THE POWER OF ENHANCING CAMPER'S EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE THROUGH ADULTS ENGAGING IN PLAY WITH CHILDREN

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Introduction

Susy had spent the last half an hour creating a beautiful sand castle and just as she stood back to admire her work, a cabin of boys comes running down the shoreline and carelessly runs over it, destroying her artwork. Susy grabs two fistfuls of sand and is ready to throw sand in their faces, when she looked over at her counselor who had been lugging buckets of wet sand from the lake to help her. The counselor is engaging in play with this child. What power does she hold to influence this child at this moment?

The boys had an hour to play before lunch. They had finally finished their fort, made out of fallen logs and branches and were armed with crab apples. Joe, the counselor observed from one side, cautioning them to wear the safety goggles provided to them. "Johnny, come on, we can't argue all day! We already decided that we'd take turns, you guys are the robbers and we're the cops this time!" Johnny threw a temper tantrum and continued to insist on his team being the cops. One of the kids muttered, "Johnny always wants things his way." Finally, the other team relented just to get the game going. Johnny was pelted with an exorbitant number of apples and soon left the game sulking.

Joe, the counselor is not directly within the flow of play but he is present. What possible difference could he make? Might not the very presence and participation of an adult inhibit children's play? Johnny is apparently having some issues related to his ability to control his own emotions and deal with the emotions he provokes in others. It appears Johnny has room to grow in emotional intelligence since it is a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions (Salovey and Mayer 1989-1990, 189). Towards this end, what role should Joe, his counselor play?

The campers' favorite activity at the lakefront was using the swing. They would take a running start, swinging as far out as possible, before dropping into the water. As many campers squealed with delight, others could be observed sitting off to one side, shoulders slumped, wistfully observing their peers play.

Camp counselors have plenty of balls to juggle, why should they be concerned about the fact that some of their campers can swing and others cannot? Besides, the children are involved in plenty of other fun and games during camp. Moreover, the counselors engage in many worthy pursuits throughout the week with their campers, why fret about such a minor issue?

Wendy is a natural athlete, but her favorite game seems to be "one-up-manship." If someone does a cartwheel, she immediately does a handspring, just to prove she can do "one-up or one better" than her peers. Although Wendy is well-liked for her prowess, she lacks empathy in understanding how her actions make others feel. Taking

another's perspective is part of emotional intelligence, how can play be used by her counselor to enhance her emotional and social learning?

Eric had two campers he was curious about. Victor played heartily with all his cabinmates. Fernando was quite the opposite, try as he might to play with his peers, he was consistently rejected. Eric was bound and determined to observe them at play and investigate how each handled relationships and discover what social skills Victor had that Fernando lacked. He wondered, was it a question of personality? Or maybe just maturity? Or was there some type of intelligence that related not to mental ability but to social and emotional competency? And finally, could he do anything to help Fernando?

In one simple game a child can experience everything from the exhilaration of winning to the agony of defeat, the delight of camaraderie in cooperation to the bitterness of rejection and ridicule from teammates. An adult who chooses to thoughtfully and intentionally engage in play with a child wields great power to influence him or her towards greater social and emotional maturity.

The distinctive environment of camp provides unique opportunities to play and provides children with adults who are free from the cares and worries of daily living so they can focus on helping children relate to others in healthy manners and learn to deal with the myriad of emotions that are provoked during play. Play provides the reflective adult with ample "teachable moments," if he or she[1] is prepared to take advantage of them. Play is universally enjoyed by children of all ages and stages. Play is a "stealth" means of positively impacting a child, while at the same time, enjoying the levity play brings for the adult.

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[1] God's gift of the imago Dei was to both women and men demonstrating their equal worth, value and meaningfulness as persons, therefore the inclusive language of he or she will be used interchangeably throughout this document.

The purpose of this paper is to better prepare or equip adults who are interested in enhancing the emotional intelligence (EQ) of children through play. In Section One, emotional intelligence (EQ or EI) is defined. In Section Two, what is meant by play is defined within a Biblical framework as well as play's role in cognitive, socio-cultural and emotional development. In Section Three, the venue of camping as it relates to play, social and emotional learning (SEL) and adult leadership is explored. Finally, in Section Four, examples of how adults can enhance the EQ of children through engaging with them in play will be provided.

This paper holds promise for camping leaders around the globe who need to be able to articulate how play can enhance emotional intelligence and train their leaders on how to best engage in play with children. For similar audiences, this paper should prove to be helpful since opportunities abound for teachers to engage in play with children at school and recess, for coaches to help their players deal with the multitude of emotions that surface during sports play and for parents to enjoy fun and games with their sons and daughters as well.

Section One will define emotional intelligence and its various components together with insights as to how an adult can enhance the child's EQ.

SECTION ONE:

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

"We have left the Emotional education of our young to chance, which is not something society has done with intellectual education" (Goleman 1995, xiii). Emotional intelligence (EQ or EI) provides a counterbalance to the overemphasis on IQ. Goleman explains that "EQ is not an attempt to do away with reason and put emotion in its place, but instead find the intelligent balance of the two. The old paradigm held an ideal of reason freed of the pull of emotion. The new paradigm urges us to harmonize the head and heart" (1995, 28-29).

Scientists encapsulate a person's IQ into one global score whereas EQ is seen and tested as a set of competencies (Lopes, et al 2004). There are a number of tests designed to measure one's EQ like Mayor-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT: Mayer, Salovey and Caruso 2002) and Bar-On's EQ-i (1997). The test results are a series of scores given to the different components of EQ. The MSCEIT asks the respondent to complete a number of tasks since it determines EQ based on ability or behavior, rather than asking the respondents how good they are at recognizing their emotions and those of others or how effectively they regulate anger. Self-report tests for EQ are prone to response biases such as social desirability and tend to overlap significantly with measures of personality traits and subjective wellbeing (Rivers, Brackett, and Salovey 2008).

The co-founders of the theory of emotional intelligence, John Mayer from the University of New Hampshire and Peter Salovey from Yale offer a simple definition of emotional intelligence as "a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions" (Salovey and Mayer 1989-1990, 189). Although there are variations on how EQ is understood and defined, all of them differentiate a number of different abilities or competencies that together form what is called emotional intelligence.

Components of emotional intelligence

For the purpose of this document, emotional intelligence will be broken down into five competencies (Goleman 1995). These competencies, which subsume Salovey and Mayer's definition, provide a handy tool, first for understanding EQ and later for delineating how a child's EQ can be enhanced through adults engaging in play with them.

(1) Self-awareness of emotions
(2) Management and self-regulation of emotions
(3) Self-motivation and performance
(4) Social-awareness, empathy and perspective taking
(5) Social skills, handling relationships

The following section presents a brief explanation of each competency, how it relates to middle childhood, the age of the camper in focus throughout this document and the role an adult might play in encouraging greater competency in a child.

(1) *Self-awareness* relates to knowing one's emotions, recognizing a feeling as it happens. If meta-cognition is being aware of one's thoughts, meta-mood is

being aware of one's own emotions. (It) points to self-awareness as being aware both of one's mood and one's thoughts about that mood (Goleman, 1995, 47).

Being aware of feeling several emotions at once or in rapid oscillation begins to occur in middle childhood (Berk 2008, 261).

Adults can help children put a name to what they are feeling which gives the child a handle, in both senses on the word, (a) *a label* to explain to himself and others what he is feeling and (b) *something to hold on* to remain steady in the midst of the swirl of the feelings (i.e. *This feeling has a name….others have felt it…I am normal, I am going to be alright…*). In the introduction, Susy could be helped by her counselor to name her feelings when the cabin of boys ruined her sand castle.

(2) *Management and self-regulation*, also called self-management builds on self-awareness and has to do with handling feelings so they are appropriate (e.g. being able to shake off a bad mood). It means being able to cope with strong feelings so as not to be overwhelmed and paralyzed by them.

Gains in managing their emotions for school-age children are supported by cognitive development and social experiences, especially adults' sensitivity to children's feelings and their willingness to discuss emotions (Berk 2008, 261).

Adults can prompt a child to "own" her feelings, legitimizing their existence and validity, while encouraging her to act appropriately, much like the Biblical advice "In your anger do not sin" Ephesians 4:26. The Bible legitimizes the feeling of anger but cautions against acting in anger since the wrath of man often does not bring about God's right living.

Johnny, the boy in the introduction, who had a temper tantrum, needed to learn how to regulate his own emotions.

