

Not Back to School Camp
Camper Handbook Extras
2024 edition



Thanks for having a look at our *Extras!*

This document is **optional reading** for folks who are interested in the topics herein.

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Key Changes for 2024

This stuff probably won't make a lot of sense to brand new campers. Also, this isn't a complete list of possible changes.

- For **long-distance air travelers to Vermont**, we now offer the option to **arrive a day early** and join a **work party** before everybody else shows up. We learned last year that it is next-to-impossible for folks flying from the West Coast to arrive by our 3:00 p.m. arrival time, and we don't want anybody sleeping in the airport or needing to pay for a pricey hotel. There's a note about this in the Vermont travel section in the main Camper Handbook. Additional details will be available later.
- We may need to continue to flex and cooperate in relation to **Covid**. We're hopeful that significant measures won't be needed, come August and September. But there may still be a variety of small adaptations. We'll assess and send details close to session time.
- **No other big shifts** anticipated for campers this year. Most of our 2024 changes will be staff-side.



Lost and Found



We keep a lost and found at all sessions; please check it often even if you don't think you're missing anything. After camp, we leave behind everything that looks to us not terribly important, such as plain white T shirts, broken sunglasses, socks, and towels. We drag the remaining sweaty muddy items to the laundromat, hang onto everything for **3 weeks**, then poke through it to see what we want for ourselves and haul the rest off to a thrift store. So if you get home and discover that you're missing something, let us know right away. We'll ask you to send money for shipping and the time of whoever is taking care of this for us, and when we receive it we'll ship your stuff home. (We typically charge a flat fee of approximately \$25 for anything under 2 lbs., more for heavier stuff.)

The moral of this story is: it's far, far better for everyone if you make sure to collect all your stuff before you go home. The giant boxes of fabulous clothing and such that we routinely haul away from camp are one of the great headscratching unsolved mysteries of our universe...

Parents, you might want to make sure that all your camper's possessions are labeled. A staff person who proofread this page shared the following memory:

I'll never forget the moment when we were modeling lost and found items, and I noticed a name written on the tag of the jacket I had been parading around in. "Hey John, is this yours?"

"Huh? No."

"It has your name in it."

"Oh, wait, yeah. Thanks."

We also suggest that you make an agreement or a plan regarding how your kids will make sure they arrive home with everything. It's expensive for you (and unpleasant for us) to track down missing items after camp is over.

What NBTSC Days are Like



We play; talk; sing; drum; dance; hike; stare at the sky; play volleyball and softball and soccer; take creative, emotional, and intellectual risks; encourage each other to do amazing things; have talent shows; teach and learn from each other. Each camper is encouraged to contribute both creatively (teach a workshop, lead a sport or group singing, etc.) and not-quite-so-creatively (wash dishes, cut vegetables, pick up trash, etc.).

Daily schedule

Each day we have a morning meeting and an evening

meeting; everyone is required to attend both, during which important announcements are made and campers and staff are able to raise concerns. The morning meeting includes time in advisee groups, where you'll spend time getting to know and sharing with about 10 other campers and your staff advisor.

Everyone is also encouraged, but not required, to participate in evening group activities. And we share mealtimes, of course. Beyond this, there are many scheduled daytime activities, sports games, and workshops—led both by staff and by you and your peers. Usually, you can choose among these daytime activities—or nap, talk with a new friend, or create your own fun.

Evening events

are special—sometimes simple, sometimes elaborate... a campfire sing-along, talent shows, dancing, music jams, a bonding night, and other good stuff.

Sports

Our Oregon and Vermont sites have large playing fields and depending on the interests of the current camper and staffer cohort, we often play ultimate frisbee, soccer, volleyball, and/or softball. We've also enjoyed Capture the Flag and lots of playful games involving running and buckets of water and such. In Oregon there's a little wabi sabi-esque basketball court. Generally speaking, if there's a sport or game you want to play, you can usually make it happen - either on your own, or with staff support.

Unscheduled activities

Most of the time you're free to make your own fun if you don't feel like participating in a group activity. You can sometimes swim, hike on trails, talk with new friends, read, nap, swing, practice a new skill...

photo by J. Davis, 2013

Brittney on Staying Healthy at Camp

Former staffer Brittney once wrote a letter, excerpts of which we think helpful enough to share quasi-permanently.



