



REMEMBER

- The impact stress has on your staff will be affected by their coping skills, resilience, supportive connections, and perception of themselves, others and God. Noticing these things will help leaders assess the capacity of staff and understand the impact of expectations.
- Stress is closely tied to expectations. Clearly communicating what is expected of staff and how that looks can prevent misperception and the unnecessary stress that results.
- Matt 6:34 (Msg.): “Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don’t get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.”



RECOGNIZE

- Stress is a normal part of life and can even be helpful and motivating. But when stress levels move beyond the person’s capacity to cope, stress becomes “distress,” and that can cause physical symptoms, emotional dysregulation, and eventual burnout if unattended.
- Stress comes from perception. Stress at camp often comes from a staff member believing that a situation or an expectation is more difficult or complicated than they have the resources to manage.
- Unsupported stress makes people feel threatened. You may see your staff responding with fight (aggression/agitation), flight (distraction/avoidance), or freeze (mind going blank/concentration difficulties).
- Camp leadership needs to be ready to supportively step in when stress begins to result in growing anxiousness, physical complaints (headaches/stomach aches), difficulties with sleep, scattered concentration, tears, forgetfulness, negative coping, or a sense of completely being overwhelmed.



RESPOND

- **Normalize the feelings.** Stress is generally not a dangerous thing - it’s a difficult thing. Help your staff know that feeling stressed is a normal human reaction. It is simply an alert from our brains to remind us that the pressure is high and it’s time to choose a response.
- **Take stock.** Guide the staff person in creating a list of their internal resources (eg. knowledge, experience, humour, faith, courage) and external resources (eg. people, nature, time off, things that bring joy, coping skills). Help them make a plan for accessing these resources in the camp setting.
- **Create a relaxation repertoire.** Encourage them to choose and practice stress release activities (like measured breathing, prayer, intentional head-to-toe muscle relaxation, journaling or stopping and focusing on peacefully “being” in the present rather than frantically “doing” all the things that need to get done).
- **Think about thinking.** Adopting helpful thinking patterns (such as optimism, gratefulness, flexibility, and grace for oneself) and noticing unhelpful ones (like catastrophizing, black and white thinking, perfectionism, or jumping to conclusions) can greatly impact perception. Encourage staff to explore their patterns and perceptions with a friend or supervisor when stress builds around a specific task or responsibility.
- **Explore surrender.** Releasing the illusion of being able to control everything helps us surrender the situation to a present and loving God. This lessens the weight of carrying it all on my own.
- **Consider adjustments.** Sometimes camp expectations are higher than ability. Recognize when changes are needed and make the requirements of your staff match their capacity.



GUIDING STRESSED-
OUT STAFF



RESOURCES

“How to help our staff with stress”: Camp Code Podcast episode #135 - <https://gocamp.pro/campcode/manage-stress>
<https://campmanagement.com/camp-wellness/self-care-101-cultivating-a-breath-of-fresh-air-for-camp-staff/>
<https://jedfoundation.org/five-ways-to-support-camp-counselor-mental-health/>