TIPS FOR LEADING A SMALL GROUP

Connecting with a group of energetic kids, whether it be Kinders or Preteens, during a "fast-paced four-day adventure" like Kids Camp can feel like a challenge. Your small group time is a valuable opportunity to pause, reflect, and build relationships amidst all the excitement. Here are some tips to help you make the most of it:

EMBRACE THE "PAUSE + REFLECT"

It's easy for small group time to get swallowed up by the next activity, but intentionally carving out this moment is key.

- Set the Tone: When it's time for small group, help the kids transition by using a consistent phrase or action (e.g., "Alright everyone, let's find our small group spots and take a deep breath!").
- Create a Calm Space: Even if it's just for a few minutes, try to make your small group area feel a little calmer than the rest of the camp. This could mean sitting in a circle, lowering your voice slightly, or even having a soft blanket for kids to sit on if appropriate.
- Model Reflection: Kids learn by example. Share a brief personal reflection related to the day's theme or even a simple "My favorite part of today was…" to encourage them to do the same.

LEVERAGE THE SCRIPT, BUT DON'T BE A ROBOT

The provided small group script is a fantastic tool, but it's a guide, not a rigid mandate.

- Read Ahead: Before camp starts each day, read through the script. This will help you feel prepared and identify any parts you might want to rephrase for your specific group.
- Personalize It: If a question in the script doesn't seem to land well with your group, try rephrasing it or asking a follow-up question. For younger kids, you might need to use more concrete examples. For older kids, you might be able to delve a little deeper.
- Listen More Than You Talk: The goal is conversation, not a lecture. After asking a question, give kids time to think and respond. Avoid immediately jumping in with the answer or the next question.
- It's Okay to Veer Slightly: If a kid shares something profound or interesting that isn't directly on the script, it's okay to explore it briefly. These organic moments can be incredibly powerful for relationship building.

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CONNECT BEYOND THE CONVERSATION

Building relationships goes beyond just talking.
- Learn Names (and Use Them!): This seems basic, but it's incredibly important. Knowing and using a child's name makes them feel seen and valued.
- Find Common Ground: Look for shared interests within your group. Do a few kids love the same cartoon? Are they excited about the same camp activity? Acknowledge these connections.
- One-on-One Moments: Even in a group setting, look for opportunities to connect individually. A quick high-five, a word of encouragement, or a brief chat about their favorite part of the day can make a big difference.
- Affirm and Encourage: Always affirm kids for participating, even if their answer isn't exactly what you expected. "That's a great thought!" or "Thanks for sharing that!" goes a long way.

TAILOR TO YOUR GRADE LEVEL

Since your groups are broken out by specific grades, you can fine-tune your approach for maximum impact.
- Kindergarten & 1st Grade: Keep it brief and tangible. Focus on quick, concrete answers, and use visuals or actions when possible. Positive reinforcement like high-fives and immediate praise are highly effective.
- 2nd & 3rd Grade: These kids are bridging concrete to abstract thinking. Use relatable examples and encourage short storytelling. Simple "would you rather" questions can be great for engagement.
- 4th & 5th Grade: These groups can handle deeper conversations. Ask open-ended questions that require more than a yes/no answer, encouraging them to think critically and share their reasoning. Help them connect camp lessons to their lives.

Small group time is a unique opportunity to create a memorable and meaningful experience for each child at Kids Camp. By focusing on connection, thoughtful conversation, and a tailored approach to each grade level, you can truly make a difference in their camp adventure.