Dear Campers,

Do you do any of the following at camp?

- Kiss
- Share finger food
- Bite your nails
- Sleep out in the cold
- Employ “damage-control” wellness tactics? (Chugging E-mergency and killer tea is damage control.)
- Sleep fewer than 7 hours per night
- ...or even touch common objects?

We all want to be “Radiantly healthy in mind, body, and spirit!” (in the words of staffer Gayatri Janine), but as campers arrive from “all over tarnation” after riding transit systems and un-school buses, and staying in hostels with friends, and getting little sleep... keeping our community radiant can take a little effort. As we travel, we get exposed to cold and flu germs that can rear their ugly little heads when we create our close, fast-paced camp community. Yep, those pesky little germs end up just about anywhere campers are: in the kitchen, in cabins, in our cuddle puddles. Even one germ-ey person in the camp kitchen can give germs a prominent chance to make people at camp feel yucky and sleepy.

The Good News is...

Our past efforts to keep germs out of the kitchen have made a difference in keeping camp energy up! Thank you to those of you at former sessions who were proactive on the health front: those of you who left the dinner line to wash your hands, who steered clear of the kitchen when you were feeling icky, who sanitized table tops and door knobs! Let's keep at it!

In addition to these past efforts, I put a lot of forethought last year into my camp wellness, and I left a West Coast session totally healthy (for the first time)! And, it wasn't really more work, just better planning on my part. I implored the military planning adage of the seven P's: “Proper Prior Planning Prevents Piss Poor Performance.” I had a mean wellness-plan, which you can read at the end of this email....

xo,
Brittney

When creating your radiance plan, you might consider adding/subtracting/editing the following items to suit your camper-style:

An ounce of prevention:

- I carry hand sanitizer and use it, especially after using public transportation, handling cash, and before eating when soap and water aren't available. (Brittney's favorite hand sanitizer is an alcohol-based [EO](#) spray: ... at CVS, Safeway, Amazon.com, healthfood stores, etc. It doesn't feel gooey and comes unscented, or in lavender, peppermint, and more!)
- I shower every night because nasty little viruses can survive hours or even days on surfaces or my skin.
- I GO CRAZY with frequent hand-washing because it is the single most important thing I can do to keep from getting sick and spreading illness (like the common cold or influenza, or hepatitis A, E. coli O157:H7, or even typhoid). Each time I wash my hands, I think of it as though I am giving all of camp a hug and wishing everyone there radiant health. The common cold is most commonly spread via objects or hands contaminated by infected nasal secretions (eww). It is transmitted when I touch my hand to a contaminated object then touch my nose or eyes. I know that scientists discovered that cold viruses are

often left on TV remotes, pencils, door handles, and places that are frequently not really cleaned by cleaning crews. (National Public Radio's show "Fresh Air." <http://www.wbur.org/npr/129829134> In an interview where Terry Gross talks with Jennifer Ackerman about her book, *Ah-Choo! The Uncommon Life of Your Common Cold*).

- I practice super-effective handwashing - I use soap, water, and friction between fingers, around wrists, on the backs of hands and under nails when I wash my hands, because, according to the MN department of health, soap suspends dirt and soils, friction helps pull dirt and oily soils free from the skin, and warm, running water will wash away suspended dirt and soils that trap germs. The final friction of wiping hands removes even more germs.
- I sneeze into my elbow or a tissue to avoid spreading microbes to anyone or anything nearby.
- I get seven-plus **hours of sleep per night** to decrease my risk of getting a cold. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/7823599.stm>
- I plan in advance and remain cool and collected. Since traveling can be stressful, and continuous stress makes me statistically more susceptible to getting a cold,* I am kind to myself and laugh when things don't go as planned, I have solutions and learning experiences rather than problems. I review my camp checklists to not forget anything, and have an emergency plan that includes important phone numbers, just in case something unexpected should happen.
*National Public Radio's show "Fresh Air." <http://www.wbur.org/npr/129829134> In an interview where Terry Gross talks with Jennifer Ackerman's about her book, *Ah-Choo! The Uncommon Life of Your Common Cold*)
- I stay warm and dry **when it's cold**, because a study in Britain demonstrates that being chilled lets suppressed cold viruses in the nose become active. I keep my feet, body, neck, and head dry and warm. When I am cold, I grab my hat or sit by the fireplace drinking tea. http://www.newsmaxhealth.com/headline_health/6_free_ways_cold_free/2010/10/01/354070_3.html
- I support my immune system with nutrition. Healthy foods, probiotics, antioxidants, supplements, pH balance, are things I consume to stay health and support my immune system. [UT Medical Center](#).

