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Cate O'Leary, M.A., LCP, NCC



Cathleen ("Cate") O'Leary earned her Master of Arts in counseling from Saint Xavier University in Chicago, Illinois. She completed her practicum and internship at Richards High School in Oak Lawn, Illinois where she worked as a school counselor helping students who struggled academically due to social and emotional issues. Her professional experience also includes working as a hospice counselor where she provided anticipatory grief and loss counseling for patients, families, and caregivers. Cathleen has been with Adventure Camp (AC) since 2013, serving as an AC Counselor from 2013-2015, and as an AC Classroom Facilitator since 2016. She also joined ATS' clinical team in

2015 as a part-time therapist accruing her licensure hours to turn her provisional LPC license into a full LCPC license. In addition to providing part-time hours at ATS, Cathleen continues her role as a job coach for both high school and adult transition students with developmental and emotional disabilities at a nearby school district. She provides on-site vocational training and counseling for students who may also have co-existing issues such as obsessive-compulsive disorder or selective mutism. As a professional counselor and also a mom of two girls ages 22 and 16, Cathleen feels passionate about providing a safe and nurturing environment for children and adolescents, so they may grow and develop to their full potential.

Q&A with Cate

Why are you returning to Adventure Camp for the 6th year?

I first encountered a young adult with SM while working as a Job Coach for students with disabilities. I applied for the Counselor position at Adventure Camp to receive free training and work more effectively with my student. Since attending my first camp in 2013, I've been hooked! I keep returning to Adventure Camp because I love our campers! Just like we tell our campers, it's good to practice, practice, and practice! The overlearning that helps the kiddos approach tasks instead of avoiding them is effective practice for counselors also. Each year I see the campers make

progress throughout the week. Each and every day they have countless opportunities to practice their goals and it's wonderful to see the confidence they gain and how proud they become when they reach their goals!

What's your educational background, how does that relate to children with SM?

I have an M.A. in School Counseling; I'm also a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), and a National Certified Counselor (NCC). I am currently finishing up my clinical hours part-time at ATS to be clinically licensed (LCPC) and work full-time as a job coach for students with disabilities. Whatever disability my students may have, when they leave their high school and come to the work site, they all will experience some level of anxiety. Often that anxiety can look oppositional, specifically when I'm working with a student to complete a task. Children with SM can also appear to be oppositional, especially at home and after a day at school where their anxiety levels may have been high. On the contrary, these kids aim to please, and what may look like oppositionality may actually be the fight/flight response to anxiety. My work relates to students with SM because I use the PRIDE skills from Parent-Child Interaction Therapy, which allows for down time, and then I introduce one variable at a time which allows students to tolerate their anxiety and practice their skills.

What's your favorite part of Adventure Camp?

My favorite part of camp is when we have members from the community visit and when we take the campers on field trips! It's wonderful to see all the campers practice using their brave in different settings!

What is the biggest takeaway you've experienced from camp?

My biggest takeaway from camp is that there are always *opportunities* to practice, practice, practice verbal behaviors! Whether you're walking to the park, eating lunch, or in our simulated classroom, you can find ways to help your camper approach situations that will help him/her use their brave. Also, I love how counselors work together to engage in verbal behaviors between peers. Counselors model for each other how to prompt campers which allows your camper to practice responding and verbally initiating with other counselor/camper pairs and with unfamiliar adults in the community.

How do you think this camp, in your opinion, has lasting effects on children with SM?

I think this camp has lasting effects on children with SM because they are overlearning verbal behaviors in the simulated classroom, with community

members who come to this classroom, and out in the community during field trips. During camp, children have many opportunities to respond and initiate with adults and peers. The exposure children experience will generalize to different individuals and settings beyond camp, especially with parents and school staff prompting students with SM to respond in the ways that they have learned at camp.