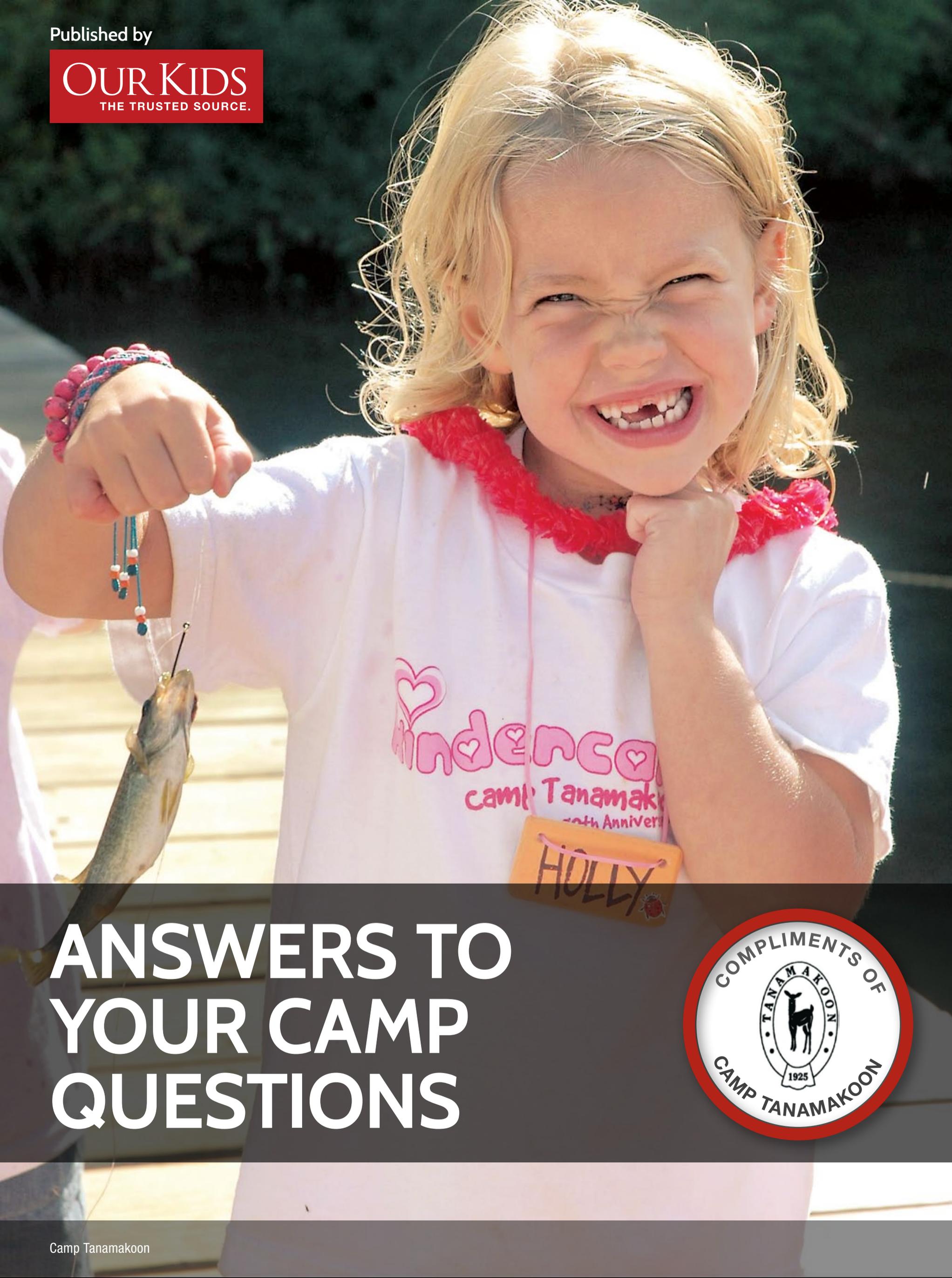


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ANSWERS TO YOUR CAMP QUESTIONS

