



The
**Teresa
Group**

CAMP MANDALA 2023

AUGUST 14TH-18TH

AT MOORELANDS CAMP, DORESET, ONTARIO

**SUMMER CAMP FOR CHILDREN IMPACTED BY
HIV/AIDS FACILITATED BY YOUTH CAMP
COUNSELLORS IMPACTED BY HIV/AIDS**

EVALUATION REPORT

FUNDED BY ViiV

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Teresa Group would like to express its special gratitude and appreciation to ViiV and its Community Engagement Team for its crucial role of funding the Summer Camp Mandala for children and youth from diverse communities, who are also new immigrants to Canada, who have been impacted by HIV/AIDS.

We would like to specifically thank Ms. Marvelous Muchenje whose help, ongoing support, stimulating suggestions and encouragement helped us successfully plan and implement the Summer Camp Mandala 2023 at the Moorelands Camp in Dorset, Ontario, Canada.

We look forward to all your ongoing and continued support as we continue to serve communities of children, youth and their families who have been impacted by HIV/AIDS.

INTRODUCTION

The Teresa Group is Canada's oldest community-based charitable organization specifically serving children, youth and their families affected by HIV/AIDS. As a comprehensive pediatric HIV provider of support services, The Teresa Group works with approximately 500 families and over 600 children and youth who are impacted by HIV and AIDS. The organization provides leadership through example, information, education, and innovation.

For many children and youth, being affected by HIV/AIDS can have a negative impact on mental health. Children and young adults living with, or affected by HIV/AIDS, may endure ongoing stress related to worrying about their own health, or that of a family member. The ongoing stigma and discrimination associated with HIV can also negatively affect self-esteem and one's sense of self-worth. Many of the families associated with The Teresa Group face ongoing challenges related to immigration, poverty, income and food insecurity and housing; these factors can negatively impact a child or a young adult's sense of wellbeing as well as their current and future mental health. Feelings of depression and anxiety are not uncommon among this group of children and young adults.

Given these many possible negative impacts, The Teresa Group conducts a one-week camp for children and youth impacted by HIV/AIDS. It was begun in the hope that the program would allow children and youth affected by HIV/AIDS a chance to connect with peers facing similar challenges, gain a sense of belonging within a supportive community and reduce their isolation. The goals of the camp are to build support, learn life skills to help empower them to live self-sufficient, independent, productive lives, and most importantly to have fun.

To help assess how well the camp achieved these goals, The Teresa Group undertook an evaluation; the results of that evaluation are discussed here. Where applicable, results from the current year are compared to previous years since the same evaluation framework was followed in multiple years (although slight modifications were made year to year).

METHODOLOGY

To measure the shorter-term goals of the camp, this year evaluation methods included:

- A survey completed by the participating camper at the end of Camp Mandala.
- A survey completed by the Camp Counsellor.
- A focus group for the Camp Counsellors.

The camper outcomes assessed included:

- Emotional intelligence.
- Friendships and social connections.
- Physical activity levels.
- Personal development and self-confidence, and
- Other learnings and benefits.

Camper and counsellor surveys also included some process items related to satisfaction with the camp. Camp counsellors evaluated the training and support provided.

RESPONSE RATES

Overall response rates were similar between stakeholder groups. Out of the 24 youth who attended, 24 gave survey responses for a 100% completion rate, a high number that compares similarly to the 2016 and 2017 and 2018 response rates (100%, 93.8%, and 98.3% respectively). Out of the 11 counsellors, 11 gave responses for a response rate of 41.7% (compared to 17 out of 22 counsellors in 2017, 77.3%, and 10 out of 24, 41.7% in 2018). In the counsellor focus group only 9 of 11 attended the session, corresponding to 81%.

There were more female campers 75%% (18) than male campers 25% (6). The average camper age was 12.04. The attendance from Toronto and Ottawa was 50% each (12 campers from each city).

