



## Small wins add up to everything

Camp Chateaugay sometimes serves McDonald's-style hash browns in the dining hall. They're always a hit.

Many mornings, kids make egg sandwiches with English muffins. Pretty standard breakfast situation.

Then one morning last summer, a kid grabbed two hash browns instead. He used them as bread for his egg sandwich.

His table mates notice. They try it and obviously love it.

Spreads to the next table. Then the next. By the end of breakfast, half the dining hall is making hash brown sandwiches.

Now he's the Hash Brown Kid. And what happens? There's all this positive reinforcement for it. Recognition from his cabin. Counselors joking about it with him. Other kids asking him if he's going to do it again tomorrow. He's become Chateaugay's own food influencer.

This shouldn't seem like a big deal. And to most adults, it isn't.

But to that kid? It's massive. He made a tiny creative choice. People noticed. It caught on. He started something.

And that's what we call a micro-success.

## What Micro-Successes Are



Camp creates dozens (really hundreds) of opportunities per day for small wins like this.

For a 7-year-old, a micro-success might be navigating from cabin to soccer field without a grown-up telling them how to get there.

For a shy kid, it might be standing up during the SHAKE YOUR BOOTIE cheer (ask me about this!) and doing their own dance move in front of everyone.

For a STEM kid, it might be the Great Raft Race. Teams get two barrels, pieces of wood, duct tape, and rope. Build a boat. Counselor paddles it in a race. This kid came up with the winning design idea. Now he's the hero of a legit, real-life moment.

None of these are life-changing moments by themselves.

But two dozen of them per day for a summer? That produces a fundamentally different child.

## **The Constriction Problem**

Our culture trains human beings from birth to constrict as a survival mechanism.

Don't stand out. Stay with the group.

Kids learn this early. Raise your hand in class and you might get it wrong. Try something different at school and kids might make fun of you. Be yourself too loudly and someone could shut you down.

So they constrict and they restrict and they play it safe.

Camp reverses this.

## **Expansion Culture**

At camp, the norm is different. The norm is to be free and expansive.

Singing Boom Chicka Boom at every meal isn't unusual at camp. It's a cherished tradition.

Making a hash brown sandwich isn't strange. It spreads through the dining hall.

Coming up with a creative boat design isn't risky. It makes you the hero when it works.

Standing up and doing your own dance move during a cheer isn't embarrassing. It's celebrated.

When you can open up and do something completely different, it opens everything up. You get access to parts of yourself you've been shutting down without even knowing it.

Camp is this little laboratory of joy where being yourself gets rewarded instead of punished.

## The Stacking Effect



One micro-success doesn't transform a kid.

Two dozen per day all summer does.

Your child will make a choice at breakfast that becomes a thing at their table. They'll navigate somewhere on their own for the first time. Someone will laugh at their joke at dinner. Their counselor will remember their favorite activity without them having to ask.

They'll stand up during a cheer when they're scared. Their team will win on Olympic Day. They'll make it through a full day without thinking about home. They'll try water skiing and stand up on the skis. Or they won't stand up but they'll want to try again tomorrow anyway.

Small wins stack. Belief shifts.

Camp is the printing press of confidence. The world is mostly not set up for this.

Camp is.

**See you this summer.**

Mitch