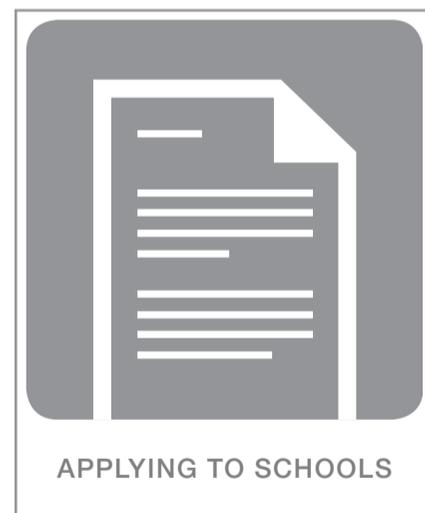
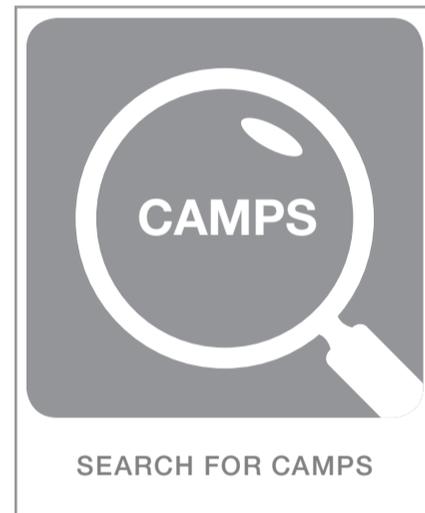




The Trusted Source for parents on everything kid.

Thank you for downloading the latest e-book from Our Kids.

Our Kids brings you sound planning strategies and advice to assure you make the right private school and camp decisions for your children.





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Camp Robinhood – Photograph by Mike Pochwat

INTRODUCTION



Olympia Sports Camp – Photograph by Dick Loek

At Our Kids, we get a lot of questions about camp. Our top parent questions are answered in this eBook, where you'll find information and resources to help you select the best camp for your child.

The articles in this eBook answer our most common parent questions about camp, including:

- Are there camps sensitive and knowledgeable about handling kids with special needs?
- Are there any subsidized options for summer camp?
- What information is available for financial aid or sibling discounts for camps?
- How should we help our child prepare for camp?
- What are registration deadlines for camps?
- How do we apply for camp?
- Safety of the kids and bullying are concerns at camp. How are they addressed?

SPECIAL NEEDS CAMPS

2



Camp Kirk – Photograph by Alex McCusker

WHERE EVERY CHILD EXPERIENCES THE MAGIC OF CAMP

By Shelley Divnich Haggert and Annette Bourdeau

For children with special needs, camp isn't another place to feel left out or left behind.

Special needs and integrated camps can be a wonderful opportunity for youth with physical, developmental, emotional, behavioural or medical challenges to build their confidence, expand their skill set and experience new adventures in a safe environment.

Since most children with special needs already experience integrated environments at school and at home, they may appreciate the chance to mingle with other kids facing similar challenges at a special needs camp.

Trained staff, facilities and activities are focused on supporting these children at this type of specialized camp.

For instance, **Camp Kirk** is like a traditional camp with activities such as swimming, arts and drama, but with more attention and support for campers who have learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), as well as some **autism spectrum disorders (ASD)**.

With the camp's high staff-to-camper ratio of 5:6, each camper receives the individual attention and support he or she needs.

“It's geared toward having the kids push themselves at their own pace without being compared to others,” says executive director Henri Audet of the special needs camp near Kirkfield, Ont.

