

# 5 Ways Summer Camp Helps Your Child Prepare for Adulthood

When your child attends summer camp, he learns how to work with others, build meaningful relationships, accept guidance and develop decision-making skills. All of these life skills create a foundation that will serve him and that he'll stand and grow from for the rest of his life.

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When I think back on my own camp experience, I recall standing on a wooden tower about 10, maybe 15, feet off the ground. Several people I had recently met stood below. They were yelling at me to fall. I'd just met these people; why on earth would I trust them enough to catch me? I put my arms

across my chest and fell back through the air. Whack! I'd been caught.

Experiences like these summer after summer brought about remarkable transformations in my life. I learned how to trust others, work with others and build relationships. This ultimately helped me to grow up.

Summer camp taught me foundational principles I now rely on as an adult. As a professional mentor, I encourage many of my clients to attend summer camp if possible. Watching kids and teens grow as a result of their summer experiences is incredible. Each summer, it's obvious they have grown and matured.

When your child attends summer camp, he learns how to work with others, build meaningful relationships, accept guidance and develop decision-making skills. All of these life skills nurture independence and confidence, creating a foundation that will serve him and that he'll stand and grow from for the rest of his life.

So how can your child benefit from summer camp?

**1. At camp, kids learn teamwork**, i.e., working together for the benefit of something bigger than themselves: the team. This takes attention away from "me, me, me," and turns it toward the value of investing in others.

They learn that their relationships benefit from investment, and that the team benefits as a whole when individual relationships are strengthened. Contributing to the success of the group is empowering to each individual.

**2. The camp environment teaches resilience.** Kids learn to fall then get back up time and time again. One example is the ropes course, a challenging outdoor, team-building activity that you often find at camp.

Kids have to learn resilience to get through the course as they will undoubtedly fall, and have to get back up over and over. As they progress through the course their confidence builds, and in turn they accomplish a task that seems impossible... and accomplishment is always empowering.

**3. Kids learn to make decisions at camp.** Camp experiences grow confidence and develop good decision making skills -- especially when times are tough. He also learns who to accept guidance from, in a world that's filled with some pretty bad advice on TV, in movies and among some friends.

**4. Camp sets a kid up for trying new things,** putting himself out there, and making decisions to get through various situations.

Living in a cabin, cooking food, climbing ropes, and overcoming obstacles are life accomplishments young people can develop that build strength of character, courage, determination, and focus on something bigger than themselves.

As parents, we know when children only accept comfortable situations, they find themselves limited in confidence, courage, and flexibility. The actual presentation of an unpleasant or unfamiliar situation at camp gives a child the opportunity to grow in ways he never would in his comfort zone.

Through new experiences, he's pushed into positions to grow in life. And when teens learn to push themselves to grow, they begin to accumulate understanding of what it takes to be a productive, independent adult.

**5. Help your child to grow up.**

While more and more our culture allows people to seek out what's enjoyable and avoid what's unpleasant, camp nudges your child to move out of their comfort zone to overcome.

So while our conveniences make life easier in so many ways, there are

experiences missing that provide growth, strengthening of values, confidence, and development for times of adversity. Those experiences need to come from somewhere, and I encourage my clients to go to camp and absorb all the life benefits they'll find there.

If your family can't afford to send your kid to camp, and many can't, try to mimic the same opportunities and experiences at home that they'd find at camp. Push to try new things, push him out of his comfort zone. Allow him to make his own decisions. Create some obstacles for him to overcome.

No matter what, it will require focus and effort to guide your child. There are many ways you can help your child gain the benefits of camp to ensure he's equipped for adulthood. In this modern world, it won't happen automatically. But your effort will be well worth the energy you invest.