

DATA SNAPSHOT

2014-2015

OUTCOMES EVALUATION STUDY

Understanding the effects of SeriousFun on campers and their families, as well as the mechanisms through which related changes occur, is critical to ensure all children have the best experience possible and that newly built resiliency skills last beyond camp.

During the summer of 2014, a total of 645 families from five SeriousFun camps completed pre- and post-camp surveys to reveal the impact residential camp has on the lives of campers coping with serious illnesses. The post-camp surveys were completed one month after camp. A follow-up survey six months later with the same group of parents is currently in progress to better understand the potential for lasting change in campers following camp attendance.

The evaluation builds on a multi-year collaboration between SeriousFun Children's Network and Yale Child Study Center. Results of the data have the potential to inform and strengthen camp programming.

The 2014-2015 findings replicate the results from the previous years' surveys, which included nearly all of the SeriousFun camps, but with a smaller response rate. Although only five camps were included in this study, all SeriousFun camps share a common mission and adhere to a common set of program and medical operating criteria. Previous years' findings and this year's high response rate support that these trends are widespread throughout the SeriousFun Children's Network.

Key Data Findings

Changes in Children Noticed By Parents Following Camp

- 79% of parents reported noticing an increase in their child's confidence;
- 77% reported an increase in self-esteem;
- 75% reported an increase in maturity;
- 74% reported an increase in independence;
- 76% reported an increased interest in social activities;
- 80% reported an openness to try new things.

Camper Outcomes Relating to Resilience

Parents were asked to rate variables of social support related to resilience. A key variable that improved one month after camp was Relationship Skills. Improvement with these skills contributed to increases in many positive correlated outcomes including:

- *Attitude toward medical professionals*
- *Attitude toward taking medication*
- *Adaptability*
- *Pro-social and passive coping strategies*
- *Comfort with making friends*

Conclusions

- Campers demonstrated significant positive changes, including increased confidence, self-esteem and social skills, one month after camp.
- Campers showed improved relationship skills one month after camp. These improved skills were related to boosts in other outcomes, such as attitude towards taking medication, ability to adapt, and comfort making friends.
- The evaluation shows that the combination of dynamics at SeriousFun camps – including friendships made at camp, supportive social network provided at camp, and the improved relationship skills developed at camp – all support campers’ capacity for resilience.
- Multiple evaluations over a period of years provide confirmation that SeriousFun camps provide significant psychological and social benefits for campers, which help them develop resilience in coping with their illness.

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Participating Camps

- Flying Horse Farms (Ohio)
- The Hole in the Wall Gang Camp (Conn.)
- The Painted Turtle (California)
- Bátor Tátor (Hungary)
- Dynamo Camp (Italy)

About Yale Child Study Center

The Child Study Center is a department at Yale University School of Medicine which brings together multiple disciplines to further the understanding of the problems of children and families. Among the many disciplines are child psychiatry, pediatrics, genetics, neurobiology, epidemiology, psychology, nursing, social work and social policy. The mission of the Center is to understand child development, social, behavioral, and emotional adjustment, and psychiatric disorders and to help children and families in need of care.

The Research Team at Yale

Dr. Linda Mayes, M.D. is the Director of Child Psychiatry, Pediatrics, and Psychology of the Yale Child Study Center. Dr. Mayes’s research integrates perspectives from child development, behavioral neuroscience, psychophysiology and neurobiology, developmental psychopathology, and neurobehavioral teratology. Her work focuses on stress-response and regulatory mechanisms in young children at both biological and psychosocial risk.

Dr. Steven Southwick M.D. is Professor of Psychiatry at the Yale University School of Medicine and at the Yale Child Study Center, Adjunct Professor at the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine and Director of the Resilience Laboratory of the National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. He has expertise on the psychological and neurobiological effects of extreme psychological trauma and resilience to stress.

Dr. Shauna Tominey, Ph. D. is a Postdoctoral Research Associate at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence and the Yale Child Study Center. At the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, she is the project director overseeing the development of Preschool RULER, an early childhood program integrating emotional literacy into the lives of children, teachers, administrators, and parents/family members.