Children with special needs can also feel welcome and receive the support they need at an integrated camp. Many camps include programs that give youth with special needs the opportunity to

“The kids push themselves at their own pace without being compared to others”



interact with “typical” peers, as well as with siblings or friends. “When children are exposed to a special need and the needs are explained, that awareness usually creates understanding and acceptance,” says Vicki Harvey, a board member for Autism Society Canada who has a son with ASD.

Campers often have support staff, and the camp program may be adjusted when necessary to accommodate particular challenges.

Camp Awakening, for example, operates out of two mainstream summer camps (**Kilcoo Camp** for boys and **Camp Oconto** for girls). Campers with physical disabilities form a cabin group and take part in regular programs with able-bodied campers. At the same time, they enjoy activities that allow them to focus on building their physical skills, says executive director Tracy Morley.

From activities and facilities that accommodate campers to close supervision from well-trained staff, special needs and integrated camps offer every child the chance to experience the magic of camp while giving parents peace of mind.

For Jack, the best part about special needs camp was, well, everything. “I wish we could live here because there’s so much fun, there’s so much stuff to do,” says the seven-year-old.

FINANCIAL AID, SUBSIDIES AND AFFORDABLE CAMPS

3



Sportplay – Photograph by Ashley Hutcheson

There are a wide variety of camps available for kids of different age groups. While many overnight and day camps are expensive, many camps go out of their way to make fees affordable for parents with several children or who may just be cash-strapped.

There are many different types of affordable summer camps, including **sports**, music, dance, art, technology and languages. Parents faced with the challenge of finding camps that are enjoyable, reasonably priced, and valuable for the money have a wide variety of options.

Financial aid is sometimes provided, which can make camps affordable for families. Many camps offer some sort of financial

assistance to families and these summer camps cover a portion or all of the camp enrollment fees. Although assistance of this type is usually awarded based on need, parents need to apply early for financial aid.

Grants and sponsors allow some summer **camps** to be free for kids. Art, writing, theater, math, science and reading are some of the themes of these free camps. Many of these excellent specialty camps are subsidized by funding for arts and education.

Day camps are an affordable option as compared to weekend camps or week-long camps. Campers can enjoy similar activities to those they would experience by going away and the costs are much more reasonable. Fewer hours or less days can also help slash costs without taking away from the camp experience.

A large number of **summer camps** offer discounts for early registration, full-season enrollment or multiple enrollments. Group or family enrollments are particularly beneficial and the large discounts can give you an affordable summer camping experience. There are also tax breaks for children's fitness offered by some provinces including Ontario. The amount of the credit is based on adjusted gross income and applies to federal taxes only. Transportation, meals and accommodation may also be subsidized at many of summer camps in Canada.

A large number of summer camps offer discounts for early registration, full-season enrollment or multiple enrollments

PAYING FOR YOUR KIDS' CAMP: LET'S TALK MONEY

4



The Taylor Statten Camps – Photograph by James Forsyth

While a two-week stay at overnight camp averages \$1,000 or more, a week of **day camp** averages a little over \$200. Typically, the longer the stay, the lower the weekly cost, but coming up with the money can be a challenge.

Here are some ideas:

- Start a camping fund early in the year. Open a bank account and try to make regular deposits. When your child is old enough, suggest he or she contribute babysitting, paper-route or part-time-job money
- Take advantage of early registration discounts
- Some camps offer subsidies to families in financial need; don't be afraid to ask
- Camping association websites and some camp websites list information about subsidy programs
- Community, church and charitable organizations such as the Kiwanis Club, help send children to camp

Some organizations that help to pay camp fees:

- [Tim Horton Children's Foundation](#) operates residential and day camps in Canada.
- [The Toronto Star Fresh Air Fund](#) helps send children to a variety of residential and day camps across Ontario.
- [AMICI Camping Charity](#) offers subsidies for children attending various camps under the Ontario Camping Association umbrella.
- [Reach For The Rainbow](#) offers support to children and young adults with physical and developmental disabilities to attend integrated residential and day camp programs.
- A range of other non-profit organizations such as the Canadian Diabetes Association, the [Easter Seal Society](#), the Ontario March of Dimes and the YMCA provide financial help to families or camps.
- Religious organizations such as the [Salvation Army](#) offer support for low-income families to send their kids to camp.
- [The City of Toronto](#) waives fees for its day camps and other recreation programs for families in need.
- [Kids in Camp](#) helps pay for children to attend accredited camps of the Ontario Camps Association.



