

## Being a counselor works

I think being a camp counselor is an excellent way to prepare for most any job or career but it's always nice to see where other persons concur. Like with this [USA Today article](#), and more recently, on [the blog of the American Camp Association website](#). In *Ten reasons why businesses should hire former camp counselors*, the author, Anne Archer Yetsko writes,

When I speak with friends who work in other industries, I always tell them that if you have an applicant who has been a camp counselor and has a positive reference from that camp, they should move to the top of that pile of applications that are overflowing on their desk.

Yetsko goes on to give the top ten reasons why hiring a former camp counselor is a savvy decision on the part of a manager. And even though every single reason on the list seems most important (while I was reading that one) my favorite was #4. Resilience. She says,

**4. A resilient individual:** Camp counselors can handle anything. Just ask the counselor who has been helping a camper overcome homesickness while teaching their activity in the rain for 4 days straight, only to learn that there is a child in their cabin with lice. When they hear this, instead of curling up in a ball and hiding (the way any normal person would), they grab their gloves, strip all the beds in the cabin, get all of the laundry to the cleaners, and get all the campers lined up outside to check each one for nits. I repeat, camp counselors can, and do, handle anything!

This is so true. Counselors have to think on their feet, adapt to ever-changing situations, remain calm, and maintain ongoing class and activity schedules amidst surprises like tummy aches, mosquito bites, and a surprise bout of homesickness. Developing resilience is putting it mildly! 😊

## Training makes the difference

There are a lot of reasons why camp counseling is such a complex, multi-faceted job. First there are the campers themselves who are at camp for a pleasurable and yet challenging experience – to learn and grow, meet new people, try new things, and do it all away from the comforts and familiarity of home. Providing campers with a trustworthy, stable, loving, supportive, and fun experience is crucial. But behind the curtain a lot more is going on.

There are safety issues such as proper use of special class equipment and also fire drills, water safety, and how to handle mild maladies before heading to the Infirmary. There is nutrition – making sure your campers eat well, get enough, and stay hydrated. There are social issues such as cultivating relationships, being a ear (and heart) to listen to any troubles, fairness, proper guidance to help campers make good decisions, and also being accessible so that campers feel comfortable around you as a trusted authority figure.

Then if a counselor is also teaching a class, it's important that they are prepared, clear, direct, aware, sensitive to different needs and abilities, and on-track relative to any end-of-term performance, competition, gallery, or demonstration.

And the way we get to all this (and more) is through good training – so consider closely which camp you apply to and ask about their training program. And all that good training inevitably leads to...good workers, who are good for businesses.

## What's in it for you?

It's wonderful to know you've been properly trained, and, if you've done your part well and can count on a good reference, that you're ready for future jobs. In some ways when we're focused on the road ahead, this seems like *the most important thing*.

But let's also remember that all of this also leads to good self-development. Learning – and mastering – the juggling act of camp counseling and the resilience that it both takes and fosters, translates into a million unexpected successes down the line. Right off the top of my head I can think of my own list of ten ways being a counselor helps you to be prepared for almost everything:

1. Tight quarters helps you to be a better roommate in college and after.
2. Time management helps you set and achieve goals even in hectic times.
3. Keeping on a schedule even when surprises pop up along the way is infinitely useful!
4. Being on a counseling team prepares you to work with any group, from volunteer situations, to parent organizations, to partner relationships, and more.
5. All those campers (and counselor peers) help you build better, more effective people skills with all kinds of people – their unique quirks and all!
6. Camp history helps in understanding the importance of traditions and the “insider baseball” to any organization or group.
7. Being a role model helps you recognize that our actions and behaviors create our reputations.
8. Being a temporary “mom” or “dad” to all those campers help prepare us to one day become parents – learning how to juggle children's needs and still keep the big picture moving.
9. Camp requires patience, humility, and service. (Oh and creativity, light-heartedness, a sense of humor.) What's not to like about cultivating that?
10. Singing at the top of your lungs, swimming in a cold morning lake, laughing with hundreds of new (and old) friends helps you to see you are part of a larger story. But **YOU** are a part of it!