At camp

- I exercise everyday. US researchers report in the British Journal of Sports Medicine that when we exercise at least five times a week, we have much fewer colds per season and display symptoms significantly milder when we do catch the bug.
- I stay well-hydrated. Staying hydrated keeps mucous membranes soft and moist, preventing tiny cracks that allow viruses and bacteria to enter (according to [UT Medical Center](#)).
- I keep my hands away from my face to prevent cold and flu germs from entering my system.
- I use serving spoons or forks, instead of my fingers, to put food on my plate to prevent contaminating camp food.
- If I get sick or feel like I am, I will: nap, avoid kissing people, avoid doing food prep, get extra sleep, sleep inside, check in with Mama Bear, and participate in mellow activities....

Brittney's Camp Wellness Recipe

A first defense: I know that germs can incubate for days before cold or flu symptoms appear, so before camp, I treat myself as though I have already been exposed to some nasty little virus, and I don't want it having any chance of survival at camp. Then I maintain a luxe routine once I am AT camp, to ensure long-lasting wellness.

My first defense

- **I create time for stress-free travel.** Traveling and preparation can be stressful, especially on top of work and school, or when, like me, you just hate to pack and procrastinate. Under continuous stress, I am statistically more susceptible to getting a cold, and probably more likely to be impatient and forgetful, so I start packing like WEEKS in advance. I toss things in my suitcase like frisbees, cameras, swimsuits, workshop supplies, directions, travel items like my travel case with my extra toothbrush & toothpaste so they're all in one place, and I don't have to worry about grabbing these last minute. I also create a checklist to make sure I don't forget stuff like tickets, confirmation numbers, underwear, etc. I start with the list in the camper handbook, and add items from there to a custom list. I create lists online, like at <http://upl.codeq.info/>. I have a plan A and plan B for getting to and from camp. I order extra multivitamins and make sure I have a good supply. The point is...I do as little as possible last-minute, so I can sneak in extra sleep before traveling.).

- **I start taking a daily [Wellness Formula](#) capsule** -- it's like killer tea on steroids, in pill-form, and I want to support my immune system. I also take daily multi-vitamins.
- **I prevent germs I come in contact with from entering my system by washing my hands frequently** throughout the day, even if not for any particular reason, **avoiding my usual nail-biting and face-touching, keeping my shoes away from my pillow, and showering when I arrive in Eugene** or at camp to wash away travel grime because viruses can survive hours or even days on surfaces or my skin. I also **carry (and use) my favorite hand-sanitizer!** (alcohol-based [EO](#) spray: ... at CVS, Safeway, Amazon.com, healthfood stores, etc. It doesn't feel gooey and comes unscented, or in lavender, peppermint, and more!)
- **I drink healthy, bottled smoothies on the go to keep hunger at bay** and wait for real meals with real, satisfying and immune-supporting nutritional value (and keep trail mix on hand to prevent from getting super-hungry). I try to limit sugar intake and use sugar-substitutes like ... stevia when traveling because the hippies and probably Gandhi say "sugar is bad."
- **I drink extra water when flying**, since cabin air is low humidity and drying and I want to stay hydrated.

Sustainability at camp

- **I make bedtime a pampering ritual** to be enjoyed at the end of a long day, well-spent. Getting **more than seven hours of sleep** per night decreases my risk of getting a cold. **I am usually in bed by 11:00 PM at camp**, and up by about 7:30 AM.
- **I welcome firelight, starlight, candlelight, and moonlight** at night and avoid bright, artificial light because it suppresses the release of natural melatonin hormones which promote sleepiness.
- If I am really stimulated, I drink a sleepy, **chamomile tea**.
- **I start heading for the shower at 10 PM** each night (some nights I get there quicker than others) with my hot water bottle filled up from the kitchen (if it's a cold night). The hot water bottle goes at the bottom of my sleeping bag. It keeps my feet warm and helps me fall asleep. The shower kills viruses that can survive on my skin for hours or even days and also helps me get warm and cozy before bed. (If it's really cold that night, I might avoid wetting my hair.) I shower in my flip flops to avoid walking around on cold, wet or dirty surfaces before I crawl into my snug sleeping bag. Before crawling in bed, I also take my vitamins (they're in a little M-F case from CVS) and apply lip balm (to prevent my lips from chapping).
- **I ensure a good night's sleep** by having an adequately warm (rated 30 degree) sleeping bag with a cozy hot water-bottle at my feet and ear plugs and an eye mask nearby (in case my roomies are loud or the cabin gets bright). ...ZzZzZzZz.
- If I start to feel under the weather: I nap, do what my body says, avoid food prep, avoid cuddling, get extra sleep, take extra [Wellness Formula](#) capsules, sleep alone in a quiet tent or cabin, have someone else get my food from the dinner line.