Frontier Trail Camp – Photograph by Dick Loek

REGISTERING FOR CAMP



Cosmodome Space Camp – Photograph by Christinne Muschi

by Catherine Ross

Some **camp**s begin registering for the following summer before the current summer is over. Sometimes, early registration for the next year is offered at this year's fee. While some camps are fully booked months before the opening session, others register right up to the opening day. The advantage of making your plans early is that you are likely to have more choice of time and program.

After registering your child, you will discover that there are several forms to be completed. Be assured that every piece of information requested is necessary and will be used. Understandably, the director needs to gather enough information to care for your child properly. All information will be treated with confidentiality in accordance with the Privacy Act. The information will be relayed to members of staff on a need to know basis. For example, for safety reasons, the entire staff will be informed if your child has a bee sting allergy or is a non-swimmer.

You may be required to submit a photocopy of your child's health card. International campers will require supplementary health insurance. You will be asked for a complete health history as well as current conditions and medications, sleeping and eating habits. Full disclosure on health forms is essential. For example, don't hesitate to mention if your child is a bed wetter. Camps are accustomed to this, but counsellors will be better prepared if forewarned. Relevant information will be relayed to the kitchen staff and the counsellor.

Because camps are caring communities committed to the well being, growth and development of the campers and staff, they often have a written Code of Conduct for all

The director needs to know recent, significant changes such as a family move or a serious illness in the immediate family. A counsellor can be better prepared and more effective knowing about a child's goals, fears, siblings, pets or previous camp experience.

If the camp's cancellation policy is not presented in print, ask about it. If your plans change, most camps will refund the fee prior to a certain date but retain a small percentage as a non-refundable processing fee. After this date, some camps will refund fees under certain circumstances e.g. an illness or injury that prevents your child from participating in the camp program. Others will offer a credit for a future session. There is usually no adjustment in fees for late arrival or early departure.

Because camps are caring communities committed to the well being, growth and development of the campers and staff, they often have a written Code of Conduct for all. Some codes are very detailed with varying levels of misconduct and graduated consequences, but generally speaking, everyone is expected to treat everyone else with kindness and respect and to refrain from any illegal activity related to smoking, drugs or alcohol. All camps agree that gross misconduct (such as **physical abuse** or use of non-medicinal drugs) would result in immediate communication with the parents then dismissal with no refund of fees

SAFETY FIRST AT CAMP

6



Camp Ak-o-Mak – Photograph by Colin O'Connor

By Christl Dabu

Camps live by this mantra: If it's not safe, don't do it.

Parents can be assured that campers' safety is the director's first priority, says Catherine Ross, communications officer with the [Canadian Camping Association](#) and former president of the Society of Camp Directors.

"Campers are safe and secure because directors carefully plan for the expected and the unexpected," Ross states. "Upon arrival, campers learn the most important safety rules, which they are expected to obey without question – rules such as: no swimming without permission, no boating without permission or no walking alone in the woods."

Before camp even begins, Ross says, the entire site, indoors and out, is closely inspected and necessary repairs are made. Camps provide emergency services with maps and directions to the site.

“Camps work every minute of every day to make sure children are safe in our programs,” says Dave Graham, [Ontario Camps Association \(OCA\)](#) board member and director of [Camp Kandalore](#), a traditional overnight camp in Minden, Ont. Many camps safeguard campers by becoming accredited with their provincial camping association, and voluntarily abide by additional standards, according to Ross.

