This I Believe

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I believe that if I take a step back from the norms, have patience and work through situations, every activity or conflict can be transformed into a fun learning experience. All children have an unimaginable talent to learn and it is my job to find common ground between us. If I expand my creativity and force myself to think outside the box in every aspect of my life, there is endless possibilities to what I can discover about myself and about my students. I believe I can always strive to take an extra step in this direction.

I have learned this through working at Camp Weona last summer, a YMCA overnight camp in NY. I found my voice with the kids until the 6th or 7th week where we had “The cabin from Hell.” Our camp has a program where they bring in kids from inner cities off of fundraisers and donations to attend camp for free! It is a wonderful program and I believe the kids really need the camping experience. They also decide to lump all of these children together into one week!

After giving all of my efforts, at day 3 we had a child screaming for his mother cursing at me and my co-counselor to bring him home. After the 5th day, I can determine that our whole cabin was out of control and every single kid at one point or another had gotten into either an actual fight or a verbal dispute with another camper. If you can catch my drift, our cabin was full of very outgoing kids who need a great deal of supervision and attention.

One sunny afternoon we were playing outdoor activities with another cabin group. A few of my kids were on the courts playing basketball. One of my bigger campers gets in a tussle with one of the smaller ones over the ball and they start to wrestle. I run over to break it up and the smaller child lets go, falls backwards, and hits his head on the concrete. He doesn’t cry yet, I
notice, until he runs over to my co-counselor. My co asks him to stand up and walk around to make sure he is O.K. I see this too and I decide be more creative, “James, I’m going to do some tests to make sure you aren’t hurt.” He nods his head. “Alright, stand on one foot.” He does it. “Now put your right finger to your nose.” He follows. “Now put your left hand on your head, jump in a straight line to me while singing the ABC’s.” He does all of this and finally realizes I am playing a joke and starts to laugh.

I felt such a rush of accomplishment that I have diffused the situation and had everyone laughing. Everyone is O.K. That is what learning is about, finding the ground where we can all have a good time and get along and work together to expand our knowledge of the world.