Sample Bedtime Policies

We offer these in hopes that they'll help you plan ahead.

Suggested possibilities for you to adapt:

- “At midnight, if I haven’t gone to bed already, I will take 10 minutes to be alone, sit still, take deep breaths, check in with how my body feels, consider what I want to do tomorrow and what I want to get out of the camp week. Based on all that, I will decide what time to be in bed, and I will stick to that choice.”
- “I will go to bed by 1 a.m. every night, earlier if I’m feeling tired, except the last night. And, I won’t start new activities and invite other people into them after midnight.”
- “I will be spontaneous about how late to stay up, but I will take a nap every day after lunch.”
- “I will get at least 8 hours of sleep in each 24 hour period.”

Actual, successful policies (in some cases adapted slightly) from previous camps:



- I will be in bed before 1 a.m. every night except for the last one.

- I will set my watch alarm for 12:20, and be in bed 20 minutes after that.

- I'll lay my pajamas out on my bed after dinner. I will brush my teeth and wash my face at 11:30, and then talk with Bill every half hour after that about how I'm feeling. As soon as I'm tired, I'll go straight to bed.

- I will plan on going to bed by 1:00 a.m. every night. If and when I don't make that goal, I will lay down the next afternoon

and try to sleep.

- At midnight I will take a moment to think about how much longer I should stay awake and how I am feeling. If I feel tired, the next day I will take a nap. I will get 7.5 hours of sleep within each 24 hours.
- I, Jeanette, will be in bed every night while I'm here by 12:30 a.m. at the very latest.

What not to write (examples of actual policies that are **too vague**):

- John and I are going to check in with each other every night.
- I will go to bed when I'm tired.
- I'll resist the urge to stay up after I'm sleepy.

NBTSC agreements - long version

This is the most recent draft—there may be some small updates for 2024 but probably nothing significant. We offer a one-page version (see your main camper handbook) and also this longer edition with more perspective and nuance.

The agreements roughly fall into four categories.

- Take care of yourself, participate in the camp community, and get the most out of camp that you can.
- Take care of each other and respect each others' differences and boundaries.
- Take care of the environment.
- Engage in a way that will allow camp to continue in future years.

These agreements are for campers. Most pertain to staff and staff children also. A few are slightly different, such as: staff doesn't check in with junior staff; can leave camp boundaries; can have sex; etc. (But, staff doesn't use alcohol or recreational marijuana- let alone illegal drugs - while at camp.) Young staff children don't have to keep their clothes on, etc.



Take care of yourself, participate in the camp community, and get the most out of camp that you can.

- **Come to NBTSC only if you want to**, not just because your parents or friends think you should.
 - This is essential. We rarely have discipline issues at camp, and we think this is because almost everyone is there because they want to be. Occasionally, however, someone comes to camp because they let themselves be pushed into it. That is not okay with us!
 - If you have registered for camp against your will, you have already violated one of our most important agreements. Please cancel your registration now.
 - If you are already at camp having broken this agreement, either decide that you sincerely want to participate, or call your parents and arrange to leave immediately.
- **Help co-create and renew our legendary culture of kindness, honesty, trust, openness, cooperation, safety, and all-around radical goodness. We collectively agree to engage with one another, to form a community that excludes no one.**
 - This culture is not an abstract, permanent entity - as a group, we must all recreate it together at each session of NBTSC.