(3) *Self-motivation and performance* relates to being goal-oriented and able to channel emotions toward desired outcomes. Abilities like motivating oneself by marshaling emotions in the service of a goal, and self-control, through delaying gratification or denying impulse in the service of a goal. Enthusiasm and persistence in the face of setbacks is part of self-motivation (Goleman 1995).

Motivation is associated with flow. Flow can be viewed as a state of self-forgetfulness and focus, when one is involved in a task where one is competent such that the sheer pleasure of the act itself motivates. One's performance increases and one enters into "the flow" or in sports language: *The Zone or in the groove*. Csikszentmihalyi (1975) notes how flow occurs in that delicate zone between boredom and anxiety and is an optimal positive experience. Maia Montessori (1909/207), the famed child educator, was known to effectively harness the concept of flow as part of the healthiest way to teach children, motivating them from inside rather than by threat or promise of reward.

Play and sports activities are filled with feelings of inadequacy when set-backs occur, like the example of the children at camp, who were overcome with fears and a sense of defeat, which further complicated their ability to learn how to swing. An adult can encourage a child to move from an "I can't do it" attitude, to the famous mindset of the train who huffed and puffed up the long hill by saying "I think I can, I think I can…".

(4) *Social-awareness, empathy and perspective taking* involves being able to recognize emotions in others and to understand others' point of view. This ability also builds on emotional self-awareness (Goleman 1995).

According to Selman's (Selman 1980) five stages of perspective taking, school-age children, usually at stage two, can understand that different perspectives may result because people have access to different information, something that was more difficult to do at stage one (toddlers) where they frequently confuse their own perspective with that of others—a well known example of stage one is when a young child gives his mother a gift that he really wants, not yet able to conceive of how she would want anything different. As the child develops, many in middle childhood can "step into another person's shoes" and view their own thoughts, feelings, and behavior from the other person's perspective. They also recognize that others can do the same. Stage two perspective taking is a foundational piece to social-awareness and thus to emotional intelligence in general.

Given a case like Wendy, the "show-off" camper, adults can foster empathy by calling strong attention to the distress or pain caused by the child's misbehavior during play, appealing to the Golden Rule, of doing to others what you would have them do to you.

(5) *Social or relationship skills*, handling relationships involves the skill of managing emotions in others. EI refers to the capacity to use emotions in thinking, planning, and decision making and that's why these abilities undergird popularity, leadership and interpersonal effectiveness (Salovey and Grewal, 2005).

Goleman (1995, 112) noted a crucial emotional aptitude as the ability to know another's feelings and to act in a way that further shapes those feelings. Goleman noted with social skills, a moral component, in that a person can positively shape the

feelings of others or intentional hurt or manipulate other's feelings, like in the case of a "con-artist."

Berk (2008) notes that by the end of middle childhood, children display a strong desire for group belonging. They form peer groups based on proximity (being in the same classroom) and similarity (gender, ethnicity and popularity) and often employ relationally aggressive tactics to lead, to include and exclude others. Adult involvement holds in check the negative behavior associated with children's informal peer groups.

Paramount to an adult's positive involvement in the social world of children is the adult's comprehension and grasp of what is actually taking place from the perspective of the children. Heightened understanding comes by gaining an inside view, that is, seeing the child's world through his eyes. Corsaro (2005) observed how school teachers were quick to accuse young children of being selfish when they would refuse to let another child play with them. Viewed from the children's perspective, Corsaro observed that they were protecting their shared space from intrusion. The teachers were lax to note the importance of *how* a child entered into the play of others. Demanding entrance (Let me play! I wanna play!) was sure to earn rejection, whereas "hovering around the area of play" and "encirclement" (gradually moving in closer and closer) eventually earned the child a place in the play.

Before the adult engages with the child at play, it greatly behooves him to gain understanding through observation and taking the perspective of the child, which is exactly the approach Eric, the counselor, determined to take with his campers Victor and Fernando.

Why does emotional intelligence matter? Schulze and Robert (2005) note that EI is a term that is in vogue as evidenced by its wide use in popular culture (books, toys, films, even robots employ it as an advertising jingle). On one hand are the popular accounts of EI being the psychological factor *most* relevant for success in almost any field of application (i.e., in the home, workplace and school) and on the other are the research reports of social scientists testing the validity of these findings. There is still plenty of room for social scientists to question the veracity of supposedly scientifically founded claims associated with EI.

Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts (2007) note in their book a number of the concerns social scientists have with EI. One of their concerns, which relates to adults engaging in play with children and camp, is that emotional intelligence often presents its competencies as a static set of constructs while ignoring the processes that support intelligent interaction with the external environment. A popular notion of IQ is that it can be measured at a young age and it remains the same throughout life. EQ is quite the opposite. One's expression of EI may vary—perhaps radically—depending upon the surrounding environment. Play is a social construct, even if only in the imagination of the child, and is closely related to the setting. An adult would need to be aware of how the setting impacts the child and gives clues as to how the child should intelligently relate to others in that particular setting.

Another concern is the relationship between EQ and one's personality. Could it be that what one calls high EQ is really more an indication of one's personality? To what degree does EQ overlap with other constructs, like a few of the Big Five personality traits –Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness and

Emotional stability? Rivers, Brackett, and Salovey (2008) posit that EI is related to but distinct from personality. Based on MSCEIT scores, they noted a modest correlation with two of the Big Five personality traits: openness and agreeableness (2008, 449).

One could also question EQ as more a question of maturity and growth rather than a distinct set of competencies. Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts (2007) noted that EI has a well-defined development trajectory starting from infancy to adulthood. There is extensive literature on social-emotional development in children that predates EI showing a fairly well-defined sequence of markers of emotional development, beginning with the simple expressive and regulatory behaviors of the infant and culminating in the active, insightful self-regulation of an adult who is sensitive to the social and cultural environment. Nevertheless, the existence of literature *describing* how a child grows in emotional competence, does not guarantee that each child will indeed develop along those lines. Society is filled with individuals who although they are adults in body, still display low social and emotional intelligence. Not all people naturally or automatically develop EQ, however, everyone can improve it (Goleman 2000).

Yet, emotional intelligence just like Gardner's (1983) theory of multiple intelligences has its critics; however, both theories have served to broaden the definition and discussion of intelligence, far beyond the narrow scope of one's cognitive or mental ability. Elias, Arnold and Hussey (2003) note that since the publication of Goleman's best-selling book in 1995, and its subsequent translation into thirty plus languages, emotional intelligence has come to be known and has a rightful place alongside IQ in conceptualizing what it means to be smart.

So, apart from the fact that emotional intelligence is a fashionable term and that social scientists are working hard to verify its validity and relevance, EI matters to adults because they intuitively understand that a child's future success, in whatever field, depends to a large degree on their ability to experience and appropriately express their emotions, to understand the emotions of peers and to regulate their emotions during social interactions.

This section has defined emotional intelligence and described its five components as understood by the one who first popularized emotional intelligence, Daniel Goleman. The description of the competencies included age related characteristics of middle childhood (typical camper's age) and insights on how an adult might engage in play accordingly. Several of the questions and controversies surrounding EQ was commented on as well. Lastly, EI relevance to a child's future success was addressed.

Section Two defines play from both a Biblical and social science basis and provides social science's perspective on the benefits of play for the cognitive, socio-cultural and social and emotional development of a child.

SECTION TWO:

WHAT IS PLAY?

A Biblical framework for play

The Biblical basis for play is the concept of the Sabbath. Genesis 2:2-3 provides the model of God resting on the seventh day. Exodus 20:8-11 commands the people of God to rest because God Himself rested. Humans are to follow God's model. Deuteronomy 5:12-15 reiterates His command for the people of God to rest because He redeemed them from slavery in Egypt. A scriptural understanding of rest includes the notions of celebration, festivities and re-creation (Johnston 1983; Sabean 2003). God was not fatigued after His work of creation; for God does not tire, so rest cannot be interpreted as passivity or idleness, like a postscript to the act of Creation. Genesis 2:2-3 says that God blessed the day of rest, God created rest to benefit man and woman. He sanctified the seventh day. To sanctify means to separate, to set apart, meaning, the Sabbath has its place and purpose in the rhythm of life. It does not depend on work to give it meaning. Time to rest or re-create is not inferior to time to work.

