

## What makes a great camp counselor?

Recently I posted our staff applications for summer on the Camp Scully website and updated the application process on webpage. I thought I'd share some updated tips and insight that will help applicants learn more about being a counselor at Camp Scully, to make doubly sure that being a counselor is for you.

I can say with personal experience and true conviction that being a camp counselor is among the most fun summer jobs that anyone can have. It's also among the most valuable jobs in terms of personal development and the kind of experience and responsibility that other employers seek in their job applicants. That means that being a camp counselor is a good early career move!

That said, there is a balance — a healthy balance from my perspective — between the “fun factor” and the responsibility factor. It's good for people to come into the job knowing all about that balance so that both factors play a meaningful role in the job.

### The best of both worlds

The bottom line is that being a camp counselor is **both challenging and rewarding at the same time**, and also *fun*.

Where “fun” plays the supporting role if you will is that first and foremost we are providing a safe, engaging, enjoyable experience for our charges — the campers. Our focus is on the campers first — always.

So while it's great to be out in the fresh air and sunshine soaking up some rays, burning calories, developing great relationships with co-workers, and being creative, all of those are almost side-effects (except maybe the being creative part), or “perks” of the job, rather than the focus of the job itself. Keeping that in mind can go a long way to making camp counseling work for you and help make you successful and happy.

But ultimately the nitty-gritty of the job, the day-to-day real demands of counseling is about serving your campers with kindness, dignity, humanity, encouragement, accessibility and when it comes right down to it, love. And you're doing this while essentially being “on” all the time. So being a counselor requires that you balance your personal needs with the needs of the job during a concentrated period of time.

### It's all in the training

Does this sound hard? Well, let's be real...yes, sometimes it is. But at Camp Scully we train you to do this successfully. We make clear to you the expectations, the ground rules, the best practices, and the little extras to make it all come together. And we do it while supporting and nurturing *you*, too. When you're successful, we're successful, so we want you to have all the skills and tools needed to get it right and enjoy it, too!

I often talk about resilience being a key quality that counselors need to possess. It's the ability to ride through the daily matters with a sense of ease but also the ability to bounce back after tough situations.

**There will be challenging times.**

Whether there's a power outage, a storm and your things get wet, dealing with poor behavior, or just really long, hot days, **you simply cannot complain in front of campers**, and you must have the coping skills to stay cool under pressure. And then, after the pressure is off, you have to leave the trying situation behind and move forward with the same spirit of leadership, emotional equilibrium, and get-up-and-go that you had on opening day.

So how does this relate to other jobs? Is being a counselor just a summer lark and nothing more?

No way!

It's important to never separate a camp job from the "real world," because in my opinion camp *is* the real world. It's just the real world with some woods and a canoe!

When we at Camp talk about your deadlines, completed personal paperwork, being on time, professional conduct and positive attitude, giving and accepting feedback and evaluations, you'll find that this is all the same kind of thing you have to do in other jobs. We just happen to do all those things in a casual setting where you can dress down every day and not have to put on makeup or do your hair. We take your position very seriously, and we always hope — and expect — that the counselors will treat work at camp just as professionally as they would a teaching or banking job or whatever. In fact, by treating it professionally you're developing the kind of skills that will serve you so well in later professional situations.

### **I think I can, I think I can, I think I can**

Round about now you might be thinking, *"Can I do that? What does it take to be selected for this kind of job?"*

On one hand, yes, we are very selective. We have high expectations and we get fabulous applicants who together make up a compelling and competitive applicant pool.

But if you know you're earnest, want to learn, and care about being responsible and setting a good example, you're halfway there, so do apply. And, since we create such a nurturing environment for you so that you're armed with the training you need to succeed, you'll find that the culture of camp itself helps foster the kind of support that is mutually resilient, mutually supportive, and hence mutually successful. **We succeed with each other.**

Still, if you've never been a counselor before you might think, "How on earth do I show I've got this resilience and equilibrium?"

Well sometimes you just have to "fake it till you make it," (in the most sincere way, of course). I certainly don't mean misrepresenting yourself on an application, or biting off more than you can chew. I just mean bringing the right combination of attitude, willingness, responsiveness, and eagerness for growth and development that you naturally gain and integrate skills and tools quickly.

### **Put others before themselves**

What we're looking for are people, counselors, who have the ability above all things to put others before themselves. That is the #1 quality needed to be a counselor, and immediately after that is to maintain a positive attitude while putting others before yourself. Finally, camp does have a hierarchy in its management because, just as with other institutions and educational settings, we deal with confidential information. Naturally, much of this information can't be shared with counselors except in cases where it's relevant to a counselor in question. That means a certain acceptance that you're given all the information that you need to succeed at camp, but no more. Other people are in other roles, both in a decision making capacity and related to confidential matters, and this must be accepted and respected — we're all in the roles that are best for us at that time.

If you think you can do all this — or are committed to learning how to — you have what it takes to be a camp counselor and we want to hear from you. [Please apply today.](#)