- Be the change. Be a contribution.
 - If someone behaves in a way you don't like, talk to that person and/or to a staff person, or brainstorm other choices available to you.
 - When you see something about camp that you don't like, be proactive. Take action to create change, or talk with staff (director, advisor, whatever), or choose to accept that "something" as it is, even if you don't like it.
- Be honest.
 - Don't lie to the staff, particularly if you have broken a camp agreement.
 - Don't spread rumors - they're usually exaggerations, if not downright falsehoods.
- **Stay within the daytime and nighttime boundaries.**
 - Check in with the appointed staff person each morning and evening, so we know you're still with us.
 - "Boundaries" also extends to any parameters staff sets regarding
 - sleeping arrangements
 - tree climbing
 - hiking and other outdoor activities
 - etc.
- **Participate in morning meeting, advisee group, and evening meeting each day.**
 - We need you! Your advisee group needs you!
 - Your presence is needed even if you stayed up really late and you don't feel like getting out of bed.
 - If you're sick, that's different. If we already know you're sick, just stay in bed. If nobody knows, ask a cabin mate to inform staff.
- **Take responsibility for your own well-being.**
 - If someone behaves toward you in a way that you don't like, speak up; remove yourself from the situation if necessary. (Speak with staff if you need additional support.)
 - Communicate about your needs and boundaries as clearly as you are able.
- **Don't use tobacco unless you have written parental permission.**
 - Or unless you're 18+ (and you've discussed parameters with NBTSC directors).
- **Cooperate with any additional agreements the staff needs to request.**
- **Do your best to have a wonderful time and to help others have a wonderful time too.**

Take care of each other and respect differences and boundaries.

"Each other" means all campers, staff, visitors, and folks who live and work on site.

- **Respect others of all backgrounds and identities.**
 - As a community, we make an effort to learn about micro-aggressions and to avoid perpetrating them, so that all may feel more welcome and comfortable.
 - Racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, body-shaming, and classist jokes and pranks are not tolerated. (Nor are any other categories of prejudice and cruelty we forgot to mention here.)
- **Respect others' boundaries.**
 - Respect the word "no," which means exactly that.
 - While there are many nuances involved in friendships and romantic relationships, and body language is one time-honored form of communication, we also urge you to ask for verbal consent before initiating romantic contact such as kissing.

- Asking for (and receiving) verbal consent is not a panacea that ensures everyone actually wants to participate in any particular activity. Still, we promote it as a significant tool available to help build happy and mutually desired connections.
- **Watch out for each others' health and avoid spreading germs.**
 - If you have symptoms of anything contagious, tell the staff and make a sincere effort to not pass it on. Cooperate with the staff if they ask you to do (or not to do) certain things such as sleeping in your own bed or in the infirmary and going to bed by a specific time.
- **Speak helpfully. Don't gossip.**
 - If you are concerned about someone's behavior, speak directly with staff and/or with that person, instead of spreading rumors.
- **Make it easy for people to sleep and rest.**
 - Be quiet at night (and during siesta in cabin areas).
 - Don't talk (except in whispers) near cabins and tents.
 - Don't run on gravel paths near cabins.
 - Plan ahead. Have your flashlight handy and your bed ready. Don't turn on cabin lights if you go to bed late.
 - If cabin mates are trying to sleep at times other than night and siesta, do what you reasonably can to avoid disturbing them.
- **Stay out of others' cabins and tents.**
 - Cabins and tents are reserved for the people assigned to them.
- **Share the air.**
 - Music ~ **amplified music is reserved for specific places, situations, events.**
 - kitchen (canned music often inspires our cooks)
 - workshops ~ amplified music welcome as needed. Keep it contained.
 - evening events when relevant (prom, etc.)
 - Usually, we like the airwaves to be free for the sound of acoustic instruments, wind in the trees, grunts of concentration, and accents of crazy screeching laughter. During mealtimes we generally prefer soothing created-by-the-community music (piano, a cellist in the corner, etc.) or quiet.
 - Be sensitive to how your noises affect or interrupt the social environment.
 - **Fumes** ~ we like the airwaves to smell like doug fir, roasting garlic, spawning fish, and volleyball-generated sweat – **please don't spew** fingernail polish, hairspray, or other **toxic chemical fumes in confined public spaces** when it's reasonably avoidable.
- **But do not share smoke.**
 - Even if you are already a smoker and have parental permission to use tobacco during camp, you can't share (even with folks who also have permission to smoke).
 - While we are willing to accommodate campers who have a tobacco addiction (with parental permission for minors), we do not want a smoking subculture at NBTSC.
- **Pay attention ~ watch our pre-camp videos, read our stuff, and listen during meetings.**
 - Observe the signs and notices posted around camp, and the announcements that are made in meetings by staff. (And before camp, read the camper handbook!)
 - The more that campers understand our written material, the less we need to discuss their subjects, or repeat the same announcements multiple times, in meetings.

