

# Campfire Circle 2025 Family & Stakeholder Impact Report

Summer overnight camp at Muskoka and Rainbow Lake

For children living with serious illness, camp can be more than a week away. It can be a place to feel safe, make friends, try something new, and be themselves. Campfire Circle's 2025 Summer Evaluation shows that these experiences are transformative — and measurable.

## At a glance

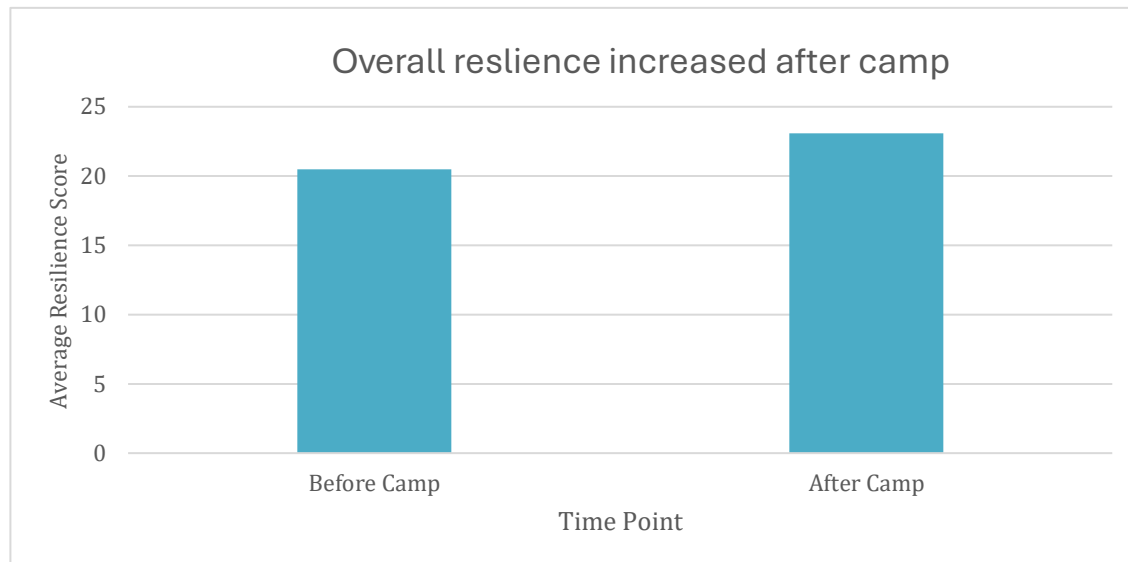
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|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>452</b><br>campers in the 2025<br>evaluation sample          | <b>185</b><br>paired surveys used to<br>measure change over time | <b>272</b><br>post-camp responses<br>used for camp experience<br>ratings | <b>9.3/10</b><br>average overall camp experience<br>rating         |
| <b>95%</b><br>enjoyed camp activities<br>often or almost always | <b>96%</b><br>made a friend at camp                              | <b>94%</b><br>want to come back next<br>year                             | <b>20.54 → 23.09</b><br>overall resilience increased after<br>camp |

## How to read these findings

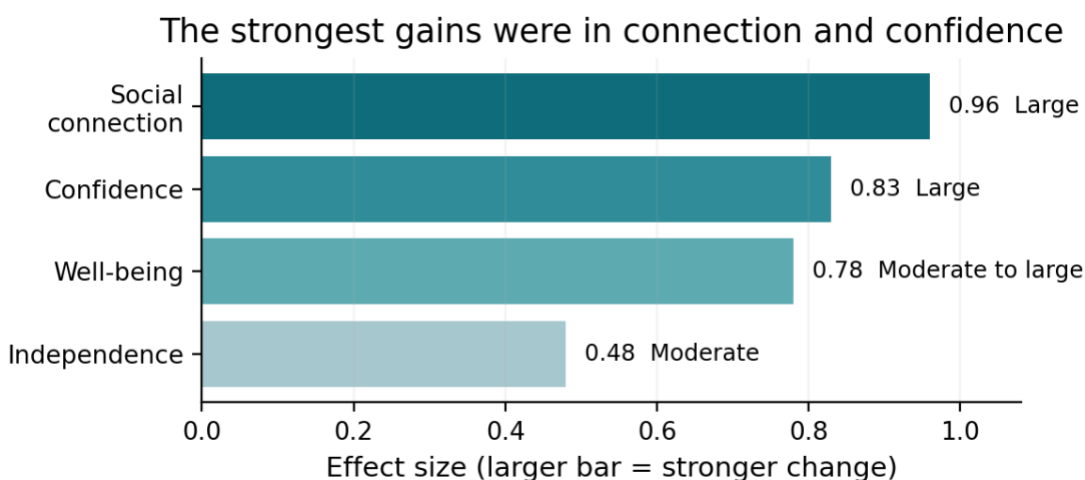
Results about **change over time** come from the 185 campers who completed both the before and after-camp surveys. **The questionnaires were developed based on research and adapted for campers.** Results about **camp experience** come from the 272 campers who answered the post-camp questions. The evaluation drew on research-informed psychosocial measures and adapted them for the camp context and camper population. Survey items and response options were tailored to be developmentally appropriate, accessible, and relevant to campers' lived experiences, while maintaining alignment with the underlying constructs of self-esteem, independence, social functioning, and well-being.

