



COFFEE TALK 2: INCLUSION AND REOPENING CAMPS

FAQ and Additional Resources

June 18, 2020

What are some ideas to help companions, counselors, and support staff effectively interact with children while wearing masks and limiting touch?

- As in all things inclusion—much of the anxiety children feel when facing change or new experiences can be lessened by preparing the child for the environment and preparing the environment for the child. Using roleplay, picture stories, and social scripts are great tools to explain the nuances of camp this summer. There are tons of great resources out there to use as templates or springboards to develop these for your camp—don't reinvent the wheel! Among the great examples, consider checking out the work of children's author & inclusion specialist [Meredith Polsky](#).
- Be sure to follow your local/state/camp guidelines for mask wearing, interactive touch, physical distancing etc. For example, some suggest that masks be worn indoors but are not required for outdoor physically distanced activities. Or, that interactions between campers & staff within each small group can be mask free but individuals outside of that cohort should wear masks.
- Play "show me" type activities during which staff & children take turns showing what their different feelings/expressions look like when masked or from a distance using facial expressions, body movements, sounds, etc.
- Use feelings/disposition charts, puppets etc. with drawings or photographs of campers and staff to show facial expressions.
- If masks are required when in close proximity, schedule time to briefly unmask at safe distances to catch glimpses of familiar faces to promote comfort, recognition, connection, and communication.
- If guidelines suggest limiting physical touch even within camp groups consider using providing campers with individual supplies rather than shared materials. And if hand-over-hand assistance or 1:1 touch is needed for staff to support a child's experience, discuss those needs and procedures with camp leadership, the child's family, and the child.
- Creatively use pool noodles, hoola hoops, dance scarves, beach towels, ribbons, bands, etc. to visibly show what 6 ft looks like and promote physical activity and interaction at safe distances.
- Ask yourself—what did we do Pre-COVID19 to support the needs of children who normally aren't comfortable with touch or eye contact? Can we universally implement those interaction strategies for everyone this summer?

How can we promote and sustain interaction and communication with children who need to see facial expressions, lip reading, etc.?

- Consider using masks with see-through or transparent panels. Some resources suggested by participants can be found at: [The Clear Mask](#), [Safe 'N' Clear](#), and [Etsy](#).
- Proximity control is still possible even at a distance. For children who see, hear, or learn best when close to an instructor, position materials and orient instruction to promote good sight lines, vocal projection, cues/signals, and positive reinforcement.



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What are strategies for positive behavior support and intervention that can be implemented when physically or socially distanced?

- Consistently modeling, teaching, practicing, and reinforcing behavioral expectations, procedures, interaction & engagement strategies will help diminish some of the challenging behaviors you might see grow from children's anxiety, frustration, or curiosity related to change.
- Using cues or signals help ease transitions, keep order, and create predictable routines.
- Establish a safe space or place campers (and staff) can visit to decompress, deescalate, or take a break when needed. It may look a little different than in the past and that's ok! Just introduce the space and its purpose to campers as you would any other time.
- Model, teach, practice & reinforce effective problem solving, self-control, conflict resolution, and self-calm strategies with all campers- especially those who may need more emotional, social, or behavioral support.
- Remember that behavior is communication. Children may exhibit intense or escalated behaviors at camp this summer to communicate they are having difficulty coping with the ways the pandemic has impacted and changed their camp experience, school life, or home environment. Develop a plan for how you will create opportunities for children to communicate these feelings in appropriate ways.
- Giving campers "fidgets" is a great way to keep active hands & bodies busy (away from faces and each other), racing minds focused, and heightened sensory needs calm—they're also great camp souvenirs to remember how awesome Summer 2020 camp was!
- Remember to teach, model, practice and reinforce only what you want children "to do" instead of drawing attention to what you "don't".
- Again, physical interaction between children & program staff is not prohibited this summer- there are simply guidelines in place to make it as safe as possible. Work closely with staff and families to get to know your campers' needs and develop a plan for how and when to intervene, provide support, and redirect.
- Often, disruptive and distracting behaviors stem from a need for attention. Be creative in how you will keep children engaged in activities. The small group configurations at camp this summer provide a wonderful opportunity to connect with, give attention to, and tailor activities to your campers more than ever!