- **If you interact with others in the camp community throughout the year** (not just at NBTSC), **keep it kind and respectful.**
 - If NBTSC staff learns, for example, that you have bullied others via social media, we reserve the right to exclude you from future sessions of camp.
- **Follow common sense rules of courtesy, kindness, and safety.**

Take care of the environment.

- **Respect the natural environment, buildings, and other surroundings.**
- **Before using hair dye** (indoors or out), **get site guidelines** from the staff logistics coordinator and follow them rigorously.

Engage in a way that will allow camp to continue in future years.

- **When you experience or are aware of problems at camp, tell a staff person.**
 - Keeping camp wonderful is a partnership between campers and staff. We depend on you to reach out to us - sometimes bravely - so we can address problems when they occur.
- **Don't have sex.**
 - no matter how consensual, or how sexually active each party is outside of camp, or how old the campers are.
 - generally speaking, we define "sex" as genital contact - hands to genitals, mouths to genitals, genitals to genitals, etc. But we reserve the right to define other activities as "sex" also - such as 2 people watching each other masturbate.
 - No, we don't care about solo, private, quiet sex that nobody else witnesses.
- **Keep your clothes on.**
 - As a collection of individuals, NBTSC staff has nothing against the human body, clothed or unclothed. As an organization, at this time we choose to work within cultural norms:
 - dressing and undressing takes place in private areas (cabins and bathrooms).
 - in public areas, standard "swimsuit" areas are covered - genitalia; also female breasts (except nursing mamas).
- **No illegal substances.**
 - We're serious about possession and use as well as sharing and sales.
 - We get high with a little help from our friends. Love, truth, clean air, adventure.
 - If you brought illegal substances to camp, at most sessions you can discard them anonymously and without penalty, prior to morning meeting on Day 1, in our "black bag."
- **Follow NBTSC swimming rules.**
 - They're different at different sites; staff explains details at each session. Swim only during official swimming hours - among other things, this means no unsupervised night swimming.
- **Observe any additional rules that are set by our sites.**
 - Even if you don't understand the point, or if you disagree with them. These rules are part of NBTSC's agreement with our sites.
 - For instance, when site staff asks us to wear shoes in dining halls, we do so.

Sharing Sensitive Information About Campers With NBTSC Staff

From time to time a camper or a parent sees fit to share with us information about another camper—before or during (or sometimes after) camp.

From time to time a camper or a parent thinks about sharing, sees fit not to, and then later wishes they had.

Being on the receiving end of such information can be confusing and awkward for us. But sometimes it seems like a good idea that communication happened. (Or we later wish it might have.) Here are some things to think about:

Although we sincerely appreciate the desire to create support for a camper by letting us know about struggles that person is facing (eating disorders, family conflict, etc.), this puts us in a bit of a quandary. Overall, we think it's best to let the camper decide how much they want us to know, in order that we can offer support or at least understanding. On some occasions a parent will (secretly) share this type of information with us, without including the camper themselves in that discussion. Even that can be a little awkward for us, but we figure that in some cases the parent knows that we need to know something the camper might prefer to keep private, and we generally trust parental judgment. If you're not the parent? Again, we very sincerely appreciate and empathize with the intent, but we think you should probably keep your personal knowledge about the camper to yourself. (Of course, that camper may choose to share with us.) We know, there may be exceptions. This is not a hard and fast rule, but a general statement of how we see things.

