



1 Summer Camp

Summer camps are special, but this one is truly magical! Nestled deep in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Camp Inner Light overlooks a shimmering freshwater lake in Virginia.

For one unforgettable week, kids ages 7 to 11 enjoy classic camp adventures—splashing in the cool lake, fishing off the rustic wooden dock, roasting hot dogs and gooey marshmallows over a crackling campfire, and hiking in the lush natural woods.

But this isn't just any summer camp. It's a magical empowerment camp where kids learn how to build self-esteem and confidence, manage their emotions, and cultivate gratitude and mindfulness.

The camp is lovingly owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Wilson, who founded it after retiring. Mr. Wilson, a former naval officer known as "Mr. Fixit," keeps the cabins sturdy and the grounds pristine. Mrs. Wilson, once a leadership instructor, now pours her passion into shaping future leaders.

The kids call her Mimi. Tall and graceful, she carries an air of wisdom, her salt-and-pepper brown hair resting gently on her shoulders. Her warm presence makes every child feel safe, seen, and valued.

On the last morning of camp, Mimi gathers the children for a closing ceremony in the large open field in the middle of the cabins. As they sit cross-legged on the lawn

and feel the warmth of the sun, she says, “Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths to settle down and get centered.”

“Who would like to share something they love about themselves and something they are grateful for?”

Grace, a shy 9-year-old, hesitantly raises her hand. Her voice is small but brave. “I like my long blonde hair... and I’m really glad my tangles are finally gone.” She takes a deep breath. “I’m also grateful for making new friends this week.”

Cal, an energetic 10-year-old, bolts his hand upward and shouts, “I like my friendly personality! And I’m grateful for catching a five-pound bass—and for Mr. Wilson

helping me take it off the hook!” He stretches his arms wide to show everyone the size of his big fish.

After all the children share, Mimi instructs them to stand in a circle facing each other, and she mysteriously reveals a glowing ball of light between her hands. The children gasp in amazement!

“What the heck is that?” Luisa blurts out.

Between Mimi’s hands floats a ball of light, shimmering with tiny golden flecks, the size of a bowling ball. With a slow, deliberate motion, she rotates her hands, and the swirling light pulses with warmth.

“I invite you to take this ball of light and place it in your heart.”

She passes the ball of light to Reid, a funny 7-year-old boy with sandy brown hair. Reid carefully balances the ball of light between his hands and then pushes it into his chest. He smiles and says, “That was epic,” as he passes the ball to Grace.

Grace balances it between her small hands and exclaims, “Wow, it is light as a feather!” This continues around the circle until everyone receives the ball of light.

Finally, Jake looks up at Mimi. His brow furrows with curiosity.

“Mimi... what is this ball of light?”

Mimi's eyes twinkle. She presses a gentle hand to her heart. "The light holds everything you've learned at camp—self-love, courage, honesty, the power to manage your feelings, positive thinking, energy, and gratitude."

She pauses, then adds, "You can access the light anytime by closing your eyes, taking a few deep breaths, and placing your hands over your hearts."

Krystal, a girl with dark braids and a voice like sunshine, reaches for Mimi's hand. She tilts her head up, blinking back a few tears. "I'm gonna miss you, Mimi," she whispers.

The other children nod in agreement, their faces filled with emotion. Without hesitation, they

rush forward, wrapping Mimi in a giant group hug.

Mimi brushes away a tear of her own. With a warm smile, she reassures them, “We’ll be together again at winter holiday camp.”

Then, in a clear, sweet voice, Krystal begins to sing. “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine...”

The other children join in, their voices lifting into the morning sky.

Hand in hand, arm in arm, they walk toward the main lodge, where their families wait. As they wave goodbye, they promise to stay in touch, already counting the days until they meet again.

As Mimi watches the last of the children leave, she clasps her hands together and breathes deeply.

She couldn't help but wonder—how would each of these children use their light in the world?

Reflective Questions

If you were at this camp, which activity would you enjoy the most—swimming, fishing, hiking, or roasting marshmallows? Why?

Why do you think Mimi encourages the children to name something they love about themselves each day? How could this practice help you?