Johnston (1983) posits what he calls a "Biblical or Hebraic" model, one rooted in the Jewish and Christian notions of creation and addressed by such wisdom writers as the author of Ecclesiastes. Instead of seeing work and play in antithesis, this biblical writer treats the workaday world and playground in unison as evidenced in this passage: "Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now that God favors what you do. … Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love ….Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might" (Eccl 9:7-10 NIV).

Johnston (1982, 81-83) exegetes Ecclesiastes by pointing out that God created life not in two parts: work and play, but as a whole, both are ordained by Him and are His gifts to us to be fully engaged in and enjoyed. Play is a means of experiencing God-centered joy. Our labor is also a means of finding God's joy and meaning in life. Thus the writer of Ecclesiastes commands us to fully engage in both—to work with all one's might and to eat and drink and to enjoy one's loved ones, all the while mindful of one's dependence on Him for joy and provision.

God's created order of human beings is working six days, then ceasing their labors for one day as well as celebrating the numerous festivities outlined in Leviticus 23. God's created order was so His people would celebrate His creation and see that it is very good indeed (Gen. 2); recognize Him as their provider (Exodus 20), and to commemorate God's intervention in human history (Deut. 6). Nonproductive time is rooted in worship which includes activities like celebration, playing instruments, dance, song, festivities and play (Sabean 2003).

Tim Ladwig (1993) has captured the restorative aspect of play with one of his illustrations of Psalm 23 (see Figure 1: He restores my soul).

Figure 1: "He restores my soul" Psalm 23

From the social science perspective, in most definitions offered of play, references are made to Huizinga's work in *Homo Ludens* (1938/1955). He was a Dutch historian, cultural theorist and professor who described certain characteristics of play as being free, an activity standing outside "ordinary or real" life, intensely absorbing, connected to no material gain, bounded by rules and tending toward social affiliations. Huizinga looked at play as drama, a drama in which the people, society or culture describes their overall beliefs or myths and its epistemology. Huizinga speaks of the detrimental effects on a culture and society when time for play is ignored.

Johnston, in his book, *The Christian at play* defines play as:

> That activity which is freely and spontaneously entered into, but which, once begun, has its own design, its own rules or order, which must be followed so that the play activity may continue. The player is called into play by a potential co-player and/or play object, and while at play, treats other players and/or "playthings" as personal, creating with them a community…. But though play is an end in itself, it can nevertheless have several consequences. Chief among these are the joy and release, the personal fulfillment, the remembering of our common humanity, and the presentiment of the sacred, which the player sometimes experiences in and through the activity. (1983, 34)

Several noteworthy components of this definition of play make it appropriate for the purpose of the thesis of this paper:

- Play creates a parenthesis in the life of the player. The player becomes so focused on play they enter into a state of self-forgetfulness, the concerns of life are cast aside as they enter into the "flow" (Csikszentmihalyi 1975)
- Play cannot be forced; it must be entered into freely, of one's own choice.
- Play creates a sense of community.
- Play is nonproductive, not connected with a material interest or gain.
- Play has intrinsic value, that it is not merely idle activity.
- Play's very purposelessness is purposeful in that the player is a changed individual because of the playtime.

Johnston's definition of play embodies the Biblical connection between play and the sacred. God sanctified the Sabbath as a time to re-create, to reminisce and comment on His redemptive work in the world. Obedience (keeping the Sabbath) brings restfulness, joy and restoration to the person, which is also present in Johnston's definition. When social scientists, like Huizinga and others, study God's General Revelation (His creatures and His creation), it is no wonder they observe glimpses of the restorative nature of play.

The impact of the cultural milieu on play

There appears to be a cultural shift towards competition/competence and away from play time. Bergen and Pronin Fromberg (2009) note that much of recess has been reduced or eliminated in schools that are considered to be "poor performers" due to the state and federal legislation which pressures the schools to insist all available time be dedicated to academic endeavors. This cultural shift towards achievement causes parents to pressure educational institutions to start schooling earlier to make the children "superkids." (The notion of "superkids" means that if parents, teachers and marketers enrolled the child in enough classes, taught them early enough and sold them the proper educational toys, the child could soon become a "superkid"). The incursion of curriculum models in early childhood education began to encroach on the unstructured play time that had previously occupied a vital role in the daily schedule (Monighan-Nourot, Scales, Van Hoorn, Almy 1987).

This cultural shift also reaches into the home, which previously had been the primary center of leisure pursuits and play for children (Jacobson 1997; Elkind 1995). Currently, much of the play time at home is lost to music, dance or other lessons,

participation on sports teams and after-school homework or test preparations sessions (Bergen and Pronin Fromberg 2009). In addition, parents' fear of the dangers lurking "out there" has prompted parents to move children's play indoors or enroll them in organized sports. Parent's fears are augmented by sensationalist media coverage which often promotes a litigious culture of fear that favors "safe" regimented sports over imaginative play. Another feature of modern life at home is the children's intense interest in "screen play" (GameBoy, video games, TV, Ipod, etc.), much of the time children once spent playing outdoors is now occupied by this type of sedentary, indoor play. (Kirn and Cole, 2001; Elkind 2007a; Elkind 2007b; Louv 2005).

Although play is universal, it may look different around the world. Much of what is written about play relates to the North American context. Frost and Sunderline's (1985) note the contrast between the children at play in the industrialized world versus developing nations. "One may see in accounts by writers from Africa, Asia and Latin America a portrait of children at play and at work, swimming in rivers and ponds, sliding down wet hillsides, raising crops, tending animals, keeping house, playing and working in close consort with friends and family, sharing in communal fellowship and responsibility. In contrast, children in industrialized nations are increasingly swept up by contemporary fascination with such technological devices as computers" (1985, x).

Samantha Punch's (2003) ethnographic research notes that children in rural Bolivia integrate work, play and school, moving back and forth between child and adult-centered worlds. She observed that it is more common for children to play as they work, like stopping to kick a ball on their way to school or wrestling with their siblings as they do the household chores.

All over the world there are cultural changes impacting society's view of play. This paper's thesis may be more difficult for certain cultures where "playing with children may not automatically fall into the role expectations of adults. In some cultures, this is an activity for grandparents or older siblings and not part of the adult or parental job description"(Kuchner 1998; Bornstein, Venuti and Hahn 2002).

Even though there are noteworthy cultural differences between how play is viewed and how it is evolving, for camping leaders around the globe, play remains an excellent means of enhancing children's emotional intelligence.

The next section detailing the numerous benefits of play responds to the question initially posed by the counselors: *Should not adults be investing their time with children in pursuits more profitable than play?* The hidden question behind this concern is: Are the adults in charge of the children, be they parents, teachers or camp counselors, doing enough for the child? It is hoped that the following list of benefits provided by play will serve to relieve this adult angst and inspire many adults to more fully engage in play with the children under their charge.

The developmental benefits of play

Play is a legitimate area of empirical study and scientific inquiry (Gross 2003). "From the naturalist studies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by the empiricists, with their biographies of children and their meticulous observations of children's lives, to the experimental studies by the European and American child psychologists of the beginning of the twentieth century, to current studies, there has been a continual interest in explaining the psychodevelpmental nature of play and its role in learning" (Ortega 2003, 99).

God created people as one whole being, while social scientists compartmentalize aspects of human nature into neat categories for closer scrutiny, one must always keep in mind the integral nature of people and that play impacts the entire person. Only for the sake of clarity, the following benefits of play are placed into categories: cognitive, socio-cultural and social-emotional development. The physical benefits of play versus sedentary activities have been well substantiated (fine and gross motor skills, strength, flexibility, coordination, cardiovascular, to name a few.) and thus will not be included in this paper.

Cognitive development

In Piaget's (1962) seminal study of children's play he observed the correlation between play and his first three stages of cognitive development. He believed cognitive development takes place as a result of the interaction between the child and the environment. As infants, children play with objects, which helps develop their basic sensorimotor skills (blowing, sucking, grabbing, etc). As children move into the toddler stage, they engage in pretending and make-believe. Simple objects take a life of their own as the child develops her cognitive ability and learns to distinguish reality from fantasy. School age children's initiation into social institutions further develops when they play *games with rules*. Just the choosing who will be It for a tag game involves learning to abide by the rules which is part of the socialization process of subordinating their personal wishes—not to be chosen IT—to the rules of the game as decided by the group (Elkind 2007b, 154).

