



## **10 Reasons for Holiday-Gifting Summer Camp – Best Lifelong, Non-tech Kid Gift**

### **“Unplugging” is Invaluable Shares Catherine Steiner-Adair & Maine Camp Experience**

December 3, 2014 (Portland, ME) – The best gift this holiday season may be the opposite of the newest technology devices. While the holidays tend to be a big time for tech purchases for our kids and teens, the gift of summer camp – where kids unplug – may be the BEST, longest-lasting, most impactful gift a parent can give.

Here are the top 10 reasons camp is the best gift a child can receive and a parent can give from [Maine Camp Experience](http://www.mainecampexperience.com), a community of 30+ traditional camps, with input from noted child development expert and author of [The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age](#), Dr. Catherine Steiner-Adair.

Sleepaway camp is an incredible, life-shaping opportunity where kids get to disconnect from their smartphones and tablets and connect with friends in real life. Catherine Steiner-Adair, noted psychologist, and a Maine Camp Experience sleepaway camp alum and proponent says, “In this digital age, people are looking at smartphones more than each other. Kids are texting the kid sitting next to them. Sleepaway camp can help kids develop empathy, they learn what it means to be part of a community, and how everyone’s feelings matter. It’s an ideal environment to teach children the social and emotional intelligence tools that they need now – more than ever – in this highly reactive, quick-paced digital life.”

### **For kids, top five reasons why camp is the best gift to RECEIVE:**

1. **Unplug** – Camp is the only place where you can see kids of all ages creating their own fun, fully present to each other, laughing, playing, learning how to win and lose, and having a blast- without any screens! Campers rediscover how to engage in the real world, and reconnect to their inner creativity and self generated capacity for focus and fun. Without the constant interruptions of checking social media and email, their brains have the chance to happily engage in a healthy pace of life, removed from the “just checking” stress and anxiety that technology can trigger.
2. **Make new friends** – Camp offers children a whole new set of friends of all ages that is separate from home and school. When you live with peers in a cabin or tent, you learn how to be a friend and get along with others in ways school can’t provide. Camp is one of the best places for children to learn how to deal affectively and positively with all the challenges of being a peer. Kids make new friends at camp, often from diverse geographic locations, which expands their social confidence and competence. Friendships made at camp often build through the years and even expand beyond camp years. Campers can reconnect at universities, in careers, in marriages, and more.

3. **Connect with nature** – Kids can relax, breathe fresh air and enjoy incredible outdoor experiences in nature such as hikes and overnight camp-outs. In fact, according to an [article](#) from the National Wildlife Foundation, kids benefit tremendously from outdoor play. Outdoor play helps build healthy bodies, enhances social interactions, lowers health risks such as obesity, and decreases stress. “Our kids are out of shape, tuned out and stressed out, because they’re missing something essential to their health and development: connection to the natural world.” Living in nature offers children the chance to discover their self in connection to the great outdoors, and the beauty of the natural world, and develop a sense of stewardship for the environment.
4. **Learn new skills and gain confidence** – Under the guidance of directors, counselors and specialists, campers will try and succeed at things they may not have done before (responsible for picking out clothes, showering/brushing teeth, keeping cubby and stuff organized) and may never have dreamt they could do (like climbing a rock wall or riding a horse). Campers learn so many new skills ranging from sports (like waterskiing or lacrosse) to arts (like cooking or participating in a play) to life skills (like learning to make their own beds, negotiating relationships, and resolving problems).
5. **Gain independence, build character and good values.** Camp is one of the few places in a child’s life that they get to flourish away from their parents and come to believe in their independent self. The values of camp culture - inclusion, friendship, healthy competition, try new things, help the other fellow, protect the environment, loyalty, and integrity- surround campers as they sing, play, and participate in social action initiatives that help others; helping campers mature and think beyond themselves.

For parents, top five reasons why camp is the best gift to GIVE:

1. **Help with teaching your child life skills and values** – Parents often find that their kids have developed positive skills from being at camp such as becoming more cooperative with parents and siblings, more empathetic and more flexible about trying new things. Kids often appreciate following directions from their role model counselors and often learn responsibility from things like the in-cabin and/or dining hall work wheel.
2. **Ability to refresh and recharge** – Having kids at camp gives parents a break from all the carpooling and entertaining they do throughout the school year. They find themselves refreshed, and welcome back their kids and responsibilities with open arms. Absence does make the heart grow fonder.
3. **“Me time”** – While kids are at camp, parents have time for things they often don’t get around to during the busy days of parenting. Most of all, it’s a chance for parents to reconnect to their selves, and have much needed uninterrupted time to focus inside or on tasks or goals that got pushed aside for the children (everything from organizing their photos into albums or cleaning out closets, to working more, meeting friends, following a regular exercise schedule or pursuing interests more).

4. **Time to reconnect with spouse** – Oftentimes, our spouse becomes the other half of the transactional partnership in things like - Who is picking up the kids? Who is helping with the homework? While kids are at camp, spouses can reconnect with each other, focus on their relationship, and enjoy quality time together.
5. **Good vacation opportunities** – Parents often enjoy traveling together while their kids are at camp. This includes making a vacation out of visiting their kid at camp on Visiting Day, as many do at Maine camps. (There is even family camp available if families want to sample and enjoy camp together.) It's a wonderful guilt free time for parents to have their own grown up adventures, knowing their children are happy campers.

Maine has the greatest number of the oldest, most established overnight summer camps in the country. Each summer 20,000 kids come to camp there for natural beauty, strong traditions and values, and top notch activities and instruction. (Parents and siblings also enjoy Maine during Visiting Day weekends and pre/post camp trips.) Camps range from 1-8 weeks. There are coed or all boys or all girls or brother/sister camps. [www.maineexperience.com](http://www.maineexperience.com) is the free resource for 30+ premier camps to help families decide which camp is the best fit, including the Maine Guide who personally assists families as their [Campcierge™](#) with camp selection and planning their visits to Maine. (Fall and winter is a popular time to enroll.) The site features [videos](#), [self-posted testimonials](#) by camp families, camp planning tips, and much more.

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