

Top 3 reasons to be a camp counselor

March 15, 2016 By [Elizabeth Dawson Shreckhise](#)

It's easy to think about being a camp counselor as simply what you do — or what you have to do: your duties, assignments, responsibilities. And of course those things matter and are a big deal. You're responsible for kids, for modeling your best behavior, and teaching arts and skills in effective ways that engage campers. All of that matters a lot— it's the key to a great camp and camp experience.

But let's put that to the side for just today, for just this one blog post, and talk instead about [what YOU get out of it](#).

I'm not talking about happy-go-lucky platitudes like, "It's the best job you'll ever have," and "it's so rewarding!"

Because let's face it, while it's super fun to be a camp counselor, sometimes it's hard! The hours are demanding, there's little free time to yourself, and kids — those little people at the heart of your job — go through a lot in a day, and it's not always all smiles and hugs.

Being [a camp counselor is a good job](#), and *it is* fun.

But in the arc of your life — especially in considering that the process of life is toward growing up, being mature, and taking more and more personal responsibility on in pursuit of adulthood — [being a camp counselor](#) is one of the few jobs you can get that combine it all. And if you can get THAT right, you can do most any job out there!

So let's talk about **the top three reasons to be a camp counselor**.

#1 Juggling act

There's no job more like being a parent than being a camp counselor. You have to put others first (with a smile on your face) as often as you can. Your job is to nurture them, not yourself. Your personal growth takes a deep back seat — your personal growth *happens*, and marvelously so, but not out front. That alone tunes you in to what it means to put the ego aside, put selfishness aside, put self-consciousness aside and focus on others while getting things done.

When this comes together right, as it does for the best camp counselors, you begin to see how demanding the work is, how to manage time effectively, how to prioritize tasks within a broader strategy, and how to do it all with an aim in mind.

And guess what? Then you get to claim to future bosses (or for yourself as an entrepreneur) that you can see the big picture, carve out a path, and get from point A to point Z easily.

It's called being a self-starter.

This doesn't mean that you don't get guidance from your bosses, or have them set expectations for you. It just means that within those expectations YOU get the ball and run with it. That's the test that you'll be put to again and again in the best jobs out there in your future. It's a lot more meaningful to get your feet wet doing that in a job as a camp counselor than in, say, flipping burgers or checking customers out at the movie counter all summer.

#2 Wise up

It's amazing and wonderful how much fun you can have being a camp counselor. Kids allow us to be child-like, full of wonder, playful, and joyful!

But there's always that fine line that you can't cross when you're tendering kids through the world. The line where you have to be mature, responsible, ethical, and modeling the best behavior.

Kids look up to adults and they absolutely crave our being heroes and heroines.

We can be funny, inspiring, goofy, *and* quirky but at the end of the day we have to make them feel safe. And more than that we have to make them feel that the journey is meaningful, that there's **a noble purpose to it all**.

When we work as camp counselors we get to try on and wear that heroic mantle and be our best for someone, for many young and impressionable someones, our campers.

Holding that image in our hearts and minds as we work with campers, we transform into those heroes and heroines. And that firm, ethical, high-minded, purposeful stance translates into a better you and me.

We take that with us into all future work, whether for a non-profit or volunteer cause, in parenting, or in any kind of job we would ever do. Employers look for this kind of person, this kind of worker, because it's the kind of worker who CARES.

Our human hearts matter to the work we do. Yours will get a work out at camp in the best possible way. And it will be in prime form for all that comes after.

#3 Talk it up

Most camp counselors are called on to not only manage tents and camp life, but also to teach activities. And here, words matter.

How do you explain something so that it makes sense to someone else?

How do you give feedback to someone who's struggling to grasp something?

How do you make corrections in someone's approach to a task or skill so that they can get better while leaving them with enough confidence to keep trying?

How do you stay in touch with parents about their campers in a meaningful way?

How do you resolve a minor or major conflict in a way that heals rather than hurts while still moving forward within whatever issue came up?

Back to flipping burgers and working the checkout counter for a second — you're not going to work out those complex communication skills that way, in those jobs! They're going to allow you to say things like, "Next!" and, "That'll be 8.49, please."

Being a camp counselor asks you to think about your every word and deed, what it communicates, what it models, and what it conveys toward a given end.

When you're 18 or 21 or even 25 (to say nothing of the rest of life) you need practice building these arts and skills so that when you go for your dream job as a lawyer, artist, physician, architect, teacher, or whatever you have some real experience under your belt communicating ideas, goals, and issues with other people who also want to communicate issues, ideas, and goals.

Being a camp counselor will provide you with excellent opportunities every day, all day, to fine tune your communication skills.

Get the job (done)

Hopefully this helps you see that being a camp counselor is a job that punches well above its weight.

What is it NOT? It's not a glorified babysitting job. It's not a slacker summer job in the woods. It's NOT passing time until you get a ["real job."](#) And it's NOT unpaid, like too many [internships](#).

Camp counseling is a demanding job that trains you for every other job you'll ever do — and it trains you well, across many skill sets. You get immersed in world of camp counseling, with opportunities each and every day to practice and hone those skills.

Being a camp counselor *is*, in fact, one of the "best jobs you'll ever have," and it *will* be "so rewarding." But these things have real meaning behind them.

So [apply](#) for a summer camp counseling job today!

— **Elizabeth Dawson Shreckhise**, *Assistant Director*, [Camp Alleghany for Girls](#)