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Zena Dadouch, B.A.



Zena Dadouch moved from Connecticut to Damascus, Syria with her family when she was four years old. After living in Damascus for 13 years, Zena moved back to the United States in 2011 at age 17 to attend the University of California in Berkeley, where she earned her bachelor's degree in psychology. She is currently working towards her Ph.D. in clinical psychology at Northern Illinois University, with a focus on trauma and PTSD. Zena's research interests include investigating variables that predict outcome following trauma; specifically, she is interested in conducting research on resilience post-trauma in refugees, and is currently surveying Syrian refugees for her thesis requirement at NIU. Even though selective mutism is not trauma-based (a common misconception), anxious avoidance is a prevailing presentation among those with anxiety disorders, including PTSD, selective mutism, and other anxiety conditions. As a bilingual Arabic/English speaker, Zena is bound to make a difference as a future clinician. Furthermore, Zena is familiar with the "silence period" that can manifest in refugee children when learning a new language and culture. Zena plans to apply the exposure therapy skills she observes and learns through Adventure Camp not only to help kids with selective mutism, but also to help in her future work with PTSD and refugees. Zena is excited to return to the diverse Adventure Camp team this summer, and to keep helping facilitate amazing strides in kids who are using their Brave!

Q+A with Zena

Why are you returning to Adventure Camp for a second year?

Adventure Camp was such a unique and amazing learning experience that one year was not enough; I had to come back for more! I cannot wait to meet the new campers and to see the returning campers and to grow from this experience as a clinician.

What's your favorite part of Adventure Camp?

My favorite parts were watching the kids at the gift store, the sticker sheets and how much they encouraged them, and the Dairy Queen trip, of course!

What is the biggest take-away you've experienced from Adventure Camp?

My biggest take-away from last year was how much easier it is to help the younger kiddos struggling with SM than those who are older. Helping parents understand this disorder and making treatments available for them and their children is so important!

How does this camp, in your opinion, have lasting effects on children with SM?

Watching campers go from not uttering a single word to having full-on conversations with other campers was so moving and evidence for the effects it has on children's lives. The difference in the children's willingness to speak with others, just during one week's time, will absolutely have a lasting effect on their lives!

How do you use your brave?

I use my brave every day now that I started a new job with a new and challenging population, and I cannot wait to see the campers using theirs!