



**The Adventures Last a Summer,
The Memories Last a Lifetime...**

The Value of Struggle

By: Ryan Rosen, Director, Camp Kinneret Summer Day Camp, campkinneret.com, @campk_ry

How can struggle be a good thing for children? Years ago we had an applicant who was the picture perfect camp counselor candidate: captain of the football team, homecoming king, prom king, 'A' student, UCLA freshman. But lurking below the surface of this super successful person was a major flaw.

School came easy to him, so getting a 4.0 GPA didn't require a lot of work. He had an easygoing personality, so his peers liked him. He was a naturally gifted athlete, so his teammates looked up to him. When he wanted to get better in sports, he could improve through repetition and practice. But with so much easy success, he never learned what to do when he failed.

He struggled during the first week of the summer. He was trying as hard as he could, but each day was harder. When we sat down to discuss his struggles, he couldn't understand why his methods weren't working and he wanted to keep doing it his way.

Ultimately, it was clear that he didn't want to continue in an environment where he wasn't being successful, so he quit.

Through that experience, we realized the importance of our campers learning how to fail. We would play games on the field and there would be no more "ties," one team would win and one would lose. When they lost, we helped them understand why they high five one another after a game. And when they didn't get a bullseye at archery, we could help them learn that sometimes you have to ask for help to improve. And when they were up high in the trees, intimidated by the ropes course, they could learn the importance of supporting their peers while being coached by the instructor.

A few years later, we heard from that counselor who shared that his failure at camp was a turning point for him. He explained that during his freshman year, he was struggling with his classes and he didn't know what to do. After his experience at camp, he knew he needed to listen to others to improve. At that point, we realized that a summer at camp could help a child learn how to fail and more importantly, how to grow from that failure. As parents, you have daily opportunities to help your children become more resilient and confident through their failures.

Here are a few related suggestions for parents:

- Instead of resolving problems for your children, ask them, "How can I help you?"
- When your children say they can't, ask them to say "I don't know how, can you show me?"
- Encourage your children to take responsibility for their failure and ask them "what could you do differently next time to have a different outcome?"
- Help illustrate choices and the decision-making process for your children by talking through your process.
- Allow your children to see you fail and demonstrate the process of learning from it.

Ryan is the owner/director of Camp Kinneret Summer Day Camp and is an active member in the Western Association of Independent Camps, the American Camp Association and the local community.