

High Impact, No Trouble Leadership

Working as a youth development professional requires energy and stamina. Energy is needed to ignite enthusiasm, inspire compliance, and keep pace with active children. Stamina is needed to sustain your efforts over the course of a day, a week, a session, and the entire season.

*HINT is an energy-saving, stamina-preserving approach to leadership. These high-impact, nominally taxing strategies are best used for day-to-day interactions and routine hassles. They are not a substitute for wild enthusiasm and forceful direction, both of which have important places in your leadership repertoire. HINT leadership should leave you with **more** energy for the times you need it.*

*To test whether you “get the HINT,” use the Tic-Tac test. (You know, those little mints that supposedly have just 1½ calories?) If your strategy is effective **and** takes no more energy than a Tic-Tac, you’ve gotten the HINT.*

Case Example: You’ve become exasperated because your kids constantly forget to close the door when they enter and exit the rec hall. The result is that the hall is filled with mosquitoes. Having been bothered all afternoon by the buzz of bugs, you have resorted to yelling and lecturing the kids in a vain attempt to get them to close the door. Instead of getting grumpy, it’s time to get the HINT:

- 1. LOOK** Give a look that conveys your message.
Example: Raise your eyebrows, look at a particular child, and then at the door.
- 2. LABEL** Say what you want in a single word, no more.
Example: “Door.”
- 3. NAME** Say the name of the camper, who probably knows what to do.
Example: “Sam.”
- 4. NOTE** Post a small note, in a prominent location, with a reminder.
Example: Stick a Post-It note on the door that says, “Close me.”
- 5. SIGN** Point to the thing that needs to be done.
Example: Point at the door.
- 6. START** Begin the thing that needs to be done, to set an example.
Example: Close the door part-way, while a child witnesses the action.
- 7. PLAY** Turn the target activity into a game.
Example: Tell the kids they can earn a prize by remembering the door all day.
- 8. PRAISE** Use humor to draw attention to the problem and its solution.
Example: Start buzzing loudly or smile and say, “Could you open it wider?”
- 9. IGNORE** Let the natural consequences or positive peer pressure take hold.
Example: Allow the kids become annoyed enough by bugs to remember.

HINT Case Studies

Case Example: Write your own example of a scenario that might exasperate you this summer. Think of some minor, annoying misbehavior that might be typical for the children you'll work with at camp. Then, think of one or two ways you might use one of the HINT strategies to change the behavior and conserve your energy. Can you think of any other HINT strategies besides these nine?

→ *Example of a common, low-level, annoying misbehavior that might drive you nuts:*

- 1. LOOK** Give a look that conveys your message.

- 2. LABEL** Say what you want in a single word, no more.

- 3. NAME** Say the name of the camper, who probably knows what to do.

- 4. NOTE** Post a small note, in a prominent location, with a reminder.

- 5. SIGN** Point to the thing that needs to be done.

- 6. START** Begin the thing that needs to be done, to set an example.

- 7. PLAY** Turn the target activity into a game.

- 8. PRAISE** Use humor to draw attention to the problem and its solution.

- 9. IGNORE** Let the natural consequences or positive peer pressure take hold.