The rules may be handed down from above or constructed spontaneously as children play. Piaget (1965) noted at length that play at this stage promoted moral

development as well, in deepening the child's understanding of rules, right and wrong. He held that each stage builds on the previous development, so even older childhood often make use of make-believe. According to Piaget (1962) play is a process of experimentation and exploration and since children learn more effectively through activity rather than instruction, play provides an excellent vehicle for learning.

Altman (1986, 11) lists several of play's contributions to the development of a child in the following ways:

- Conservation (the ability to perceive that properties of substances remain the same despite changes to shape or arrangement) (Golomb and Cornelius 1977).
- Spatial and classification skills (Conolly and Doyle 1984).
- Language fluency (Weininger 1978).
- Innovative problem-solving (Smith and Dutton 1979).
- Mathematical concept formation (Zammarelli and Bolten 1977).
- Abstract thought and intelligence (Weininger 1978).

Socio-cultural development

Vygotsky (1967; 1978) sees play as essentially a socio-cultural activity. A central concept in Vygotsky's theory of cognitive development is the *zone of proximal development*, "which he defines as the difference between a child's *actual* developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of *potential* development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky quoted in Nicolopoulou 1993, 8). It is within this larger theoretical context that Vygotsky sees play as contributing significantly to socio-cultural development. Play takes on the role of a "leading activity" and creates the zone of proximal development.

> In play a child is always above his average age, above his daily behavior; in play, it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed

> form; in play, it is though the child were trying to jump above the level of his normal behavior. (Vygotsky 1967, 16)

The zone of proximal development provides a clear theoretical framework for unleashing the powerful influence an adult can have on a child through play. The accompaniment of the adult with the child at play has a scaffolding effect and can be used to promote social and emotional learning.

Social and emotional development

It is impossible to separate emotional and social development since children's social interactions are emotionally charged. Emotions arise because of different situations; feelings are context-based and change by doing things. Emotions will change across social experiences and time as noted in the sequence below.

- EI: self-awareness of emotions—Play allows the child to express his feelings and problems naturally, even his personality is clearly evident during play.
- EI: management and self-regulation of emotions—As the child learns to define his role in the game and accepts rule-regulated behavior, he learns to restrain negative displays of emotion.
- EI: self-motivation and performance—With each successful play adventure or acquisition of a new skill (throwing a ball or shooting a basket), the child learns to marshal his own emotions towards greater performance.
- EI: Social-awareness, empathy and perspective taking—The freedom of expression children display during play gives those adults accompanying them a window into understanding how they deal with emotions and how each one handles the feelings of others. Goals towards growth may be set accordingly, together with the child.
- EI: social relationships—According to the National Fatherhood Initiative, children whose fathers regularly play with them are more competent in their peer relationships and more popular than children whose dads do not play with them often (Wetzstein 2008).

A caveat in the preceding sequence is noted by Altman (1986) who concedes that while play facilitates rapport and communication between an adult and child, caution must be taken by the "adult to be as non-directive as possible, displaying a

maximum acceptance of what the child brings into his play. If it is accepted that the child can express anger, conflict, trauma, etc. in the context of play, then it is accepted that the child is communicating with an understanding adult. In this way the child can express himself in his own terms because he is given the space and freedom to do so. Without this freedom and space the relationship between adult and child becomes ritualized and begins to lose its meaning" (1986, 11).

For Erikson (1950) play provides the ideal space for children to work through their stages of identity development, since the world of play is safe from the real world of consequences and allows the child to work through their identity conflicts. The child can imagine or role play model situations through which she learns how to adjust to the demands of external reality. Erikson observed that the child makes use of make-believe games to resolve or master conflicts which aids in the child's positive emotional development, which may be used to help avoid a child getting "stuck" at a certain stage. An example would be a child who consoles her baby doll who has lost "her puppy" when in reality it was the little girl whose puppy has died.

The Piagetian concepts of equilibrium-disequilibrium are also observed in play when the child experiences dissatisfaction, uneasiness and difficulty, which produces emotional dissonance. This in turn prompts children to greater differentiation of problem-solving strategies resulting in advancing cognition (Kwon and Yawkey 2000). An example is when a young boy is outside attempting to climb a rock wall. He tries and tries, each time getting more and more frustrated. This very difficulty prompts him to go and look for a rope which he uses creatively to help him overcome the obstacle.

Kwon and Yawkey (2000) analyze the emotional elements of children's pretend play like the expression of their emotions through facial and body language. In play children learn useful methods to show emotional thinking. Children also discover in play what contextual situations produce these emotions. Adults who engage in play with children can converse about feelings, especially conflict situations, which helps the children process and understand their feelings. Often children imitate the adults around them through pretend play so they can learn socially acceptable ways of expressing their emotions. As the adult listens to a child scold or discipline others for misbehavior, one invariably discovers if they are surrounded by good role models for emotional expression.

There is considerable research available on the power of play for therapeutic purposes, most of which is based on theories of attachment, in which play is used as a means of establishing healthy physical contact and a close, personal relationship in an effort to help the child learn to relate to other people in a satisfying and productive manner (Mitchum 1987).

This section highlighted just how versatile play is as a means of prompting growth and learning in children. In Section Three, the world of camping will be explored briefly, including a definition of camp for this paper. Also discussed are the threats to playtime at camp and the strengths camps have for being a place where children's EQ is enhanced through play.

SECTION THREE:

CAMPING

Camping is very much a part of the North American landscape (Barnett 2009c). Since its inception in the mid 1800's, camping been exported to a great number of countries around the world, often by missionaries or parachurch ministries (Williams 2003). Christian Camping International (CCI Worldwide website 2009) currently boasts of seventeen country and regional members its international alliance.

Under the umbrella of "camping" rests a myriad of types as described in Table 1: Types of camping programs. It should be noted that these categories serve only to demonstrate the breadth of camping and are not an exhaustive list of the types of camping in existence; moreover, many a camp uses a combination of these types.

Table 1: Types of camping programs

Broad categories	**Examples**
Residential	Summer camp (1-4 weeks in duration) Within this genre of camp, there are known to be two broad categories: *Traditional* (features the classic activities like swimming, games, scouting like outdoor activities, campfires, etc. and *Specialty skill* camps (sports, computers, language, computers, arts, cheerleading… you name it, there is a camp for it!)
	Weekend retreats (Friday to Sunday)
	Outdoor or nature education
	Personal spiritual retreats
Day camp	Summer camp for younger campers (4-7 years old) which does not involve overnight accommodations
	Vacation Bible school type
	One-day "picnic" type outings
Adventure	Wilderness Barnett (2009a) identifies two different emphases in the stories of God's encounters with his people in the wilderness: The "*desert*" (symbolic of testing and challenge used to refine and strengthen its participants) and the "*mountaintop*" (characterized by restoration and reflection). Most educational experiences conducted in a wilderness context contain elements of both.
	Excursion or Tripping Using the campsite as a base any number of outdoor pursuits off site are engaged in like backpacking, rock climbing, whitewater rafting or canoeing, biking,
	Short-term Missions trips A growing number of campsites sponsor teams either from their own staff or older camper population to travel abroad to participate in camping programs and/or train international camp leaders (Priest 2008). Barnett (2009b) notes how campers' horizons are expanded by interacting with staff from another culture.
Conferences	Within the membership Christian Camping International Worldwide are a number of sites dedicated exclusively to hosting Conferences, Congresses and Conventions. In addition, many campsites have facilities particularly geared to hosting this type of event which may last anywhere from a weekend to a week.

Each campsite and each Association Member of CCI Worldwide has its own unique mission statement and definition of camping. For the purpose of this document, the definition of camping created by one of the founders of Christian Camping International in Latin America (CCI/LA), Robert Sabean (Anderson 2002) will be used: "A Christian camp is a Christ-centered experience of life within a temporary community

of small groups, in the out-of-doors, under trained leadership, where the camper can develop abilities recreationally, educationally, socially and know Christ as Savior, Lord and Friend" (15).

If one were to examine the other socializing agents of society—the church, school and home, the unique aspects of camp compliment them well by creating a powerful temporary community to prompt changes in the camper's permanent community (Slater 1984).

As per the definition above, camp consists of four components that together create a very unique environment to build the campers' relationships with God, others, oneself and God's creation and to promote holistic growth. (1) Christian camp is experiential education, focused on providing Christ-centered experiences and reflections about those experiences; (2) Camp for CCI/LA advocates the use of small groups to create a temporary Christian community; (3) Camp makes full use of God's creation; (4) Camp operates on the basis of well-trained leadership.