## What changed for campers

Among campers who completed both the pre- and post-camp surveys, overall resilience increased from 20.54 before camp to 23.09 after camp. The strongest gains were in social connection and confidence. Campers also reported meaningful improvements in emotional well-being and independence. All these changes were statistically significant, meaning the improvements were unlikely to be due to chance alone in this group of campers.



The strongest gains from one week in camp were connection and confidence. Paired analyses were used to compare campers' scores before and after camp. Statistical significance tells us whether the change is likely real rather than random, while a statistic called *Cohen's d* helps show how meaningful that change is. As a guide, a  $d = 0.2$  is considered a small effect,  $d = 0.5$  moderate, and  $d = 0.8$  large.



## How campers experienced camp

The post-camp experience findings reinforce the outcome results. Campers did not just improve on resilience measures — they also described camp as a very positive experience. On average, campers rated their **overall camp experience 9.3 out of 10**. Nearly all said they enjoyed camp activities often or almost always, made a friend at camp, and would like to come back next year.

**9.3/10**

overall camp experience

**95%**

enjoyed camp activities

**96%**

made a friend at camp

**94%**

want to come back next year

**Food ratings were mixed:** 73% of campers liked or really liked the food, while 22% said it was okay. This matches other feedback identifying food and daily living experience as areas where camp can grow even stronger.

## What families noticed

The numbers are important, but so are the moments families noticed when their children came home. These reflections capture what the survey findings also show: camp helps children feel connected, proud of themselves, and emotionally stronger.

*“The only bad thing about camp for him was that it ended! He had some tears when we got home because he “just miss everyone so so much”. Camp was amazing. Thank you staff for the wonderful week.”*

Parent reflection

*“After she told us about trying to pick her clothes at camp, catching a fish, trying body boarding she would ask mom and dad “are you proud of me”. We think camp had an amazing and positive impact on her.”*

Parent reflection

## Camp meets children where they are

Campers do not all arrive at camp with the same starting point. Before camping, first-time campers reported slightly lower social functioning and independence than returning campers. This difference was modest and may reflect a combination of factors, including age, clinical composition, and the possibility of prior camp exposure. What shows most clearly is that children begin camp in different places — and that growth we see after camp matters all the more because of those different starting points.

## What could make camp even better

The overall story is very positive, and the evaluation also points to ways Campfire Circle can deepen its impact. Feedback highlighted the importance of strong cabin cohesion, more age-appropriate

independence for older campers, and improvements in food quality, dietary inclusion, activity equipment, and cabin integration. A small number of families also described difficult peer experiences within cabins, underscoring the importance of consistent relational safety and inclusion across all groups.

### Keep strengthening

Belonging, friendships, counsellor support, confidence-building activities, and opportunities to try new things.

### Keep improving

Cabin cohesion, older-youth autonomy, food and dietary inclusion, and the consistency of daily camp experience.

## Why these results matter

Campfire Circle's 2025 findings show that camp is not only joyful — it can be transformative. After camp, children reported feeling more connected, more confident, more independent, and stronger emotionally than before camp. For families, staff, and supporters, that means camp is helping children rediscover joy, belonging, and strength in ways they can carry home with them.

**A note about the evidence:** This evaluation used a pre-post design without a comparison group, so it shows strong improvement after camp but does not prove that camp alone caused every change. Even with that caution, the findings provide clear evidence that the camp experience is associated with meaningful positive change in the areas that matter most to resilience.

**Children leave camp more connected, more confident, more independent, and emotionally stronger.**