

My Camp Koby Experience

Shirley Mamiye



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Counselors and campers baking challot

I have always wanted to spend my summer vacation fruitfully. Rather than simply sitting around, I longed to participate in something special, something inspiring. Through Yeshiva of Flatbush High School, I heard about Camp Koby, a summer-camp dedicated to helping young Israeli victims of terrorism.

In Israel, Arabs stoned a boy named Koby Mandell while he was exploring a cave. His parents, Seth and Sherry Mandell, turned this tragedy into something positive by founding Camp Koby, which gives children that were affected by terrorism a safe place to laugh, smile and have fun. It's truly an amazing place, the kids all have something in common, and they are the only ones that can truly understand one another's pain.

Wanting to help, I decided to become a counselor in this camp's American program. The day I left my family for Israel, I was worried about many things. Was my luggage too heavy? Would I miss my family? Would I fit in? My concerns all proved to be unfounded, for when I arrived and saw a camp that was filled with energy and happiness, the inviting atmosphere made me quickly forget all of my worries.

The camp's purpose was twofold; have a great time with the kids, and help them let out their frustrations through a wide variety of therapies. Treatments varied, but all were so much fun that nobody knew the exercises were intended as therapy. There was movement therapy, art therapy, yoga laughter, animal therapy and countless others.

Campers and counselors took a variety of field trips, including trips to theme and water parks. By spending



Shirley Mamiye and Israeli campers



Gaining confidence caring for the horses.

My Camp...



Chemdat and Shirley Mamiye



*Top: Shirley, Eliyana and Chanabella,
Bottom: Naomi, (My Israeli counsellor)*

time with these children, I came to realize that each child's individual needs were different, and that they were all special to me. Despite the language barrier, I grew very close to my campers, especially the ones with whom I shared a bunk. Chana-Bella, Eliyana and Avi-Shag, I miss you guys!

Unfortunately, during the time I was there, there was still a war going on up north. My parents insisted that I take a flight home, but I just couldn't do it. The staff assured us that we were safe, and the camp meant so much to me. I was too involved, too committed; I was definitely not ready to go back home to New Jersey just yet. Those kids have had so much hardship to deal with, and simply making them laugh at my broken Hebrew was fulfilling. I did my best to show that I really care about them, and I was able to learn from them, as well.

As a Syrian girl, the camp changed my perspective on life. It taught me what is truly important in life. I'm glad I was able to make a difference. □