“Accreditation sets best practices for how camps operate, which helps ensure they’re safe for children,” says Harry Edwards, president of [the Canadian Camping Association](#).

Camp staff are usually well-trained and knowledgeable, Ross says. Requirements for qualifications will vary according to the staff member’s role, location and program. The waterfront director, for example, requires National Lifeguard Service (NLS) certification. Trip leaders in situations where boating or swimming is involved require Bronze Cross, standard first aid and CPR. First aid and CPR are part of pre-camp training in many camps. Though it’s not mandatory for all camps unless required by legislation or an accreditation group, many camps do a criminal record check for each new staff member.

“When our kids take part in canoeing, kayaking, rock climbing or mountain rappelling, they’re supervised by staff who are certified in those areas,” adds Gordon Hay, director of [Venture Academy](#) in Kelowna, B.C., which runs a camp for troubled teens.

Many camps have smaller camper-to-staff ratios, especially if the children are young or have special needs, according to Ross. For instance, the overall ratio of at least 8:1 is mandatory for OCA-accredited camps.

Though camp is a place that brings joy to children, Ross says first and foremost, “Safety overrules fun.”

SUMMER CAMPS & BULLYING

7



Glenburnie Summer Camp –Photograph by Tim Fraser

by Patti Thom, Director, [Camp Tanamakoon](#).

To help prevent and deal with bullying, camps need to create positive and caring environments for **girls** and boys alike. This environments needs to centre on respect, communication, mentorship and clear guidelines for behaviour. These overriding principles are key but need to be balanced with a clear understanding of the different realities of girls' and boys' lives.

Girls and **boys** bully in unique ways. Tanya Beran from the University of Calgary has unique research into the differences. “As a general group, boys spend more time with boys in physical activities such as sports and games; girls tend to spend more of their time socializing with other girls in more friendship-based activities (e.g., talking with other girls). So it is no surprise that boys and girls tend to bully and be bullied differently.”

Girls will say and do things that make others feel alienated and alone. Being singled out in a cabin group, ridiculed by peers, excluded from social activities, or alienated from the group are all forms of bullying and very hurtful for the victim. Being beaten up emotionally on a daily basis does long term damage to a person.

How can **all-girls camps** deal with bullying?

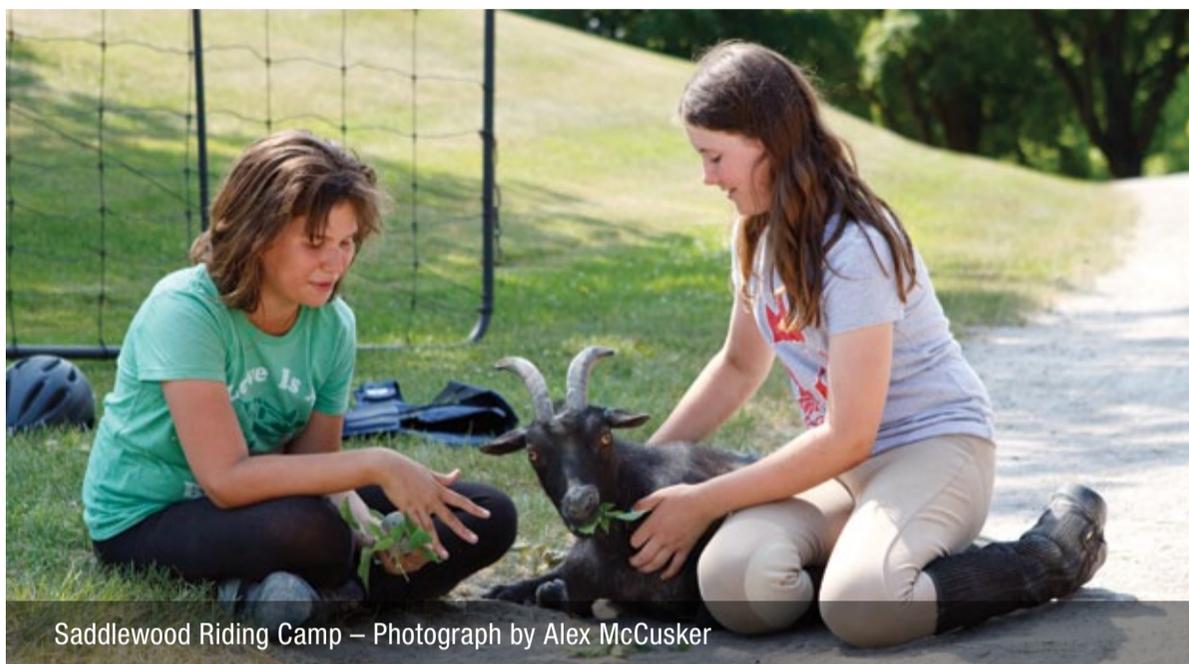
An all girls experience allows the camp the opportunity to provide intervention and a proactive learning focus with a gender difference approach. The all female environment gives girls a unique opportunity to make strong connections with other girls at camp

