

Cruelty vs. Humor Embers

Theme: Drawing lines between jokes and aggression.

Age of campers: 12+

Time allotted/actual: 45-60 minutes

Location: Anywhere quiet and comfortable.

Props/Materials/Symbols: None, other than the questions.

Prep done: Have questions in mind (see below for examples). Keep in mind that this embers works best for issue resolution. Assess your campers and evaluate whether this is what they need before proceeding.

Opening/Mood set: Introduce the topic and explain that questions are coming.

Questions/Activities:

1st phase: What is the difference between joking around and hurting others? What need is met by joking around? What need is met by hurting others?

2nd phase: Why is so much humor based in insult? How is everyone feeling about the current level of humor/insult used in our group?

3rd phase: What other ways can we meet these needs? What culture do we want to have for our cabin? What guidelines can help us create that?

Closing: Open the subject of new commitments or the formation of a contract that everyone will adhere to. What does the group want/need? How does it need to sound to meet this need?

Were other people involved? This one stands a lot of potential benefit from a guest facilitator, especially if the topic has come up before and the group is familiar with your thoughts on it.

Thoughts on pacing? This one actually has the potential to be very short with some campers (especially 15+) who want the focus quickly taken off of their "language of cool." Be ready with appropriate challenges to that mentality.

What would you change next time / what did you learn / how would you enhance it? If the group also has a swearing issue, try introducing a metaphor and the beginning where two counselors get into a discussion and potentially even use curse words to speak to each other very awkwardly, with attention called inappropriately to them. See what this does to the discussion.

Camper feedback: Hard to get into at first, but good in the end.