Year	Females	Males	Average Age
2023	75%	25%	12.04
2018	58.6%	41.4%	12.2
2017	65.2%	34.8%	12.7
2016	51%	49%	12.3
2015	58.5%	36.6%	12.1

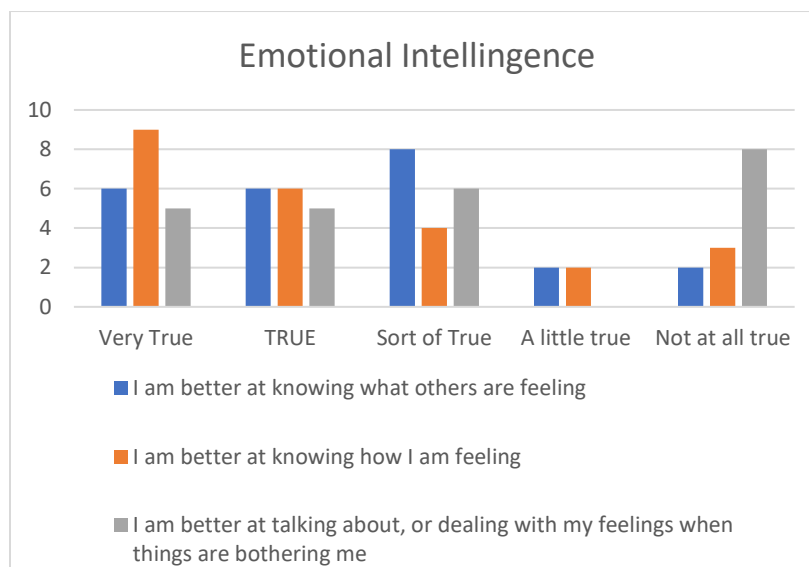
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

The following figures illustrate the changes in emotional intelligence experienced by campers because of the camp.

"I've learned to be accountable for your actions even if you don't think you are wrong"
(Female, 15)

"I think since coming to Camp I have been able to express my feelings more"
(Female, 12)

"I have learned that people are different in how they express their feelings and the best way to know for sure is to talk one-on-one with the person and trying to sort it act maturely without invalidating them"
(Female, 16)"



During the counsellor focus group, there were improvements across all of the components of emotional intelligence when comparing the campers at the end of camp to their first 48 hours.

FRIENDSHIP AND SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Positive outcomes can be observed around friendship as in previous years. The following figures illustrate the proportion of campers who made friends, learned how to be a good friend and maintained friendships after the camp.

“Being a good friend is being nice, caring for each other, watching over each other” (Female, 11)

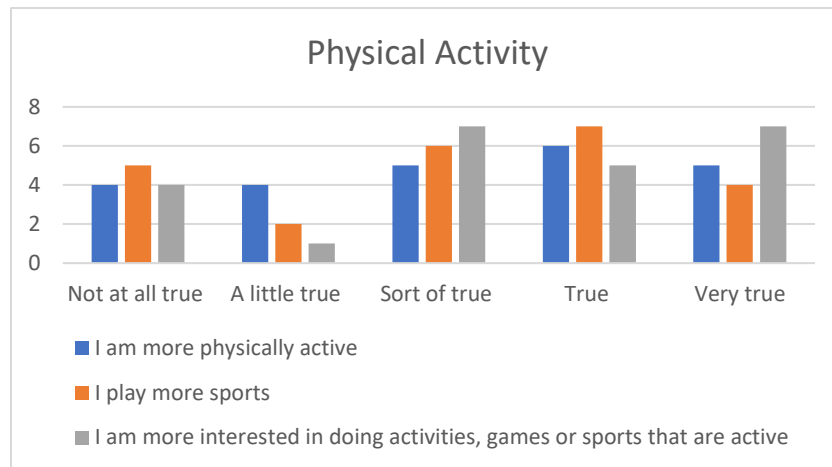
“I have learned that I have to ask to my campmates for permission to use something and I have to share” (Male, 10)

“Being a good friend is caring, sharing and helping” (Male, 12)



PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Campers reported that since attending camp, the campers were more physical, played more sports, and were more interested in activities and games that are more active.



