

# A Guide for Camp Counselors: Supporting Kids through Difficult News

**Supporting campers when there is difficult news requires sensitivity, intentionality, and thoughtful communication. Use these strategies to help campers navigate difficult news. And remember, you're never alone! Ask for help when needed.**

**Take Care of Yourself:** Taking care of yourself is vital to your ability to be present and attentive. If you are struggling, let a supervisor know.

**Stay Calm:** Campers look to staff for cues on how to react. Remaining calm helps reassure them. If you feel emotional, ask for support.

**Be Honest and Age-Appropriate:** Share information that is truthful and factual, and suitable for camper's age and understanding. This is not a time for personal opinions.

**Listen Actively:** Let campers express their feelings and thoughts. Listen without interrupting and validate their emotions.

**Offer Reassurance:** Comfort campers by ensuring their safety and that they are cared for. Let them know it's okay to feel upset.

**Keep Routine:** Maintaining a regular camp schedule can provide a sense of normalcy and security.

**Provide a Safe Space:** Create a culture and environment where campers feel safe to ask questions and express feelings.

**Monitor Camper Behavior:** Be observant of changes in behavior or signs of distress. If you think a camper or colleague needs extra support, let a supervisor know.

**Be Available:** Make sure campers know you, and other staff, are there for them if they need to talk or need comfort.

**Ask for Help:** If a child is particularly distressed, or you are unsure how to manage a situation, ask a supervisor for help.

## When to Ask for Help

Ask for help when you are:

- Concerned for the physical or emotional safety of others or yourself
- Experiencing persistent stress or anxiety
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Facing an unfamiliar challenge
- Not seeing progress or feeling successful despite working hard
- Feeling isolated or lonely

## How to Ask for Help

Find a person who can help: camp director, leadership, supervisor, health/wellness staff.

Be honest and as specific as possible.

Share how you feel and what you need.

It's okay to say you are not sure what help is needed or what your question is.

