

THE BENEFITS OF CAMP

In October 2011, Dr. Troy Glover and his research team at the University of Waterloo released a five-year study, [*The Canadian Summer Camp Research Project \(CSCR\)*](#). It explored the outcomes of summer camp participation and concluded that “participation in provincially accredited camps promotes positive change in five key areas of development: social integration and citizenship, environmental awareness, attitudes towards physical activity, emotional intelligence and self-confidence and personal development.”

Camp increases social connections. Camp friends become friends for life. Young people befriend others who sometimes are individuals perceived as different from themselves. They learn to resolve conflicts in a positive manner. Campers have a sense of belonging and develop a sense of pride in their camp.

Camp exposes children to the natural world. Current research shows that time spent in a natural environment is as essential to a child’s physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development as eating and sleeping. Campers learn to respect and appreciate the world around them. They learn how to protect the environment and develop environmentally friendly attitudes.

Camp allows children to live simply. Simple routines in a camp environment allow children to both anticipate and enjoy the camp day. When life is stripped of cell phones, television and computer-based social networking, children can discover core values upon which successful lives are based.

Camp provides a safe, secure, supportive and healthy environment. After participating in a full day of activity often out of doors and enjoying regular, nutritious meals, campers are ready for a good night’s sleep whether in their camp cabin or tent or at home after a busy camp day. The CSCR reported that “61% of campers showed improved attitudes towards physical activity by the end of their camp session.”

Camp builds character and self-esteem. Emulating the example of camp leaders, children become co-operative, caring and considerate members of the camp community. As they enjoy novel experiences, acquire new skills and cope independently away from home, they become more capable and confident. Returning campers develop leadership skills. Sixty-nine percent of the participants in the CSCR experienced positive development in the area of emotional intelligence i.e. the ability to recognize and deal with one’s own emotions and the emotions of others at an age appropriate level.

Camp teaches skills. The ‘harder’ skills like sailing, canoeing and soccer become leisure pursuits for a lifetime while the ‘softer’ skills like sharing, consideration, conflict resolution and self-confidence are both transferable and lifelong.

Camp is a place to experience fun, laughter, wonder and joy. Camp provides a time of relief and rest from the pressures, demands, schedules and stress, which too often are a reality of young people’s daily lives. Laughter and fun are as important to health and wellness as medicine or treatment.

Camp parents recognize the benefits that camp provides:

I marvelled as to how two weeks could make such a difference in a young life—but it really did. I think the combination of developing skills and friendships in a setting away from home builds tremendous confidence.

Camp has been an important part of our daughter’s growing up. She has gained a great deal from the activities and the companionship and leadership of the counsellors.

Both our children are far better people for their camp experience and both have learned valuable skills, which will benefit them throughout life.

Chris returned home a little more independent, proud of his accomplishments and full of fun memories, which will last forever.

My daughters went to camp in July and came home with such a positive outlook on life. They enjoyed it tremendously and learned how to overcome fears and try new tasks.

Camp was the best experience of my son’s life. It gave him more confidence...he felt like he was part of this big family.

Since my son went to camp, he has a lot more confidence in himself and he is more helpful. He has stepped up as a role model to his younger siblings and also his cousins.