What about when you know something about a camper's history or personality that you imagine could impact camp, or other campers, negatively? So, so tricky. On the one hand, camp is an open and trusting environment and of course we don't want to unknowingly invite someone into our midst who is going to abuse that trust by stealing from or harming others. If a prospective camper has an actual track record of *behavior* that has unquestionably harmed others, or has made threatening statements, we'd certainly want to know that, and depending on the particulars, of course we might decide that we were unable to host that person at camp. But on the other hand, we have seen the devastating effects of unnecessary, sometimes very ideological judgments and gossip. It has happened that a camper has made one poor decision (relatively minor in the big scheme of things, in our opinion) and then been branded rather hatefully by a small group of others convinced that excluding this person from camp in the future will somehow contribute to peace and goodwill on the planet. (I am thinking of a specific incident back in the nineties, so no need to try to figure out who I'm obliquely referring to.) Teenagers grow and change, and at camp one of our greatest values is forgiveness, supporting people in creating positive change in their lives, and such. So of course we don't want someone to have to begin their camp career stigmatized among staff or campers based on a past reputation which may no longer be valid—if indeed it ever was.... reputations being not the most reliable source of information.

You see our dilemma. We will certainly not refuse to speak with you should you choose to share something with us. But we may not feel comfortable keeping your name anonymous should we see fit to discuss your disclosures with the camper and/or their parents.

Again, no hard and fast rules here... we certainly appreciate your looking out for individual campers and for camp (and the community) as a whole. Please do consider carefully whether what you want to share is important enough that risking the privacy of the camper involved is worth it.

There are a few instances—few and far between—where we definitely need to know stuff. We do certainly expect parents (if not the campers themselves) to be very clear when a camper has an issue that might cause a problem for other campers. We once (this was more than fifteen years

ago, so don't scratch your head trying to guess who it was) had a camper who had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and in fact had recently been arrested for a violent action. His parents, wanting him to have a clean slate with us, said nothing about any of this. We could tell something was off, and eventually he crossed a boundary with a female camper - nothing huge or violent, but unpleasant and confusing for her—and had we known even a little about his mental health situation and history of violence, we could have likely prevented the situation. In this case I don't think anyone else at camp knew more than we did, but this is the sort of situation where if there *were* another individual who knew the family and suspected that they might withhold important information, we would have appreciated a heads up.

Finally ~ in recent years, we have had a dozen or more folks contact us in the ways described on this page. If one of them is you, don't worry or wonder whether we were shocked, appalled, or judgmental—we weren't; we appreciate your concern. It's more just that as we ponder on the number of these overtures and their impact, we figured we would share our perspective—in hopes that collectively we might respect privacy and autonomy, and yet still discern when the benefits of speaking up are likely to outweigh the negatives.

Thanks for listening.
~Grace



photo by Mike Reddy, 2013

Shopping at camp

There's not much to buy at camp, but you may want to bring money for some of the following.

- Meals/snacks to eat during your trip to camp and on your way home. Depending on your travel mode and schedule, this may be **extremely important**. Airport food tends toward the expensive.
- Camp T-shirts (officially, you can only order them in advance, but we usually have extras).
- Camp hoodies - best to order them in advance (less expensive and you get the size you want), but we usually have extras.
- CDs, books, etc., sold by staff and other campers. Usually a couple staff people and a couple campers bring stuff like their own music CDs, books or zines they wrote, etc., to sell. This is something you can do, as well, though we can't devote a lot of physical space to displaying items for sale, nor take up a lot of meeting time with sales announcements.
- Necessities like toothpaste, tampons/sanitary pads, shampoo, sunscreen, etc. in case you forget yours. We occasionally stock a few extras for purchase or may have the opportunity to pick up supplies in town at some point. (But of course it's best to pack everything you need!)
- Occasionally we bring some unschooling T-shirts and books to sell—it all just depends...

photo (of our NBTSC hoodie) by Signe Constable, 2013



Hair!



It often happens that campers imaginatively cut, remove altogether, and/or colorfully dye their hair. While the NBTSC staff generally has nothing to do with this tradition (except that they may cheer rabidly or gape in horror depending on personal taste), and sometimes the modifications take place not technically at camp but rather in hotel rooms or bus station bathrooms, we mention it here so you can instigate your own family discussions ahead of time, as to who precisely presides over the camper's locks and what constitutes acceptable treatment of them.

Photo by Laura Cox, 2010

Group Singing

One of the best parts of camp is singing together in our meetings. If you know one or more songs that you would like us to sing, great! We love to learn new ones. They should not be too complicated—not too many words to memorize, and not extremely tricky melodies or rhythms. (NBTSC, however, tends to attract a musical bunch and we've pulled off some unusual stuff.)

We especially love when campers share songs from their own cultural traditions!

