



Jake Tovar

Camp *Coral Kids* by Jake Tovar

Forget about the camp songs. Forget about the relay races and the camp fires. Forget about the arts and crafts, field trips and even petting an alligator! Forget about the rush Abby, an eight year old camper with diabetes, felt when she was cheered on by forty eight other campers after she hit a homerun to win a kickball game. Because what's really important is when Abby needed to get her blood sugar checked after the game, there weren't any curious stares. When it's all said and done, the connection campers share because they live with diabetes is what made their experience at Camp Coral Kids so extraordinary.

Four days into camp, the kids went around the room and shared their encounters with bullying. One camper discussed a classmate who once ran up to her in PE and yelled, "Ha ha! You can't do what I can do!" The camper unfortunately had low blood sugar that day and was unable to participate in the school activity. Another camper talked about how other students have tried to steal his insulin pump, the device used for the administration of insulin. As they went around the circle and told their stories, the other campers nodded in agreement, attesting to the unfortunate prevalence of bullying.

Camp Coral Kids' strict "No Bullying" policy is important to have, but it surely was not the only factor which prevented the campers from teasing one other. The camper's experiences with feeling isolated and detached from a group because of their diabetes were, in my opinion, what made all the difference. And as a result, each and every camper made it a point not to ever single out another camper.

With all the struggles which come with diabetes, there definitely is a lot of good. One study has shown students with diabetes perform better in college than students without diabetes, which is not surprising to me in the least. There is a maturation that occurs when a five year old girl needs to count how many carbohydrates her snack contains. I can't even get my five year old cousin to wipe the food from his mouth after dinner.

One of the most rewarding moments at Camp Coral Kids occurred while I was playing with a camper by the pool. I asked him if he thought his blood sugar was high or low, and he replied, "Oh man! I forgot I had diabetes for a second." Now, the last thing a counselor wants is for a seven year old to forget to monitor his blood sugar. But looking past this, it was incredibly rewarding for the ten minutes we spent playing together, the camper did not need to worry about his diabetes. And that, truly, is the most exceptional thing Camp Coral Kids has to offer: a place where kids can feel more comfortable with their diabetes than anywhere else.

Jake Tover, twenty two, is a Broward Health Coral Springs Medical Center marketing intern. Tover spent two weeks at Camp Coral Kids as part of his summer internship. He recently graduated from Florida State University with a B.A. in Creative Writing, with minors in Psychology and Law, and will begin law school at Nova Southeastern University this fall. In his free time, Tover often can be found composing movie screenplays. [LM](#)