Although people of all ages attend camp, the focus of this paper will be on children's participation in camping. Every camp program has its own unique schedule replete with an abundance of traditional activities like swimming, sports, campfires, hikes, instructional classes of different types. Figure 2: A sample residential camp schedule will provide the reader who may not be familiar with camping a general understanding of the daily flow of activities over a week-long camp.

SAMPLE CAMP SCHEDULE

SCHEDULE MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE AT ANYTIME BY THE CAMP DIRECTOR TO MAINTAIN PROPER CAMP OPERATIONS.

TIME	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
7:15-7:30		Wake Up!	Wake Up!	Wake Up!	Wake Up!	Wake Up!
7:30-7:45		Role Call- Flag Raising	Role Call- Flag Raising	Role Call- Flag Raising	Role Call- Flag Raising	Role Call- Flag Raising
7:45-8:30		Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
8:30-8:45		Prep Time for Campers to assemble @ nature center	Prep Time for Campers to assemble @ nature center	Prep Time for Campers to assemble @ nature center	Prep Time for Campers to assemble @ nature center	Prep Time for Campers to assemble @ nature center
8:45-2:00		Stewardship Initiatives	Stewardship Initiatives	Stewardship Initiatives	Stewardship Initiatives	Stewardship Initiatives
12:00-1:00		Lunch at Camp	Lunch @ Initiative location	Lunch @ Initiative location	Lunch @ Initiative location	Open Air Lunch/ Barbeque
2:00-3:00		2:00-3:30 Introduction to Optional Activities and encourage campers to select their choice.	Optional Activities as selected by the campers	Optional Activities as selected by the campers	Optional Activities as selected by the campers	Campers leave to go home with their guardians
2:00-2:45			(1) Optional Activity:	(1) Optional Activity:	(1) Optional Activity:	(1) Optional Activity:
2:45-3:30			(2) Optional Activity:	(2) Optional Activity:	(2) Optional Activity:	(2) Optional Activity:
3:30-4:15		(1) Optional Activity:	(3) Optional Activity:	(3) Optional Activity:	(3) Optional Activity:	(3) Optional Activity:
4:00 - 5:00	Campers Arrival	Campwide Swim	Campwide Swim	Campwide Swim	Campwide Swim	Campwide Swim
4:15-5:00	Introduction & Orientation. Overview of all Stewardship Initiatives					
5:00	Cabin Time/ Early Showers	Cabin Time/ Early Showers	Cabin Time/ Early Showers	Cabin Time/ Early Showers	Cabin Time/ Early Showers	Cabin Time/ Early Showers
5:45-6:00	Roll Call/ Flag Lowering	Roll Call/ Flag Lowering	Roll Call/ Flag Lowering	Roll Call/ Flag Lowering	Roll Call/ Flag Lowering	Roll Call/ Flag Lowering
6:00-7:00	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
7:00-8:00	Evening Activities	Evening Activities	Evening Activities	Evening Activities	Evening Activities	Evening Activities
8:30-9:00	Return to Cabin - Prep for Bedtime	Return to Cabin - Prep for Bedtime	Return to Cabin - Prep for Bedtime	Return to Cabin - Prep for Bedtime	Return to Cabin - Prep for Bedtime	Return to Cabin - Prep for Bedtime
9:00-9:30	Lights Out!	Lights Out!	Lights Out!	Lights Out!	Lights Out!	Lights Out!

Figure 2: A sample residential camp schedule (accessed from the internet 31 July 2009 www.stonybrook.edu/ceie/camp/files/camp_schedule.pdf)

Threats to playtime at camp

Camp offers ripe opportunities for engaging in play with children. However, due to pressures from modern society and parental angst ample opportunities to play at camp may be in jeopardy.

David Elkind (2007a) in his 25th Anniversary Edition of *The Hurried Child: Growing up too fast too soon* notes the shift in programs of summer camps to pressure the child to receive specialized training in many different areas, including foreign languages, tennis, baseball, dance, music and even computers.

> It seems that whatever the sport or specialized interest there is a camp (or ten or a hundred of them) dedicated to teaching the finer points. Often these camps are under the direction, actual or nominal, of a big name in a particular sport, and many have professional athletes on their staffs. The daily routine is rigorous, with individual and/or group lessons, practice sessions and tournaments, complete with trophies. …The change in the programs of summer camps reflects the new attitude that the years of childhood are not to be frittered away by engaging in activities merely for fun. Rather, the years are to be used to perfect skills and abilities that are the same as those of adults. …Competition at camp and at home is one of the most obvious pressures on contemporary children to grow up fast. (Elkind 2007a, 9-10)

A perusal of camp programs available on-line gives the impression that the majority of the day's schedule is dedicated to learning specific skills, as noted by Elkind (2007a) above. Many (not all!) of the camp programs of today reflect modern society's obsession with achievement, success and ever increasing levels of competency in children's skills. The days of summer camp providing sustained periods of play time with natural materials in the great outdoors is no longer the norm but more the exception.

Free time for play may get pushed out of the camp schedule due to the modern day child's insatiable thirst for more and more entertainment or edgy extreme experiences. "Camps fall prey to the cultural demands for non-stop entertainment"

(Barnett 2009b, 1). While most camps are ill-equipped to compete with professional Theme Parks for entertainment, there is an underlying push for more and more "toys" and "bells and whistles" in an effort to satisfy the parents and attract campers back each year.

Another threat to time for play in the camper's schedule may be parents concern for safety and their own anxiety. Due to the litigious nature of North American society, concern for safety causes camps to structure and supervise every spare moment of the camper's existence.

One director of an all-boys camp would explain to the parents that their schedule allowed for an hour and a half after lunch when the boys could roam the grounds of the camp or go off into the woods if they wanted to. Their only requirement was that if they are in the woods, they be accompanied by a friend. To which some anxious parent would respond: *We don't want you to let the boys go off into the woods. We think it is dangerous. We don't want you to let the children out of your sight* (Thompson 2008).

Time for play outdoors may seem like an invitation for trouble for many a camp director and a source of worry for the parents who perceive times when children are not completely supervised as opportunities for bullying, exploitation or abuse by other campers or counselors. It is not enough to simply have an adult present. The adult should obtain an experiential understanding of how EQ play can be enhanced through play through training so he knows how to intervene and take advantage of those teachable moments.

In spite of these threats to both time and space for play in the society at large (school, home and camp), camp retains three strong advantages which position it to

be an ideal space for EI enhancing play (1) Camp naturally provides divergent materials for creative play; (2) Camp provides "sacred spaces" and (3) Camp offers nature-based play adventures.

Camp naturally provides divergent materials for creative play

Research on convergent and divergent problems may provide insight to camp leaders as they purchase camp equipment and provide play materials for campers. Play materials, big or small, that only have one solution or that can only be used in one way (a narrow slide) tend to limit a child's creativity since they "converge" onto only one solution. On the other hand play options that 'diverge" into any number of uses or solutions tend to stimulate the child to creatively explore more options, problem solve and discover there is often more than one way to do things (Pepler and Ross 1981). An example of divergent materials readily available at camp would be things with which to do "real construction," like pieces of wood, rope, rocks, nails and a hammer. With some guidance and instruction, these "raw materials" can become a tree house, a boat, a raft, a doll house, or a fort. Materials of this nature (like ropes courses, lakefront equipment, logs/branches) abound at camp, giving camp a distinct advantage over schools and the urban home.

Rogers and Sawyers (1988, 99) give additional tips which are helpful like make it clear to children that it is acceptable, even expected to get things messy and to get oneself messy. Store materials so they are easily accessible by campers during their free time and other "down" times at camp. Add progressively more complex materials as children become more capable and older.

Camp provides “sacred spaces”

Play needs to happen somewhere—preferably somewhere safe and open and not entirely organized and dominated by grownups—but those idyllic “somewheres” are growing scarce in the rush to build shopping malls and banks, even vacant lots are spoken for (Kirn and Cole 2001). However, “sacred spaces” within the camp setting abound, providing children with multiple types of play areas they would rarely have access to at school and at home.

Play researchers Singer and Singer (1990, 11-18) consider the vital contribution that unencumbered time, space and simple, minimally structured objects, offer to children’s imaginative play. Beach (2003) studied rural play in the natural environment and found the natural surroundings to be filled with such “sacred spaces”, allowing children to employ natural objects (sticks, stones, dirt, trees, boulders, fences) in creating elaborate imaginative play. Beach (2003) surmised that as being why many people’s recollections of memorable play took place in natural environments. Brian Sutton-Smith, a prolific analyst of children’s play, bemoans the encroachment of adults on children's imaginative play, seeing play as increasingly regimented, dominated and “domesticated” by adults (Beach 2003, 185).

