**Rainy Day Activities**

When working at camp, inclement weather can throw a wrench into everyone’s plans. How are you going to entertain several hundred campers with little space and no equipment? Will the campers be disappointed that they can’t ride horses or drive go-carts?

Rainy days need to be planned AND rehearsed in advance so that it feels like a normal day at camp. We practice fire drills, lost camp drills and even intruder drills, so why not rainy day activities? It can even be done as a drill during staff training. Where does each department go? What games or activities will they do? These are all questions your staff need to ask themselves.

Before you plan a new activity consider running your activity in the rain. For many campers and staff, the rain will mean canceled activities, but in some cases, campers may enjoy a (short) hike or bike ride in the rain. Water, mud, and puddles can be fun for many different age groups. It’s often the out-of-the-ordinary and unexpected activities are often the most memorable.

When planning alternate activities, think through each department’s needs: How many activities can still run, even in poor weather? Can you combine multiple groups into one dry area? Besides rain, what other factors could affect your programming? If you lose power will STEM class need to find a new activity? Spending time now figuring out what would cause a class or activity to have to change will allow staff to develop a comprehensive plan. Great plans lead to seamless transitions when weather hits, not to mention lowering the stress level of staff.

Whatever you do, please avoid videos or lectures; this is not why kids come to camp. When possible, find an alternative that relates to the original class or activity. Take rock climbing, for example. What can campers learn about knots, belaying, and equipment while in-doors? Can your horsemanship class learn more about tack, feeding and horse care inside the barn? If you can’t find an alternative that relates to the lesson, then look for an adjacent skill area. For example, your biking class could work on balance or reaction time. Tap the many resources at your disposal to find creative solutions.

The attitude your staff lead with help determine how your campers react to a new activity. If your staff remain positive, it will encourage the campers to enjoy themselves as well. Here are some rainy day activity ideas:

**Staff talent show:** Your staff is talented! Many of their unique skills may surprise you. Campers love it when the staff share with them, this is always a big hit.

**Camper talent show:** Admittedly, this is a little more difficult to pull off on short notice. It might be possible for campers to tell stories, play an instrument or put on a short skit.

**Skits or plays:** You can either have your staff put on skits and plays, or allow the campers to learn a few lines and put on their own short play.

**Cabin time:** Do not underestimate how much campers enjoy cabin time. Time spent talking and playing games can turn out to be some of the best memories made at camp. This is a great place for Bible studies, card games and other indoor games to occur.

**Games in your back pocket**: My favorite games are challenge course games. There are hundreds of games and challenges you can play with little or no equipment. Sometimes referred to as “ice breakers”, these games can be played indoors or outdoors, in small spaces or large fields. For years, I carried a piece of paper in my back pocket listing 10 games I could play with 10-200 kids with little or no equipment. I would suggest that every staff member has a few games they can play at a moment’s notice.

**Music jam:** Your worship team can put on a concert for the kids. Have them play their favorite top ten or a camp parody or two.

**Storytime:**  Don’t underestimate the power of stories. If you have someone on-site who is a talented storyteller, this is invaluable. Ask the Camp Pastor what they have up their sleeves.  Great stories will captivate campers for long periods of time.

**Preventive maintenance:** When you have lots of idle hands, you should use them to paint the cafeteria and scrape the gum off the floor… just kidding. Campers love being at camp, you can be doing almost anything and they will have a good time. The key is to be intentional, fun and sometimes a little random. If like most things, you plan for the unplannable, you will at least look competent when you announce rainy day activities.

Oh, and one last piece of advice: make up a good name. If you call your rainy day activities “rainy day activities”, then you should take a long hard look at yourself. Give them a name that says “this is different and fun.” Instead of dwelling on the negative, give the impression that today will be fun in its own incredible way. No need to apologize for the rain, because we have something amazing planned!

* Kirk Betz