

NEW STAFF GET DRUNK

Drunk with Lust. Summer love was romanticized in the hit musical *Grease*, but the reality is far from romantic. Today's teen hook-up culture is amplified far beyond what most directors would envision. Expect that the first few hours you have your staff on-site will be spent evaluating prospects, and the rest of the summer attempting conquests. Some hook-ups will occur off-site, during time away, thus creating even more drama. Of course, maximum drama comes from staff who attempt in vain to maintain a long-distance relationship. Few events will distract your staff more than the dreaded, but inevitable, break-up text or protracted phone call. Prepare all your staff to bounce back by convincing them that children are their top priority all summer.

Drunk with Power. Millennials have a tremendous sense of entitlement. Sadly, many lack the humility to ask for feedback, the resilience to receive it without being hurt, and the grit to keep going after failing. They unconsciously react against these weaknesses by capitalizing on their newfound leadership. Reasonable responsibility morphs into bossy behavior overnight. Staff drunk with power will raise their voices, give commands, and take charge at times when none of those authoritarian strategies is warranted. Temper their intoxication early, before it transforms into tyranny. Your feedback is easiest to hear at the start of the season.

Drunk with Cliques. Insecurity about social standing is even more recalcitrant than that of one's leadership skills. You spend time training your staff how to help the campers make friends, but have you considered that the counselors are even more worried about their popularity, or lack thereof? We all want a feeling of belongingness, but when you comingle a fresh group of young adults, (some of whom were best friends last summer), helping everyone feel welcome is a serious challenge. Groups will form along predictable lines: new/returning; foreign/domestic; etc. Set common goals for mixed groups early in order to emulsify your staff.

Drunk with Stimulants. Prescription drug abuse is more common than ever, and your staff don't need to buy it from some shady dude on a street corner, or even over the Internet. Most of what they want is in their parents' medicine cabinet (opioid pain killers, such as oxycodone) or in their peers' pockets (stimulants, such as methylphenidate). You won't smell it on their breath or see it in their eyes, but a few will be enjoying a chemically-induced happy mood or a burst of energy. It might even help them do their job better for a few hours, but it's illegal and potentially dangerous. Be clear, when you interview your staff, exactly what is covered in your substance use policy. Unless it legitimately prescribed, it's a no-no, not to mention a massive liability.

Drunk with Confidence. Strong leaders need confidence and competence in equal measure. New staff tend to compensate for a lack of the latter with an overabundance of the former. Moreover, their under-developed frontal lobes make them think they are invincible. As a result, they take unhealthy risks with other people's children, themselves, and their peers. Who wudduh think that setting fire to a wakeboarding helmet and surfing by the camp after sunset was dangerous? (Hey, I can't make this stuff up.) Impress upon your staff that each wild idea for a new program or night-off activity should be double-checked with a senior staff member first. And then cross your fingers they remember who they represent during their time off.

Drunk with—You Gussed It—Alcohol. Only a call from the hospital is worse than the 2am call from the local police informing you that some of your staff have been arrested for providing alcohol to minors, driving drunk, or disorderly conduct. Most camp directors have answered calls like this, despite their sincere efforts to explain the law, the risks, and the contract everyone signed. Alcohol remains accessible, ingestible, socially acceptable, and therefore irresistible. It also seems like a better and better idea the more you imbibe...at least to a point. Therefore, underage drinking, binge drinking, and returning to camp intoxicated all remain viable activities to your new staff. Reversing these trends requires that the older staff—those who can drink legally—set a good example by voluntarily pledging abstinence, or at least moderation. And, of course, be sure that all staff know they can call camp at any time if they've been drinking and need a sober driver. Better to follow a poor decision with a smart one, rather than risk a fatal one.