

FAMILY EXPERIENCES AND RELATIONSHIPS FOLLOWING CHILD'S PARTICIPATION IN AN ADAPTED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY CAMP

Full report published at:

Youngblood, J., McDonough, M. H., Condliffe, E. G., Legg, D., & Emery, C. A. (2023). "We're a lot closer, we talk more": family experiences and relationships following child's participation in an adapted physical activity camp. *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 1-10. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/10.1080/09638288.2023.2226407>

PURPOSE

To examine family members' perspectives regarding family relationships as they relate to participation in an adapted summer camp for children and adolescents living with a disability.

STUDY

- Qualitative case study guided by thematic analysis
- Family focus groups to understand family interactions and the impact the child attending the camp had on family relationships
- Participants:
 - Twelve (5 females, 7 males) children living with a disability
 - Eleven mothers
 - Six fathers
 - Six (5 female, 1 male) siblings



PROGRAM

- The Adapted Sport and Recreation summer camp that was conducted through the University of Calgary
- Children and youth with physical disabilities participated in a variety of adapted programs



WHAT WE LEARNED

Families experienced changes in

- conversations surrounding disability
- levels of worry towards child participation in sport
- child's confidence and independence

RESULTS



THEMES - FAMILY EXPERIENCES

Family members' perspectives changed

The camp was a new experience for many of the children who participated and this new experience opened the parents' and siblings' eyes what the child living with a disability was able to achieve in an adapted physical activity setting. Parents and siblings felt proud of the child living with a disability.

Child is confident discussing their disability with their family members

All families reported that the child living with a disability seemed more confident after attending the camp. The families felt that the confidence affected how they discussed the child's disability and the child's overall comfort surrounding their own disability.

One father spoke about his child's increase in confidence: "He became more outspoken, more willing to approach people. So that would almost link into confidence really. Confidence in himself gave him the ability to talk to different age categories and different people."

Children living with a disability experienced more independence

Many of the family members and children living with a disability discussed how after the child living with a disability attended the camp alone family members that they are capable of doing things on their own and able to have more independence

One sibling spoke about an increase in their sibling's independence: "It seems like sometimes we stay a bit afraid, and we don't let her do the things that we all know she could do and her doing stuff like that camp really stopped us from being so afraid and now she can do more stuff with us too."

Family members have bonded with one another through participating in physical activity together

Families reported that they do more physical activity together after seeing what the child living with a disability was able to achieve at the camp. Participating in physical activity created common experiences and memories between the child living with a disability and their family members

THEME - IMPACTS OF COVID-19

Families experienced frustration, worry, and strained family relationships

Parents were upset that their child was not able to attend the camp in the summer of 2020, as the camp had been important to their child and their child's development. Families felt lonely, helpless, and became impatient with one another.



TAKE HOME MESSAGES

The experiences family members had regarding changes in their perspectives, conversations surrounding disability, parental worry, and pride in the child with a disability were important for how family members interacted with and understood each other. Further, the confidence and independence experienced by the child living with a disability was meaningful to their own experiences, and interactions within their families.