

Camp Staff: Psychological Overview

Rabbi Avi Landa MS, LCPC, NCC

NCSY Sports Camp

- 1) Bottom Line Rule (see bottom line): Be mindful, when in doubt, suspicious, get 2-3 opinions, go to superiors (R' Green. Cooper, me)
- 2) See the NCSY Conduct, Policy, and Behavioral Standards Manual (<https://ncsy.org/standards>)
- 3) Common Psychological Issues
 - a) Anxiety
 - i) Basic reassurance and relaxation cannot calm
 - ii) Avoids what everyone else enjoys (both introverts and extroverts)
 - b) ADHD
 - i) Disability in accessing knowledge of social norms
 - ii) Lack of impulse control
 - c) Asperger Spectrum
 - i) Disability in knowledge of social norms
 - d) Depression
 - i) Not Interested in both study and fun (both extrovert and introvert activities)
 - ii) Lack of appetite, energy
 - e) Substance Abuse
 - i) Affects: energy / motivation level, appetite, tolerance of frustration, avoiding eye contact
 - (1) Look for inconsistencies to differentiate from personality
 - (2) Overlaps with much of the above
- 4) Psychological Safety
 - a) Bullying
 - i) Listen to what others are saying/seeing
 - (1) What changes can be made
 - ii) Encourage a one on one conversation
 - iii) Ultimately indifference works
 - iv) Empower Bystanders
 - b) Inappropriate Talk / Touch
 - i) Anything the child says stop to
 - ii) Anything socially not normal is suspicious (starts subtle – feel material of pjs)
 - iii) Wake up – Be aware of kids not waking up, maybe not going to sleep on time, or maybe worse, but no shaking them or their beds...
 - (1) No joking in threatening ways (with a baseball bat etc.)
 - c) Physical Injury
 - i) In a specific area, repeatedly occurring, not clearly connected to a sport or activity
 - (1) Cutting, bruises, bite marks, extreme peeling of skin to blood, hair pulling

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- d) Suicidal Ideation
 - i) Joking about it – say to the boy seriously, we don't joke about it. Repeats despite, and seems off, better safe than sorry (report to superior...)
 - ii) Discussing a show about suicide... If seems a little personal then better safe than sorry (report to superior)
 - iii) Professional will determine if mandated to report primarily based on time and plan
- 5) Be Sensitive / Build a Relationship
 - a) Young kids (despite teenager perception)
 - b) Take a question / comment seriously even if seems outlandish, maintain poker face – build the relationship
 - i) Not your friend, rather your camper, like your child you don't pick him, see his positives, don't express at all that you think he's weird, awkward...
 - c) Discussing sensitive topics
 - i) If prepared, and sensitive, and right forum
 - (1) could be personal (homosexuality...)
 - ii) otherwise can always say, let me look into that, and possibly pass on to superior
 - iii) If requires repeated conversations / seems to be weighing on him – discuss the possibility of someone who he can meet with – who can help at a deeper level, and discuss with superior
- 6) Be Positive
 - a) Despite being careful with touch, slapping five, quick pat on back can be great, smile, compliment...
 - i) Keep written record of complimenting and noticing the child, get to everyone
 - b) 2 Stories from Dr. Pelcovitz
 - i) Birthday Cards from Rabbi (Suicide, came back later to the Rabbi – You saved my life)
 - ii) New Orleans – Rav went over to the guy after not seeing him for a while and shared a warm hello... came back, said, was on his way visiting sites from childhood before committing suicide (as is common)
- 7) To Repeat: Be mindful, when in doubt, suspicious, get 2-3 opinions, go to superiors
 - a) When you do report, if it is leading to someone speaking to the boy, tell the boy first you have to do this and work together with him, how to say it... maintain trust.