And we like sad songs, goofy songs, joyful songs, beautiful songs, funky songs, international songs, rounds, chants. If you have a song, talk to our songleaders (specific staff at each session) or to the junior staff (who facilitate singing in evening meetings). Your options might include:

- Teach and lead a song yourself
- Teach a song to someone else and ask them to teach/lead it
- Teach it to other people and get them to help you lead it
- Bring the words and music and ask someone else to teach and lead it
- Also, you can either provide your own musical accompaniment (guitar or whatever you've got), ask a camper or staff person to play guitar (give them the chords ahead of time), or sing a cappella.



photo by Zoe Newmarco, 2019

Tobacco use

For the most part we expect that campers not use tobacco during NBTSC. However, we don't want to unnecessarily exclude campers who have a tobacco dependency. We prefer that tobacco-dependent campers find an alternate way to manage during camp (such as with a nicotine replacement product - patch, gum, nasal spray, etc.). If that isn't possible, then *if* you can work with all three of the following conditions, you may bring and use tobacco (cigarettes and e-cigarettes only).

- 1) **If you're a minor**, your parents must sign our permission form allowing you to smoke (or vape) during camp. Contact Maya to request a copy of the form. If you're not a minor, you will fill out a similar form on your own behalf. **Regardless of your age**, please let us know *prior* to camp that you hope to use tobacco. It is important for us to know before camp if there will be campers using tobacco.
- 2) You must be willing and able to work within the **site's restrictions** and guidelines.
 - In Oregon, sometimes current **Forest Service regulations prevent outdoor smoking** (due to fire danger). And as a general policy, **NBTSC does not allow indoor smoking**. This means that sometimes the only option for smoking is inside a vehicle with the windows rolled up, in which case you would probably need to have your own vehicle on site. Vaping might be an option—again, this would depend on current site regulations.
 - In Vermont, our site (**Farm and Wilderness**) **has a strict no-tobacco policy**. A person who needs to smoke (or vape) can walk a mile to the edge of the property. Our NBTSC boundaries, however, permit this only during daylight hours (that is most, but not all daylight hours).
- 3) You must agree to **strictly follow NBTSC's guidelines**.
 - **You will meet with camp directors** on arrival day. At that point you will receive specific guidelines, such as where the smoking location is, and whether any forest-service or other site regulations are in effect. These things can vary from year to year (and of course from site to site), so **you must not use tobacco prior to this meeting**. (Because we have so many things going on, the first evening, this meeting tends to be pretty late—like around 9 p.m. If this would pose a problem for you, let us know several weeks prior to camp and we'll see what we can do.)
 - **You may not share tobacco with other campers**, even those who also have permission to smoke. We do not want a smoking subculture at NBTSC. Everyone must bring their own supply. Also, of course, we cannot purchase tobacco for campers.

Fairy Godparent

Fairy Godparent is an optional activity that campers organize at most sessions of camp. Some new campers have wished they had known about it in advance, so here you go.

To participate in fairy godparent, you write your name on a slip of paper and put it into a bowl. Each player draws a name and keeps it secret. Throughout the camp session, they anonymously do nice things or leave little gifts for their fairy godchild.

It is perfectly wonderful to source your offerings from what is available at camp - cups of tea delivered by secret messengers, nifty crafts made in camp workshops, special pebbles found creekside, etc. But, some folks do spend time before camp creating little gifts or collecting treats to share with their FGC. If you're a person who likes to plan ahead for such things, now you know.



The media at NBTSC

Sometimes we let journalists and photographers and reporters and such types come do their thing at camp—we've had *US News and World Report*, *Newsweek*, *CBS*, the *Oregonian*, a journalist who wrote an article for *Hope* magazine, a journalist who wrote an article for *Teacher* magazine, and a few lower-profile folks.

Back in 2009, we had the pleasure of the company of a skilled, sensitive, and insightful filmmaker, Allen Ellis, who was also an NBTSC alumnus - he created **a beautiful film about camp** and our community. (**Watch it [here](#).**)

Sometimes it's fun having the attention, and while occasionally the results are a little weird, overall they make for good publicity for unschooling in general and camp in particular. So: be prepared for the possibility that media people will visit camp. Of course, no one is ever forced to talk with them. But you might want to think about what you don't want to be manipulated into saying, and what you *would* like to say about your unschooling experience.



****That's the end of the "extras" ~ thanks for reading! ****