That being said, a cautionary note is warranted since some campsites place such a high premium on manicured gardens and the comfort and convenience of their guests, that inadvertently, they reduce the availability of “sacred spaces” to play in or explore. Children need a healthy combination of time in the schedule to freely explore and the sacred places!

Camp offers nature-based play adventures

Within the very definition of camp is living life in the out-of-doors and one of its purposes is to help the camper develop her relationship with God's creation. Relationships are built through active engagement one with the other. What better way for a child to "get to know God's creation" than to play and immerse herself in it? Getting dirty; overturning rocks and logs to discover what lives there; chasing and catching frogs, butterflies, and salamanders; picking wild flowers; and building forts/shelters awakens the senses and helps the child to relate to the natural world. Camp can offer up those types of nature-based play adventures like no church, school or urban home can equal.

American Camping Association surveyed a number of their member camps and discovered the phenomenon of Nature-Deficit Disorder (Louv 2005) to be alive and well amongst their camper populations (James, Henderson and Barry 2008). Louv defines this disorder as the cumulative effect of withdrawing nature from children's experiences which leads to increased feelings of stress, trouble paying attention, feelings of not being rooted in the world. He points to a growing body of scientific research that suggests children who are given early and ongoing positive exposure to nature thrive in intellectual, spiritual and physical ways that their "shut-in" peers do not, like reducing stress, sharpening concentration, and promoting creative problem solving.

How then can camping leaders capitalize on "nature-play"? First, recognize that a weaning process might be necessary as children may be filled with fears and phobias, often absorbed from paranoid parents and the general media sensationalist coverage that has literally "scared children straight out of the woods and fields". Those children who are hesitant (thankfully many are not) can be coaxed into nature-play by

their counselors actively engaging in play alongside them. Additionally, program goals can be shifted toward promoting nature based experiences that are flexible enough to empower children in their creative and independent exploration of nature (James, et al 2008).

In spite of the threats, clearly camp is fertile ground for rich play experiences. However, what can camp leaders do to address these parental concerns? How can they maximize the advantages camps possess and run counter-cultural to the current cultural milieu that minimizes of the power of play? By promoting the value of play as a means of enhancing children's emotional intelligence and by becoming adept at engaging in play with children. Section Four will demonstrate how a well-trained, alert camping leader is a vital link between children's play and an increase in their emotional intelligence.

SECTION FOUR

HOW ADULTS SHOULD ENGAGE WITH CHILDREN IN THEIR PLAY

Luther Gulick (1865–1918), American physical education instructor, founder of the Camp Fire Girls and co-founder of Boy Scouts of America, once said: *If you want to know who a child is, watch him play; if you want to influence who he will become, play with him* (Quoted in Sabean 2003). The following section will go into detail specifying appropriate ways adults can enter into play with children in a purposeful manner.

Here is a brief reminder of the more noteworthy aspects of play at camp. The camper:

- Freely enters into the activity and is not obligated or forced to participate.
- May create a sense of community with the co-players.
- Abides by the game's design or group initiated rules.
- Is not in pursuit of any material interest or gain like a badge, prize, trophy or reward.
- Experiences (which may be unbeknownst to him) pleasure, joy, release, personal fulfillment as he or she enters into the "flow" of play.

Starting point: An attitude check

Adults are known to have any number of attitudes towards children's play depending on their philosophy of play, the type of children, the circumstances and their worries or concerns of the moment. Taking this brief exam may help the reader identify his or her predominant attitude or posture (See Table 2: Attitude check towards children's play).

Table 2: Attitude check towards children's play

Adult Attitude Check towards children's play		
Scoring instructions: Score yourself on a scale of 0 to 10. Zero (0) meaning you have never demonstrated this attitude, three (3) if you rarely if ever show this attitude, five (5) if you typically show this attitude, eight (8) if frequently show this attitude and ten (10) if always show this attitude.		Score from 0—10
1	Whatever! The kids aren't doing anything, they're just playing… (ambivalence)	
2	Oh no, be careful, don't do that, play close to me, settle down… (over-protectiveness)	
3	Watch me campers, this is how it is done, hey, pay attention! Do it like me!...(over-involvement)	
4	Kids, go find something to do, I've got things to do… (complacency)	
5	Don't call me unless there's blood!... (carelessness)	
6	Those kids are at it again, they'll probably break something or make an awful mess (antagonistic)	
7	How cute! Take a picture! (sentimental)	
8	Here's the game, play it like this. No, I told you, this is how to play… (over-directive)	
9	Let them alone… it's best not to get involved… (involvement in play equals interference)	
10	You're bored? Let me help you… you can do this…or this? Or how about this… (in charge of keeping child entertained)	
	Self-Scoring (the lower the score, the better in this test) 0-20 Stop reading and start writing, you have much to add to this document. 20-40 You are doing well, play on! 40-60 Keep reading, you have room to learn. 60-100 Get help quickly, recruit a child to mentor you!	Total score

Maria Montessori (1909) spoke of play as the work of a child. For the Creator, play is His way of nurturing the child's growth and development. For adults, balancing work and play (time to rest and re-creation) helps establish a God-ordained rhythm of life. When adults purposefully engage with children in play they become co-participates with God in their nurture and growth, it can be a holy thing, a *kairos* moment. It remains within the power of adults to shed any negative attitude and adopt a posture of advocacy towards play.

Be an advocate for play

Armed with the evidence presented in this paper, camping leaders need to remove any barriers and limitations related to play, like overly restrictive policies. Camp directors are in a position to assign value to children's play so that it influences how

facilities are built, what equipment is purchased and how the program is structured and activities distributed. Program directors need to alleviate the camp counselors of unnecessary labor in order to make them more available to play with their campers and offer them specialized training on how to enhance the EQ of their campers. Amidst the swirling forces of child-rearing advice, camping leaders need to protect and defend the experience of childhood play and become schooled in the arguments for play becoming a preferred (not the one and only) means of adults enhancing a child's emotional intelligence.

Once convinced mentally of the virtues and benefits of children's play, the natural move is to become directly involved.

Let the child take the lead

There is a delicate balance between controlling the child's play and letting the children determine the direction of the play. Remember that play is being used as a means or method, therefore, it is the *process* that counts, not the *product.* One must read the children's signals about how much involvement they want from the adult. Good play partners do not tell children what to do, forcing them to follow the adult's agenda or constantly ask questions or hint to children about the way to play the game (Hirsh-Pasek et al. 2003, 242).

Guided play consists of challenging the children to go just a little bit beyond what the children could do alone or with friends, creating play or make believe in partnership with them, not controlling but fitting the themes they create into the story so they can take ownership of it (Nicolopoulou 1993).

There may be times when the adult offers a limited set of choices to the children. Care must be taken to avoid offering materials or toys that only have one way to play then the toy sets the agenda for the child, especially the genre of educational toys. It is not the child figuring out what to do; it is the device that decides.

Often campers are eager to invite their counselor to play with them during free periods, these are golden opportunities as long as the campers are not depending on adult guidance all the time to run their games. If that begins to happen, an alert counselor will bow out at a certain point and let them run the game. If they are excessively dependent or lost, an astute counselor enhances his campers EI by providing them with divergent materials, nature-play options and challenges them to use their creativity to organize their own games and adventure activities. Then, from a distance, he will watch and appreciate the characteristics of their play. When left to their own devices, campers will do many things like create rules, debate rules, resolve conflicts, and exercise leadership. More importantly, they vibrate with energy when they play their own games (Thompson 2009).

Let children struggle with boredom

What to do in the hearing of "I am bored. There is nothing to do. What can I do?"

Phillips (1993) posits that "Having nothing to do" can be described as a mood, an emotional state of being. How a child learns to deal with this mood is part of one's emotional competence. The bored child is waiting, unconsciously, for an experience of anticipation, wishing for a desire to be born. It is almost like the bored child has lost "something to do." When children experience boredom, they are on the

threshold of discovering what interests them. The bored child is waiting to find his desire again. An adult can inadvertently cut short their inspiration by offering them a list of possible things that might interest the child. More often the case, this litany of play options is usually met with a shaking of the head, a total rejection of every item on the list. Camping leaders need to remember that letting children experience feelings of boredom seeds their curiosity. Boredom spawns imaginative play.

