developmental opportunities for 4-H campers. Helping fellow campers in need, setting the tables or performing camp clean up chores are all part of the service opportunity at camp.

An Emotionally and Physically Safe Environment

4-H youth should not fear physical or emotional harm while participating in the 4-H camping experience, whether from the camping environment itself, or from adults, counselors, or fellow campers. No hazing or harassment is permitted at camp, in the spirit of creating an emotionally safe environment for all campers.

Opportunity for Self Determination

4-H campers must believe that they can have impact over camp's events, rather than camp's events having control of them. We must help our campers foster that personal sense of influence over their camp experience, exercising their potential to become self-directing and autonomous. Campers should be involved in making decisions about their activities while at camp.

Opportunity to be Engaged in Learning

An engaged 4-H camper is one who is not only mindful of the subject area but one who is building relationships and connections in order to develop understanding. Through self-reflection, the 4-H camper has the ability to learn from experience. The engaged 4-H camper has a higher degree of self-motivation and an inexhaustible capacity to create.

Opportunity to See Oneself as an Active Participant in the Future

To provide 4-H campers the opportunity to see themselves in the future gives them the hope and optimism to shape their life choices accordingly. Campers should be encouraged to become counselors when they're older—counselors should promote counseling as a positive experience that builds skills for future careers.