

**Parent Preparation for Camp:
How Overnight Camp Helps Campers – and Parents - to Grow**

Camp Ramah in the Poconos created two Camper Readiness resources to support and prepare parents and campers for overnight camp. As a complement, this guide is designed for parents/caregivers to assist in preparing *themselves* for a successful summer experience. As much as camp benefits the children who experience it, it also benefits the adults who make the decision to send their children to camp.

Camp Ramah in the Poconos will provide the following opportunities for my child:

- Learning important emotional lessons by being a part of a vibrant community. Camp will help your child broaden their perspective by being pushed out of their comfort zone in healthy and safe ways.
- Participating in communal living, where campers benefit from working together toward common goals and learn how to share space with others.
- Learning to navigate peer relationships, respect personal differences and increase social skills.
- Learning to find and use their voices by advocating for their wants and needs. With camp's guidance, my child will learn who is available to help them and is encouraged to reach out to adults (or peers!) to ask for help should they need it.
- Building confidence, self-esteem and resilience by learning to try (and try again!) with choices they navigate themselves. Mistakes and challenges are where growth and a sense of purpose happens. The ability to try new things, fail, and learn to overcome challenges is central to the camp experience.
- Experimenting with and trying out different versions of themselves, free of many of the worries that correspond with the school year.
- Taking risks, conquering fears, experiencing nature, and unplugging from technology.
- Exploring elements of choice, particularly the activities they choose to do throughout the day. The more kids make small decisions for themselves, the more they build confidence in their own ability to be independent.
- Being part of a unique community that creates opportunities for leadership and character building, and the ability to be cooperative, participatory, engaged, and caring citizens of our world.

My child's time at Camp Ramah in the Poconos, will provide the following opportunities for *me*, as a parent/caregiver:

- Camp professionals strive to give children the tools they need to go out into the world and discover who they are and what they want to become. Sending my child to camp is one of the most meaningful, lasting and impactful gifts I could ever give my child.
- A safe, healthy and comfortable environment for my child, even when I'm not there. Camp staff are trained to take care of my child, in alignment with the values and philosophy of camp.
- Encouragement for my child to do things on their own without me swooping in to do it or solve it for them.
- The possibility that I might feel "kid sick" because I miss my child so much – my normal routine is thrown off because I am used to being the primary caregiver. I have to remember that just because I don't know what is happening all of the time, doesn't mean something bad is happening. Just as my camper has to learn to unplug (which bolsters their in-person connectivity and creativity!), I have to adjust as well.
- Being pushed outside my comfort zone:
 - I may receive an upsetting letter because even at camp, sometimes kids get sad. Letters are a moment in time and likely reflect my child wanting to share their feelings with me because I am their "person."
 - I might see pictures of my child that generate more questions than they answer. Pictures may show my child with friends I don't know or may not show my child at all! Pictures are a single moment in time and are not a complete reflection of a camper's day, let alone their camp experience.
 - I might be more disconnected than I'm used to from my child BUT it's okay. I remember the gift I'm giving my child and can always call camp if I have a concern or a question.
 - Understanding that my child might have a hard day – but camp will help them through it and they'll have the opportunity to grow from the experience
 - Recognizing that I don't get to know everything happening at camp in real time, but I will get to see the joy on my child's face and hear my child tell me all about their experiences when I see them in person.

We appreciate your decision to send your child to Camp Ramah in the Poconos and to give them the gift of overnight camp. We look forward to partnering with you for a successful summer.