The expression of children's boredom provokes a variety of reactions in adults. For those adults who feel their job is to keep children entertained, they feel guilty, as though the adults have decided that the child's life must be endlessly interesting. Children must be allowed to take their time to work through their boredom in order to discover what interests them, to be brave enough to let their feelings develop towards a particular interest or activity. An adult's intervention at this point curtails the child's growth, it is not the role of the adult to do that work for them (Phillips 1993).

"Children who are used to having all their time structured for them lose the resources necessary to amuse themselves. Amusing oneself is healthy. Living in your head a little and figuring out things you can do without classes, television, video games, the Wii, DS players is not a bad thing. Children need to develop the ability to stimulate themselves. This too, is part of play, and some children seem to have forgotten how it is done" (Hirsh-Pasek et al. 2003, 225).

In the context of play, be a detective for emotional intelligence

To enhance a child's EI through play, the how matters. The manner in which an adult engages is a critical success factor. Harley (1999) suggests adults adopt an investigative stance when children play, cautioning the adult to *stop*, *look* and *listen*

before entering into play. This posture allows the adult to observe how and what the child is playing, in order to ease, not barge in and thus determine the best strategy to enhance the camper's EQ.

Play has a certain flow to it. Flow is an optimal positive experience, something children would call "fun that comes from play" (Csikszentmihalyi 1975). In relationship to flow, the adult can get involved *outside the flow* or *inside the flow* (Hadley 2002). Engaging *outside the flow* allows the adult to prompt reflection on part of the children, this reflection may result in the play being modified or extended. An adult who is present and actively observing the children play is in an objective position to interact with the children and help them reflect on what they are doing. Dewey (1938) said that "learning is the representation of experience." He felt the raw experience itself does not teach; one only learns from it when he or she represents it in some way, like through talking about it, drawing it or teaching others about it. An adult who engages a child *outside the flow* can facilitate age appropriate reflection on the part of the children so they can learn from it.

Engaging *inside the flow* situates the adult as a co-participant, where the communication with children is direct and unmediated; she is accepted as a player. As a player she can elevate the level of play of the children as well. The level of play rises when adults play with the children. The variety of play children engage in also increases when adults join in. For instance, children are playing in the pool. An adult jumps in, joining in their play. At first they are sliding down the slide, and then little by little, the adult introduces other challenging activities like catching a ball as they slide into the water.

No matter the position the adult assumes, inside or outside the flow of play, in order to enhance the EI of the child, she must use her investigative stance to detect the level of the child's social and emotional competence and take action towards enhancing it using play as a means or method. The following chart re-takes the scenarios presented in the introduction and illustrates specific instances of how an adult can use the occasion and means of play to intentionally enhance a child's EI (see Table 3: An adult's role in enhancing children's EQ through play at camp).

Table 3: An adult's role in enhancing children's EQ through play at camp

Competencies of Emotional intelligence	*Adult's role in enhancing EI through play at camp*	*Analysis of the adult's participation*
(1) Self-awareness of emotions This involves being aware of one's own feelings, even as they are being felt. Together with cognitive growth, the child grows in being able to express her emotions with words.	Susy had spent the last half an hour creating a beautiful sand castle and just as she stood back to admire her work, a cabin of boys comes running down the shoreline and carelessly runs over it, destroying her artwork. Susy grabs two fistfuls of sand and is ready to throw sand in their faces, when she looked over at our counselor who had been lugging buckets of wet sand from the lake to help her. The counselor whispered to Susy, "remember, it is okay to get angry, but we have to use words to tell people we are angry at them, not hit them with things." Susy drops the sand as she stands to her feet and says: "I feel awful that you boys ruined my sand castle, I was going to play pretend princess with my friends."	• Counselor *inside the flow* of play. • Counselor allowed the child the prerogative of creating the castle design. • Counselor facilitated the child's play by taking on the laborious job of hauling wet sand. • Counselor intervened opportunely with wise counsel. • Counselor empowers camper to assert herself with the boys. • Counselor herself models emotional control by not taking charge and scolding the male campers. However, if the boys are not repentant, she will assume her role to teach, discipline and protect the wellbeing of the campers.
(2) Management and self-regulation of emotions "The experience and expression of emotion not only affects a child's behavior, but also, provides information to peers about whether to engage the child in play or retreat from further interaction with the child. Thus, skill in emotional expression is an important part of peer acceptance" (Ashiabi 2007, 200)	The boys had an hour to play before lunch. They had finally finished their fort, made out of fallen logs and branches and were armed with crab apples. Joe, the counselor observed from one side, cautioning them to wear the safety goggles provided to them. "Johnny, come on, we can't argue all day! We already decided that we'd take turns, you guys are the robbers and we're the cops this time!" Johnny threw a temper tantrum and continued to insist on his team being the cops. One of the kids muttered, "Johnny always wants things his way." Finally, the other team relented just to get the game going. Johnny was pelted with an exorbitant number of apples and soon left the game sulking. Joe, caught up with Johnny and asked if they could sit together at lunch. …. *Johnny, how are you feeling? …. Why do you think the guys are treating you like that? What might they be feeling? What do you think we should do the next time?...*	• Counselor *outside the flow* of play. • Counselor is hanging out with his campers. • Counselor is maximizing "nature-play." • Counselor has enabled the campers to create a "sacred space" for play. • Counselor enforces safety measures with the use of goggles. • Counselor did not intervene to "fix" the situation, but allowed Johnny to experience the consequences of his temper tantrum. • Counselor shows he cares by helping camper reflect on the incident. • Counselor does not "tell" the camper what he did wrong. • Counselor debriefs camper using a simple format: What happened? (description); Why did it happen? (interpretation); and What can be learned? (application).

		• Counselor offers his accompaniment to help camper manage his emotions better next time and learn to subordinate his personal wishes to the rules of the game as decided by the group.
(3) *Self-motivation and performance* Saarni (2007) points to adult (family) support as key to facilitating children's acquisition of adaptive emotion regulation. Specifically adults can help to "scaffold" for a child by thinking of ways the child can cope, persist, or perform in pursuit of a goal. This term alludes to Vygostky's (1967) zone of proximal development whereby an adult "builds a scaffold" between the children's actual state and a bit beyond in order to facilitate his or her growth.	The campers' favorite activity at the lakefront was using the swing. They would take a running start, swinging as far out as possible, before dropping into the water. During a counselors meeting, two cabin counselors commented on how a couple of their campers had all but given up on that activity. After asking these campers why they did not participate, the two counselors met separately and worked on a strategy to help them overcome their fears and sense of defeat. The two counselors joined their cabin groups and took them to a ropes course initiative. The challenge was for everyone to cross a huge mud puddle. All they could use was themselves and a hanging rope. If one failed to cross, they all failed. What ensued was two hours of pure teamwork, the more agile campers helped the less able campers learn to swing, by tying knots in the rope for hand holds, making a foothold, bending down on one knee to create a launching pad and two campers even swung together as the one secured the hand grip of the other, until finally every camper swung over the mud puddle. They all celebrated with a huge mud battle! The next day, what was the reward for their effort but seeing the "reluctant campers" by the dock using all the techniques they had learned the day before? That evening the counselors led their campers in a reflection about overcoming obstacles.	• Counselor *outside the flow* of play. • Counselors detected the sense of defeat in their campers through their reluctance to participate in a playful activity. • Counselors joined forces, recognizing two heads are better than one. • Counselors used ingenuity to strategize their help in an indirect way, helping the campers save face. • Counselors utilized the efforts of the entire group to motivate the reluctant campers and improve their performance through scaffolding. • Counselors used play for a powerful teaching moment by not just creating a memorable adventure but by reflecting on it. Dewey (1938) claimed that raw experience itself was not sufficient for learning; processing one's experience through discussion and reflection (representation) produces learning that lasts.
(4) Social-awareness, empathy and perspective taking Social-awareness consists of understanding how your actions impact others, which enables one to feel what others may be feeling. This requires a growing ability to be	Wendy is a natural athlete, but her favorite game seems to be "one-up-manship." If someone does a cartwheel, she immediately does a handspring, just to prove she can do "one-up or one better" than her peers. Although Wendy is well-liked for her prowess, she lacks empathy in understanding how her actions make others feel. Since taking another's perspective is part of emotional intelligence, her counselor	• Counselor *inside the flow* of play. • Counselor harvests short stretches of time that are caught between scheduled camp activities, devoting that time to building relationships, encouraging children's success and staying healthy. • Counselor sees "down time"

