

## Chapter 8: Working with Campers

This section provides an overview of developmental abilities and the needs of campers at each level. Information pertains to both boys and girls unless otherwise specified. The information was obtained from the *Northern California Girl Scout Council Resource Guide* and customized for Diamond Crest Girl Scout Day Camp use.

### **Pixies - ages 3 to 5 (CDC Ages and Stages)**

- Have tons of energy and need to run and play
- Love to explore and are very inquisitive
- Are just beginning to notice differences between boys and girls
- Have far more developed large motor skills (running and jumping) than fine motor skills (cutting with scissors, coloring in the lines, and writing)
- Can dress and undress themselves
- Are fairly self-sufficient in their toileting routines, however may need some assistance
- When tired and/or hungry, may appear cranky and obstinate
- Take longer to complete tasks than you may expect
- Have vivid imaginations and often “tell stories”

### **1st Graders**

- Have lots of energy and need to run and play
- Are great builders and budding artists although they are still developing their fine motor skills
- Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now
- Are beginning to learn about basic number concepts, time, and money
- Are just beginning to write and spell, and don’t always have the words for what they’re thinking or saying
- Know how to follow simple directions and respond well to recognition for doing so

### **2nd and 3rd Graders**

- Have lots of energy and need to run and play
- Are social and enjoy working in groups
- Want to help others and appreciate being given individual responsibilities
- Are concrete thinkers and focused on the here and now
- Need clear directions and structure, and like knowing what to expect
- Are becoming comfortable with basic number concepts, time, money, and distance
- Are continuing to develop fine motor skills; can tie their shoes, and use basic tools
- Love to act in plays and create music
- Know how to follow rules, listen well, and appreciate recognition of a job done well

#### **4th and 5th Graders**

- Want to make decisions and express their opinions
- Are social and enjoy doing things in groups
- Are aware of expectations
- Are sensitive to the judgments of others
- Are concerned about equity and fairness
- Are beginning to think abstractly and critically and are capable of flexible thought
- Can consider more than one perspective, as well as the feelings and perspectives and attitudes of others
- Have strong fine and gross motor skills and coordination
- May be starting puberty (mostly applies to girls)

#### **6th, 7th, and 8th Graders**

- Girls: Are going through puberty, including changes in their skin, body-shape, and weight. They're also starting their menstrual cycle and have occasional shifts in mood.
- Are starting to spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age
- Can be very self-conscious, wanting to be like everyone else, but fearing they are different in their thoughts and feelings.
- Are beginning to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at home and at school.

#### **9th and 10th Graders**

- Are beginning to clarify their own values, consider alternative points of view on controversial issues, and see multiple aspects of a situation
- Have strong problem-solving and critical thinking skills, and are able to plan and reflect on their own learning experiences
- Spend more time in peer groups than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age
- Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality
- Feel lots of responsibilities and pressures from home, school, peers, work, and so on
- Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at home and at school

#### **11th and 12th Graders (JUL's)**

- Can see complexity of situations and controversial issues. Understand that problems often have no clear solution and that varying points of view may each have merit.
- Have strong problem solving and critical thinking skills, and can adapt logical thinking to real-life situations. Recognize and incorporate practical limitations to solutions.
- Spend more time with peers than with their families and are very concerned about friends and relationships with others their age
- Frequently enjoy expressing their individuality
- Feel lots of responsibilities and pressures from home, school, peers, work, etc.
- Are continuing to navigate their increasing independence and expectations from adults at home and at school and are looking to their futures

### **Creating a Safe Space for Girls**

A safe space is one in which girls feel as though they can be themselves, without explanation, judgment, or ridicule. Girl Scout research shows that girls are looking for an emotionally safe environment, where confidentiality is respected and they can express themselves without fear. The environment you create is as important – maybe more – than the activities girls do; it's the key to developing the sort of group in which girls want to be a part. The following sections share some tips on creating a warm, safe environment for girls.

### **Recognizing and Supporting Each Girl**

- Make each girl feel important
- Recognize acts of trying as well as instances of clear success
- Emphasize the positive qualities that make each girl worthy and unique
- Help girls find ways to show acceptance of and support of one another

### **Promoting Fairness**

- Girls look for fairness in the ways responsibilities are shared, in handling of disagreements, and in responses to performance and accomplishment
- Consult girls as to what they think is fair before decisions are made
- Explain your reasoning
- Be willing to apologize if needed
- Help girls explore and decide for themselves the fair ways of solving problems, carrying out activities, and responding to behavior

### **Building Trust**

- Girls need your belief in them and your support when they try new things
- Help girls give and show trust towards each other

### **Managing Conflict**

Conflicts and disagreements are an inevitable part of life, and when handled constructively can actually enhance communication and relationships. When conflict arises, get those involved to sit down together and talk calmly and in a nonjudgmental manner. If the conflict persists, support can be found at the Staff Table.

### **Communicating Effectively with Girls of Any Age**

Ask Open Ended Questions   ♦   Listen   ♦   Show Respect   ♦   Empathize

## Preventing Problems

The best way to deal with interpersonal and behavior problems is to prevent them. An ounce of prevention really is worth a pound of cure! In Girl Scouting, we use many techniques to accomplish this:

**Unit Agreements (Ground Rules):** It's a good idea to have the group discuss expectations and agreements at the very beginning. Discuss items such as:

- Wearing their scarves – they help everyone at camp know where we belong
- Using the buddy system
- Being respectful
- Welcoming the Aides as helpers that everyone can learn from
- No playing with hair

**Team Building Activities and Games:** Ensuring that the girls have an opportunity to get to know each other is important. This can be done by providing opportunities to work in small groups and pairs, and rotating them frequently. Cooperative games can also help girls in your unit “be a sister to every Girl Scout.”

**Changing Activities Frequently:** Changing activities often can help a variety of problems. Girls, especially young ones, have short attention spans. Savvy leaders know that if girls start picking at each other or having problems getting along, that is time to pull out something new to do and possibly change the groups around.

**Split the girls up into groups for activities** in a variety of ways – this allows the opportunity to put girls together who might be good friends, separate girls who are having interpersonal difficulties before the problem escalates, and allows girls the opportunity to get to know all of the girls, rather than always sticking with those one or two “best friends.”

**Use Kaper Charts:** This allows for a fair way to divide up chores and avoids the appearance of playing favorites. It also gives a way to mix up the girls to help them get to know each other better.