What about meeting the needs of children who need more extensive physical care, feeding, etc.?

- Be open, honest & transparent with families about the resources, support, and services you can offer within your camp guidelines this summer. Brainstorm & work together.
- If your camp traditionally offers 1:1 support or aides to children, those individuals are counted in small group numbers. EX. A group of 10 might include 1 counselor, 1 child & support staff, & 7 other campers.



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How do we redesign our camp activities to meet distancing guidelines but still be accessible and inclusive?

- Before redesigning or developing new activities, review the ones you have! They may already align with guidelines or require only a few adjustments. Inclusive camps adapt, innovate, modify, and embrace change, all the time—do what you do best!
- Remember that inclusion doesn't just apply to one activity. It's a mindset, a belief, a methodology that applies to all activities.
- Coffee Talk panelist Lisa Drennan from MERGE Consulting shared a terrific [tip sheet of inclusive practices](#).
- NIP has also developed a guide for developing inclusive activities titled "[Creating Inclusive Activities...This Summer \(and ALWAYS!\)](#)" to help camps apply the principles of inclusion to both in-person and virtual activities this summer.

Practical Reopening tips from Panelist Bill Hinton @ Camp Manitou Lin

What do your staff to children ratios look like for your trail groups? Do you have a plan or protocol in place for group make-up?

1 staff 9 Campers max. Michigan has a 10 person group rule. Our Trail groups are mixed gender and done by grade. The older campers are a bit more of a gap in age due to numbers.

You mentioned each trail group would be pretty much self-contained- are there any large/whole camp activities at all- what do those look like with physical distancing?

We do have one large group game a week. It is theme based and set up as a groups running around working together to figure things out (social distancing guidelines enforced). "Gold Rush" or "Scavenger Hunt" type thing.

How have you handled staff hiring and training? For example, mostly returning staff or new hires?

Mixed new and returning. We are following precautions, using social distancing, and wear mask when we are together for staff sessions and trainings. It has been very difficult. We could not require all staff to get COVID-19 test.

If you would suggest top 3 supplies/resources important to have this summer what would they be?

Sanitization wipes, garden sprayer for large sanitation with approved chemical or bleach mix, extra masks if someone forgets (staff or campers)



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Have you eliminated any traditional activities this summer due to restrictions? What have you replaced them with?

Only our High Ropes and Climbing Wall were eliminated. All other activities were able to be modified and to include an appropriate sanitation process. Some hands-on activities were modified (ex; fewer in depth crafts. Sticking to things like Tie Die, friendship bracelets, and leatherwork.)

What do you think some of your most innovative ideas are for this summer so far?

We have purchased standalone hand washing stations that we found on the internet that were developed for 3rd world countries that struggle with sanitation. Made with a bowl and 2, 5 gallon buckets.

Do you think you'll keep any of your new procedures of activities in place even when things return to "normal"?

Some of them yes. Specifically some of our new waterfront procedures. We will evaluate at the end of the summer.

What are you most excited about for camp this summer?

Having campers on site again! It has been too long. We are usually 7 days a week from Mid-March to Mid Nov. I am going through withdrawal. LOL

Do you have a good resource list or any companies you'd recommend for cleaning supplies, masks, special materials, etc.?

We use trusted local vendors. We also have a standing procedure for anyone going to the store to buy the max allowable amount of "Clorox" Sanitizing wipes, then we reimburse and stockpile.

How many campers with special needs do you anticipate participating this summer? Are you offering any at home or virtual services to campers who have declined to attend due to health concerns?

We have 12 to 15 a week out of 60 to 100 campers. No virtual offerings as this point. Although, we are doing Zoom meetings with families before they bring their child to camp so everyone understands and preps for procedures to plan for things that may seem different.



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PLEASE NOTE:

Responses listed here represent information provided by NIP partners and participants contributing to the Coffee Talk series—lists are not exhaustive or exclusive.

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REMEMBER

YOU CAN DO THIS!

Summer camps dedicated to inclusion have been the BEST at making adaptations for years.

This summer is no different in this regard.

You are just uniquely positioned to make a bigger difference this summer than ever before— and we're here to support you.