

# Why Camp at Brigadoon Village?



So maybe you (and your child!) aren't sure whether camp is the right fit for you. We totally get that. Especially when your child is managing a chronic health condition, grieving the loss of a loved one, etc., it can be challenging to think about sending them away to be cared for by other people. It can also be challenging to know whether they'll like it!

Firstly, we are committed to caring for each of our campers. We have a fully-staffed medical centre and have thoroughly reviewed each camper's application before they arrive at camp so we can plan how to support their needs best. Our kitchen team is well-versed in meeting a wide range of dietary needs and always has backups if the meal offered is different from your camper's thing. Our well-trained staff will approach your child with compassion, patience, understanding, and jokes!

We are committed to packing our days full of fun, opportunities to try new activities in a place entirely free of judgement, and plenty of chances to laugh with your cabinmates until they become great friends. There is no underestimating the value of fun and friends, and we love having the opportunity to create those experiences for our campers, who only sometimes get enough of those opportunities!

However, we also want to make sure that on top of memories lasting a lifetime, we spend our time with our campers focused on giving them the skills and experiences they need to meet the challenges they face. If we spend time with them effectively, the other 51 weeks of the year will be easier. It is for that reason that we focus on helping our campers to grow in these areas:

**Confidence:** We'll send your child home with more positive words they can use to describe themselves. We'll provide them with opportunities to push just a little bit outside of their comfort zone, and we'll celebrate every achievement. We'll help them to bounce back when things don't go their way and help them to see that they can be successful even if they've never tried something before. We'll help point out what's great about them and help them to believe those things are true. We'll help them reflect on what they've accomplished and know they are capable people with many great qualities. (We also know that kids who feel confident in their abilities have better health outcomes in the long run!)

**Connection:** We've seen first-hand how powerful it can be to surround campers (who often feel like the odd one out at home) with others who understand their specific challenges and circumstances. We are very proud to offer an environment where campers can casually mention their treatments, surgeries, scars, loss, mental health, etc., and be understood. We'll help them focus on what makes them a good friend, too, to allow them to be even more successful in building new connections at home. After a few years, we hope they'll keep those connections they built at camp going long after they come home. (We also know kids with strong social support networks move through illnesses more quickly and report fewer symptoms overall!)

**Compassion:** While our campers often come to us already as quite kind and compassionate people, we'll also spend some time during camp focusing on the impact we have on the people around us and finding ways to make others' days brighter and easier. Our campers leave camp with a better understanding of how to help others and empathize with others' challenging circumstances. (Taking others' perspectives and supporting others positively benefits mental and physical health!)



**Independence:** At Brigadoon, we work hard to incorporate as many opportunities as possible for campers to choose how they'd most like to spend their time. We'll let them decide based on what's important to them and weigh in on what they'd prefer. We'll also encourage them to notice how they're feeling and what they might need at any time. Instead of telling them they need a break because they seem tired or short of breath, we'll help them assess that for themselves (though perhaps not if they're a Braveheart camper!) and decide what would be most helpful to them. We'll also give them opportunities for age-appropriate responsibility, cleaning up after meals and in their cabin rooms to build independence, too! (Kids with higher independence ask more questions in doctors' appointments, manage more of their treatment independently, and advocate for their own needs, all of which will help them stay healthier in the long run!)

**Resilience:** Everyone will have hard days and feel hard things, but our campers' lives will have more challenges than most. That is why Brigadoon Village exists! While at camp with us, we'll encourage your child to express how they're feeling when things are complex and encourage them to keep going when they're initially unsuccessful or nervous. We'll give them some tools and strategies that they can use to help calm themselves down or make themselves feel a bit better (even 10% better is a win!) They'll be able to take some of these things home to use on the hard days there, too. (We know that people with good coping skills who can find the positives in the middle of hard things are more likely to keep moving forward and managing the challenges. We also know they'll be healthier overall!)

The best part? They won't notice much of the above happening while we're working so hard on it! It is important to us that campers leave camp raving about the fun and all of their new friends. You may notice the growth in your camper, or they may realize it years later when looking back. We would love to be a part of your child's growth and development, to be a source of joyful memories for them, and to help them to be even better equipped to face the hard things moving forward.

**If you would like to discuss whether a week at camp would benefit your camper, please get in touch with Megan McNeil, Registrar, at [camp@brigadoonvillage.org](mailto:camp@brigadoonvillage.org) or (902) 229-3060.**