“I feel like the activities have made me more open to trying sports out of my comfort zone, which is really nice” (Female, 15)

“I am outside more than when I am at home” (Male, 9)

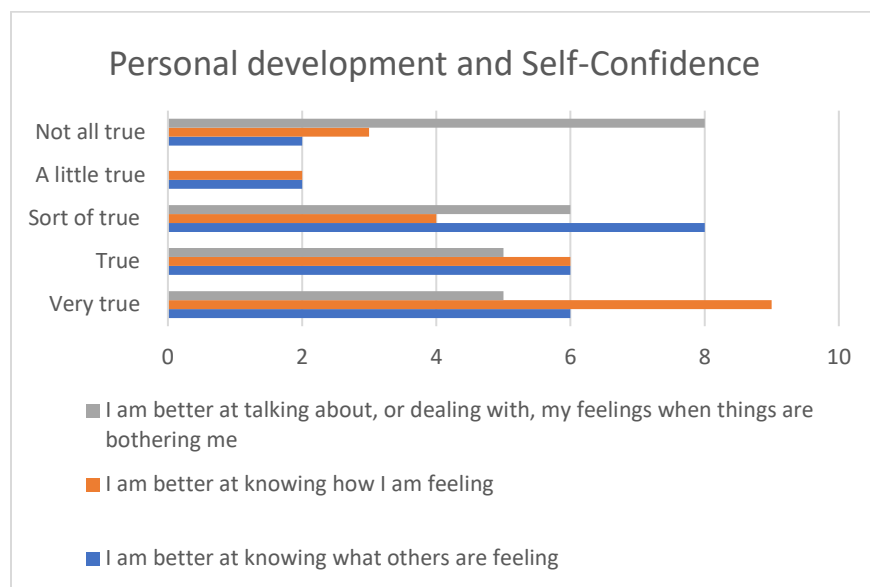
“I feel happy when I play the sports” (Female, 9)

“I started to love running and playing games” (Female, 11)

According to the counselors, there were improvements across all the components of physical activity when comparing the campers at the end of camp to their first 48 hours.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

Personal development and self-confidence were assessed using nine different aspects including but not limited to independence, physical activity, decision making, confidence, ability to try new things, accomplishment, taking responsibility and ownership, knowing limits and leadership.



"Knowing that my cabin campers were experiencing similar things to me, I feel less alone" (Female, 15)

"I learned how to deal with my feelings or others" (Female, 11)

I learned to be more open and to take risk (Female, 15)

"I have learned that I can take care of myself and I'm much more responsible and independent than I thought" (Female, 12)

"I learned to be responsible" (Male, 12)

The campers themselves attested to improved independence, responsibility, confidence, decision making and leadership capacity.

The counselors also rated the campers on items of self-confidence. According to them, there were improvements across all the components of self-confidence when comparing the campers at the end of camp to their first 48 hours.



"It made me feel better because at the talent show me and the cabin members went on stage and we sang a song and we danced and it made me feel much better at myself" (Male, 10)

"My friends make me feel better about myself and the sports and activities" (Female, 11)

"I feel better about myself from my experiences in this Camp because my campmates were kind and continuously uplifted me. I also received lots of motivation from the staff during activities and that helped me be more active and feel better about myself" (Female, 16)

"Camp is a place that I call my safe place cause it's the only place I can act like myself without worrying about what everyone thinks. At Camp I can accept me for me and not anyone else" (Female)

"I don't like outside, but I can have fun" (Male, 16)

OTHER LEARNINGS AND BENEFITS

Young people were asked to comment on any other ways that camp might have benefitted them. In addition to the above benefits mentioned, some broad categories to their responses included:

- Learned how to calm down, relax and play.
- I feel like I have learned a lot.
- Find what we are good at and push us to try it.
- I have learned a bit more English.
- I have learned how to swim.
- I learnt surviving skills.
- I learned to enjoy myself.
- It has helped me find out something that I'm good at and skills I can improve.

Counsellors felt that the Camp had significantly contributed many facets to the development of young people including social connections, self-confidence and personal development, emotional intelligence, and physical activities. While some have of these have been discussed above some of the additional quotes from counsellors attest to some of the benefits:

- Improved confidence (self-esteem) and independence and ability to cope outside of home.
- Made more friends and improved social skills including sharing and acceptance.
- Improved communication and interaction skills including listening.
- Participated in physical and outdoor activities.
- Improved skills to handle more responsibility.
- Improved decision-making ability and leadership skills
- Young people had fun; the camp made them happy.

OVERALL EXPERIENCE

As in previous years, Camp Mandala was successful in 2023. Both young people and counsellors rated their camp experience highly. Participants saw marked improvements in their social connections, physical activity levels, emotional intelligence and personal development and self-confidence. Many campers echoed sentiments of joy, happiness and love for the camp and look forward to the next year.