

## The Challenges of Working at CYO Camp

While working at camp is fun and a great learning experience, you will also find challenges. We like to share the challenges with you so you can make an informed decision and know what to expect. Having strategies to work through these types of challenges can set you up for success in a camp position.

***Lack of Privacy And "Alone Time"***- Living in a cabin with campers and staff members is a great way to build relationships; it can be difficult as you will have a small amount of space for you and your belongings. You will have to respect others' needs for space. You will be with people for most hours of the day so there is very little alone time.

***The Need to Always Be "On"*** -You will work long hours! You work 6 days a week. You are expected to participate and support campers in activities. It is your responsibility to be involved—having close proximity and engaging campers! You will also be expected to be upbeat, positive, humble (put campers first) and to keep the campers safe. You will be provided with time off, but are still considered "on the clock" in terms of your personal habits.

***"Restrictive" Policies***- Staff members are expected to follow the camp policies. At times this may feel restrictive. You may disagree with the policies or how camp is run. However, it is expected that staff will have a positive attitude about camp, the campers, and the staff. It is also expected that staff will approach the camp leaders with concerns and questions in a mature and thoughtful manner and not "gossip" about things they do not like.

***Other challenges to think about:*** Working at camp has to be something you really want to do! Besides the challenges above, you may also face other obstacles when deciding if camp is right for you. One of those is MONEY! If you only wish to make money—don't work at camp. You can make as much or more working fast food, landscaping or retail. If you are looking for something deeper that has meaning beyond money, camp is for you! Another challenge is that the people closest to you may not understand your motivation or desire to work at camp. Many staff have shared that their parents or friends feel this way. Parents are often concerned about missing their child and also are thinking of the financial end of it. Friends are often concerned about missing a friend. By sharing camp materials with your family and friends, you will be letting them "in" on the experience. Often people change their opinions and find it easier to let their loved one be a part of camp once they see for themselves the camp dynamic and its important ministry.

***"Envelope of Safety"***- Keeping campers safe—emotionally and physically is your job! To be able to do this you will sometimes need to find a balance between being the fun counselor who is a "friend" and being the responsible adult who sets and enforces rules. This "envelope" that you create with clear boundaries will allow campers to explore and take "risks" in a healthy way. When hanging out with the campers, you may have the tendency to act like a kid—just when you most need to act like an adult. You'll need to resist the temptation to act childishly.

***Difficulties with Campers***- Campers are not perfect. They may assert their independence in difficult ways, such as disagreeing with you or complaining about seemingly everything. Campers will get homesick. They may argue and call each other names and bully one another. They may be loud when you wish they'd be quiet and quiet when you wish they'd be loud. All of these things can happen at camp. You will learn and develop strategies during training and throughout the summer to solve these issues, but there is no cure-all; your patience may be tested.