



1. Building friendships and social skills.

Talk to any camp alumni and you'll likely hear how some of their most meaningful friendships and lessons on how to get along with others came from camp. That's because camp provides the perfect environment for children to take social risks.

It may seem scary at first to enter a whole new social world at camp.

However, camp offers a crash course on meeting new people -- helping children build social skills, explore their independence and improve their self-esteem, says Stephen Fine, research chair for the Ontario Camps Association.

"Teamwork, co-operation and negotiation are inherent to the camp experience," Fine explains. "Kids' confidence levels and their ability to be in social situations increase." At camp, children boost their self-esteem and develop risk-taking and conflict-resolution skills as they learn to make their own decisions without their parents' help.



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One of the Canadian Summer Camp Research Project's most significant findings was in the area of emotional intelligence, often referred to as EQ (emotional quotient). With EQ, which involves recognizing, understanding and managing emotions, children learn how to work, play, relate, get along, empathize and connect with others.

One of the major benefits of camp is the social skills that develop, especially around interacting with other people in a positive way, says Glover. "The camping experience really develops emotional intelligence in children by making them more empathetic."

It's not just about IQ in children," Glover says. Research supports how EQ is more important in terms of future success. . . . This is an essential component of the maturation process and a skill that camp is successfully developing.

Perhaps it is not surprising, then – given that camp is such a hothouse for social development and experimentation – that many children form life-long friendships and networks with their fellow campers.