

Confident Kids Camp: A Week of Brave Work!

Thriving Minds Family Services in Chelsea and Brighton just finished our yearly week-long camp for children with Selective Mutism, called Confident Kids Camp. Selective Mutism is a childhood disorder characterized by an inability to speak in various social settings; the most anxiety-provoking environment is usually the school. These children are able to speak at home and in settings where they are comfortable, secure, and relaxed. However, this anxiety significantly impacts the ability for the child to participate in both social and academic environments.

Confident Kids Camp is a 5-day, intensive therapy program designed to help prepare children with Selective Mutism for the upcoming academic year. Throughout the week, we focus on *brave work*, helping our campers to see that by practicing anxiety-provoking tasks, they start to get easier. *Brave work* activities focus on real-world situations that children may encounter in school and in the community, such as answering a teacher's questions in front of the class, talking with peers at recess, and ordering lunch at a restaurant. Children earn stickers or "brave bucks" for their participation in *brave work*, which they can later turn in for prizes.

There are many benefits families get from attending camp! Camp allows for more rapid improvements and better generalization of gains to the school setting than traditional therapy. At Confident Kids Camp, therapy is delivered in the environments most similar to those that children will encounter in the real-world, including school and community locations like restaurants, ice cream shops, and the zoo. Confident Kids Camp also includes daily parent training to empower parents to continue *brave work* even after camp is over.

Each year, we are always amazed to see the progress that children make in just one week, and this year was no different! We watched kids increase verbal responding with novel adults and peers, talk in front of groups (i.e., show-and-tell/oral presentations), initiate speech with others, and increase voice volume. All of these skills are essential for children to be successful in upcoming social and academic settings. Overall, we had a great week, and already can't wait for next year! Visit www.confidentkidscamp.com for more information about the camp and its effectiveness for children with Selective Mutism.