



Building Relationships

Building relationships is the foundation of inclusion. Children bring their unique personalities and experiences allowing them to engage in the social and recreational camp activities.

As a parent or anyone supervising play, one of the most important aspects of building relationships is to recognize that each person has something to offer. Helping children identify this within themselves is the initial step to building long-lasting friendships.

Each child will approach play and building friendships differently. Being open and creative, listening to children's needs and keeping a light and playful approach will allow you to create an environment that works for everyone.

Ways to Help Your Child Play and Build Relationships

Aid and Fade

The job of the adult is not to fix every problem or to constantly hover over children; it is to help them discover solutions on their own. There will be times when you will need to assist them, either physically or in conversation to support them in meeting their needs. Once their immediate need is met, it is then important that children are given the space to be as independent as possible. Step away slowly, allowing them more freedom.

Identifying Contributions

We all have something valuable to offer, regardless of ability. While, at first glance, it may be challenging for children to see how someone with a disability can contribute, your role as the parent or play supervisor is to help every child get involved and contribute. One great way to start this process is to have everyone share a hidden talent.

Similarities and Differences

We all have similarities and differences. In building inclusion, it is important that all similarities and differences be accepted. To do this, it is important to create an environment that promotes conversation and curiosity. By encouraging questions and dialogue around both similarities and differences, children can begin to see that differences are natural and find ways to interact with others despite apparent differences. In turn, a mutual respect between children can start to grow. Noticing differences doesn't necessarily have to have negative connotations; seeing differences as limitations can lead to inappropriate labels.



Child Questions

Questions are a great way to break down barriers. By encouraging respectful questions around abilities and disabilities between children, you automatically open the door for conversation. For both children, it is important to feel safe in asking and answering. This not only educates children about one another, but it also promotes understanding. If a child asks why another is using a wheelchair, for example, responding by showing them the capability that the wheelchair gives the participant can lead to an open communication and dialogue.

Communication Between Children

To further facilitate communication between children, particularly among those who have significant communication challenges, it is helpful to explain to children that some people have different ways of talking (some use their voice, some use pictures, some use their hands, some use a computer, etc., but it is all talking). Then you can go on to show children how to understand and relate to these ways of talking.

Conclusion

Building relationships and facilitating inclusion go hand in hand. All you need to do is be creative to find new ways to help children connect. Remember, children have something unique to offer. All they need is some encouragement, support, and guidance.