able to put oneself in another person's position, when it is different than one's own.	"set-up" an opportunity for Wendy to experience social and emotional growth. While waiting for the dining room to open, the counselor invites her campers to play *follow the leader*. She chooses Wendy , hoping she will make good the opportunity to grow in empathy but alas, Wendy tries something far beyond her peers skill level by doing a back handspring! Predictably, the counselor observes the varied reactions to the natural frustration of not being able to follow the leader. One laughs nervously, one pouts, another one attempts a cartwheel, others just sit down and give up and some stop playing altogether. The counselor steps in and in a playful tone, jokingly chides the leader (to whom she has talked to previously about this tendency), who immediately recognizes her error. Wendy asks for another chance and the counselor and girls relent. This time Wendy does a forward roll and promptly goes over to help one of the girls who is struggling.	(waiting) as prime time to play. One of the time honored strategies for waiting or delaying gratification is to fill that time with another interesting activity: play! Well-trained counselors can learn how to engage children (just like Wendy's counselor did) in playful conversation by rhyming, or silly words, playing make believe, carrying a spare book to read aloud, asking the child to tell a story, inviting them to invent unconventional uses for ordinary objects, to name a few" (Kuchner 1998, 5). • Counselor creates an opportunity for growth, challenging the camper to learn firsthand, by experience and not just in word. • Counselor, in a playful tone, with humor, supplies the needed correction, information and insight • Counselor gave the camper a second chance to prove her growth and was rewarded by her display of empathy.
(5) Social skills, handling relationships The degree to which an individual forms and maintains relationships reflects one's level of self-awareness and social competence. Relationship-building is a process and expands one's worldview. One is able to view relationships as a state of reciprocity where the *give and take* of emotions and interactions is a mutual and respected exchange. Exposure to social situations increases the probability of having successful relationships (Richburg and Fletcher 2002, 34).	Eric had two campers he was curious about. Victor played heartily with all his cabinmates. Fernando was quite the opposite, try as he might to play with his peers, he was consistently rejected. Eric was bound and determined to observe them at play and investigate how each handled relationships and discover what social skills Victor had that Fernando lacked. Eric decided to follow his campers into the woods and play the role of detective. The following scene unfolds: Victor arrived late and the children had already found a little spring in the woods. They are making a dam with sticks and mud. Victor did not immediately ask to join; instead, he hovers close to the area of play. Fernando, on the other hand, barged in immediately, demanding he be allowed to play. Victor begins to encircle or walk around the play area, carefully observing what they were doing. With this information, he enters the area with his	• Counselor *outside the flow* of play. • Counselor is curious and humble enough to learn from his campers through observation. • Counselor assumes a posture of investigative detective, being alert to observe and not immediately remedy the situation, which would serve to curtail his camper's social learning. • Counselor makes a mental note of what he learned and commits to sharing it with another camper who is being ostracized because he tends to barge in and take over in his play with his peers. • Counselor meets on e on one with camper to save face and not humiliate him in front of his peers.

	hands full of pine needles and mud and suggests they try stopping the flow of water with some pine needles. This idea is initially met with resistance. Not giving up, however, Victor watches some more, again enters the area, until finally the kids give him a nod and Victor plugs a hole with handful of pine needles and mud, successfully stopping the flow of water, thus contributing to the construction of the dam. Fernando, ended up having to play off by himself since his peers would not let him play, because every time he entered the play area, he messed up their dam. Eric reflected on what he observed and combined with what he had learned during staff training, he met with Fernando in private to share his insights. He began to coach him in how to observe and learn from others and how to build relationships.	• Counselor makes conscious use of counselor training. The staff had learned of numerous ways to "coach" their campers in their social relationships during play: The "do's" of play are: Watch what is going on, figure out the play enter the area and plug into the action without messing things up, maybe even producing a variant of the play theme (Corsaro 2005, 142-143). • Victor is demonstrating social skills, unconsciously using a series of strategies that build on one other and are useful for building relationships (Corsaro 2005).

CONCLUSION

Having come full circle with the play episodes of Susy, Johnny, Wendy, Victor, Fernando and the campers who couldn't swing, the camp leader is convinced of the power play holds in the hand of a well-trained counselor to enhance the social and emotional intelligence of his campers.

While disputes exist about how to define emotional intelligence and how to accurately assess it, the fact that children need to grow socially and emotionally is undisputable. The five components of EQ outlined provide the interested adult with sufficient indicators to guide their intervention in promoting social and emotional learning in children.

A new perspective on life should see play as part of the rhythm God ordains and sanctifies. Time to recreate and play is not inferior to work; there is a time for everything under the sun. When adults enter into joy-filled play with children, God smiles and great potential for growth is unlocked. Adults can now replace their attitudes of ambivalence, carelessness, complacency and over-protectiveness and over-involvement with an eagerness to be curious and observe them at play, to pay attention for teachable moments and to connect with children while they play.

Statements of boredom from children can now be seen like a butterfly trying to break out of its cocoon, realizing that if one helps a caterpillar break out of its cocoon, it never develops into a butterfly—likewise an adult can stunt a child's growth by constantly solving his or her struggle with boredom.

Camp directors, well aware of the grandeurs of their physical settings, can refocus their viewpoint to improve and make available their "sacred places" and creative

play materials for guests of all ages to playfully enjoy. Alerted by the dangers of the over-structuring of childhood, the prevalence of nature-deficit disorder, the growing allure of sedentary activities and screen play, camp directors can take aim against these threats to minimize their impact on their program and activities.

Camp directors are aware that the good that comes from camp is due to good, solid preparation, hard work and God's blessing. Increasing a camper's EQ is no different. Counselors will have to well-prepared, great effort will have to be given to make the most of those play experiences that lend themselves to enhancing SEL and prayers will be offered.

The following components contain the essence of this document and could be considered for a series of training modules for camp counselors:

(1) Study and comment on the definition of play offered in this document.

(2) Administer the attitude check test and discuss the results.

(3) Observe a group of children at play, either at camp or at a nearby playground. Instruct each counselor to verify evidence in the adults present of any of the attitudes mentioned in the test. Ask them to make notes on what they observe about the children. Have them compare the definition of play with the children's attitudes and behavior. Gather to discuss everyone's observations.

(4) Study and discuss the five components of EI by examining their own lives and trying to gauge their own level of EI.

(5) Once, they have an experiential understanding of EI, review video footage taken at camp, particularly clips that show children playing

and identify the following: (a) Evidence or lack of EQ in the people and children; (b) Teachable moments that presented themselves during children's play; (c) Proof of the advantages that camp has like sacred spaces, divergent play materials and nature-based play adventures. If video footage is not available from the camp, then movies or video clips could also be viewed from the www.Youtube.com. An example is "Scrooge and Emotional Intelligence" (2009) which shows video clips of the classic movie of Scrooge with a running commentary on EI.

(6) Give each counselor a copy of the camp schedule. Divide them into five small groups and assign each one of the five competencies of EQ. Each group will be responsible to map out through a drawing, sketch, or diagram how that competency could be enhanced through a play experience. The play experience they design has to fit into the camp schedule provided. Listen to each group's presentation and determine the viability of their play experiences given the camp facilities and the current schedule and exactly what the role of the adult would entail. Discuss where modifications can be made in the camp schedule and how they can help each other fulfill their roles in enhancing the camper's EQ.

(7) Announce a "mock parents meeting" during which a panel of parents will ask the counselors and camp directors to explain the value and benefits of play and why their camper needs to improve his EQ. To

prepare, provide everyone with copies of this document to study. Each person will be given 4 min. to give their speech and the panel of parents will provide specific feedback regarding the coherency of the arguments put forth.

(8) Based on the counselor's previous experience working with children, at camp or otherwise, he or she will pinpoint a need for greater social and emotional learning a child had and what they did or could have done to enhance it through play. Listen to their stories and reflect on how to detect a child's social and emotional competence and how to enhance it through observing and playing with the child.

Camp is already known for greatly impacting the lives of campers in a myriad of ways. Time to play is already a part of most camp schedules. Adults are already committed to serve at camp. Children need social and emotional learning. All the components are in place to broaden and deepen the impact camp has on children by equipping adults to harness the power of play to enhance campers' emotional intelligence.

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