

THE CAMPFIRE EFFECT

How to Engineer Belonging in a Disconnected World By Matt Kaufman | Available February 14, 2026

ABOUT THE BOOK:

What if the most effective model for building thriving teams, classrooms, and families has been hiding in plain sight at summer camp?

For over a century, summer camps have been quietly perfecting the art of belonging. They take strangers and turn them into tribes in a matter of days. They balance challenge and support in ways that help people grow. And they do it all without PowerPoint, performance reviews, or strategic planning documents.

The Campfire Effect reveals the neuroscience behind what makes camp work. It examines five neurochemicals that drive human connection and shows how camp naturally creates the conditions for each one to flourish. Then it offers practical frameworks for applying these lessons to workplaces, classrooms, and families.

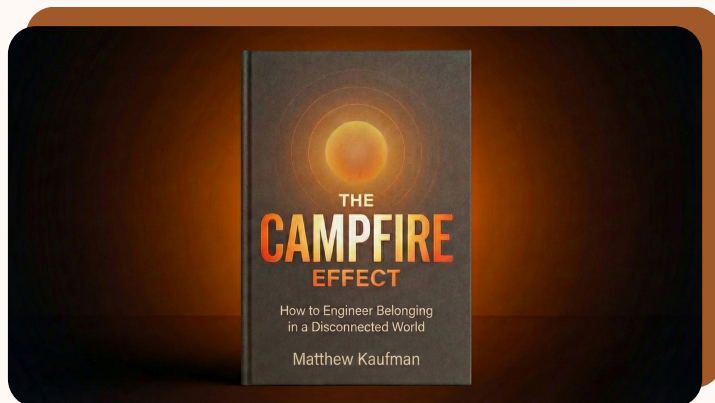
This is not a book about summer camp. It is a book about belonging, using camp as the lens.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR :

Matt Kaufman has spent 40 years in summer camp as a camper, counselor, and director. He currently serves as Director at Camp Ramaquois, where he has worked for more than three decades creating environments where children and staff thrive.



Matt writes about leadership, community, and technology for publications including Camping Magazine. He is also the author of, 'The Summer Camp MBA: 50 Leadership Lessons from Camp to Career.' His work sits at the intersection of community and technology, exploring how intentional design creates the conditions for human flourishing.



TALKING POINTS :

The Leadership Laboratory

Why a 19-year-old camp counselor learns more about leadership in one summer than most people learn in a decade of corporate work.

The Science of Belonging

The five neurochemicals (oxytocin, dopamine, cortisol, serotonin, endorphins) that drive human connection, and how to engineer environments that produce them.

Why AI Makes Camp More Necessary

As technology handles more cognitive tasks, the uniquely human skills camp teaches become more valuable, not less.

The Hybrid Work Problem

What the "campfire circle" teaches us about why some teams thrive in remote and hybrid environments while others fall apart.

Intentional vs. Accidental Community

Most families, teams, and classrooms stumble into community by accident. Camp builds it on purpose. The difference is design.

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For review copies or interview requests, contact Matt directly.

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