An all-girls camp allows girls to feel more comfortable and more willing to take risks and thus gain confidence



Camp Northway – Photograph by Peter Redman

and to identify with female staff leaders. An all-girls camp allows girls to feel more comfortable and more willing to take risks and thus gain confidence. The resulting enhancement of self-esteem is highly connected to positive relationships in which bullying is not acceptable. Self-confident girls proactively deal with situations that are not comfortable or acceptable. Fostering sensitivity to the feelings of others can go a long way to stop bullying and aggressive behaviour before it starts.



Saddlewood Riding Camp – Photograph by Alex McCusker

Most girls' camps offer programs that proactively deal with the unique behaviours exhibited by girls. For example, the Girls Circle program at [Camp Tanamakoon](#) has been successfully running for many years now. Girls participate weekly in a variety of themed discussions and activities that are facilitated by camp leaders. These programs identify and target behaviours such as female bullying and self-esteem and actively help girls grow through experiences and activities.

The gender of the staff dealing with programs of this nature is key to its success. Girls will relate best to strong and assertive female leaders who have had similar experiences while growing up. As Chris Thurber, author of the *Summer Camp Handbook* writes: "At a single-sex camp, girls can not only be themselves, they can be their whole selves and reenter the coed world with renewed confidence and empathy."

RELATED RESOURCES:

[Our Kids eBook: Preparing for Camp by Catherine Ross](#)

[Our Kids TV: Safety at Camp](#)

[Preparing for Camp with a Camp Visit](#)

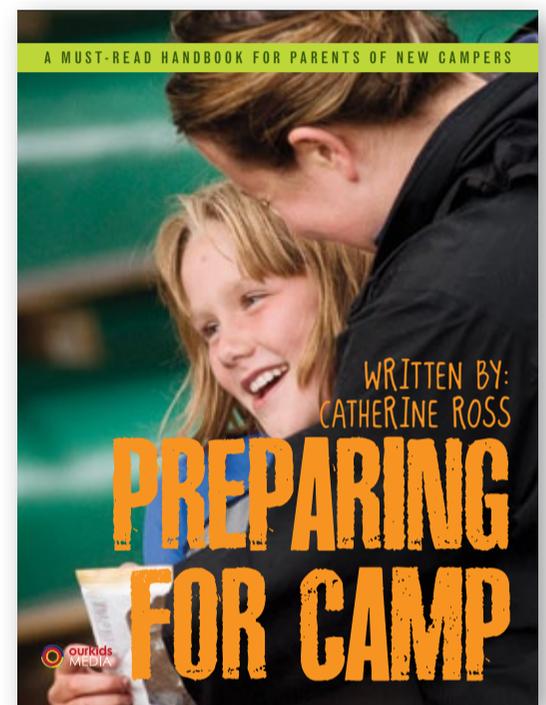
[Camps for Every Budget](#)



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