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## Kristina Kochanova, M.A.



Originally from Ukraine, Kristina graduated from Elmhurst College with a bachelor's degree in psychology, earned her Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology from Northern Illinois University (NIU), and is currently working towards her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, Child Focus, at NIU. Kristina moved to the United States from the Ukraine at age 12. Through this experience, she gained the value of working hard for what you want in life, which motivates her passion to work with low-income children and families. Kristina heard about Adventure Camp through her colleagues at NIU, and she felt it would be an ideal training to prepare her to work with children as a future clinician, especially for low-

income populations and at-risk youth who may not have access to private specialized care. Kristina has experience working with at-risk children and adolescents by assisting clinical psychologists who utilize evidence-based techniques to treat youth behavioral problems. She has also actively provided support, modeled beneficial behaviors, and taught coping strategies to at-risk youth dealing with academic, personal, and community issues. Kristina has pursued research experience with families and children with various emotional and behavioral concerns such as anxiety and ADHD., She served as a behavioral consultant at Opportunity House providing assessment and therapeutic services to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Currently, she is excited to start her rotation at Advanced Therapeutic Solutions in July 2018 to work with children, adolescents, families, and adults with anxiety and related conditions. This summer, Kristina looks forward to meeting all of the campers, receiving training that facilitates the development of her clinical skills with child anxiety, and furthering her knowledge of selective mutism, as well as spreading the word about selective mutism to her colleagues and professors.

## Q&A with Kristina

**What was your experience like starting middle school as an immigrant to the United States? Do you think that this experience in any way helped you to relate to children with selective mutism?**

It was great moving to the United States when I was in Middle School! I really enjoyed learning the language, the culture, and meeting new people. However, it was a huge change because I did have to learn a lot of information to function daily, which can be overwhelming and scary. For instance, I had to learn a new language and ways of communicating with my teachers, peers, and people around me to be able to communicate simple things like wanting to say “hello” or explaining how my day went or what I needed help with. I was lucky enough to have amazing teachers and classmates that were helpful in my transition, which helped me pick up the language quickly to a point where a lot of people now may not notice I am not a native English speaker. There was a period of time I was not communicating with others because I did not have the language skills to do so, which made me feel powerless and a little scared. This experience can help me relate to children with selective mutism because they also may feel powerless and scared, and I can imagine the difficulties they are experiencing everyday because communication is key to our daily lives. Ultimately, I know that going out there and using your brave can help kids with selective mutism, as it helped me, to regain their sense of control and promote their well-being in all areas of life.

**What made you want to be an Adventure Camp counselor?**

This will be my second summer at Adventure Camp and I am excited to continue working with a team of professionals that want to help children with selective mutism. I first heard about Adventure Camp from my graduate program and thought this would be a great opportunity to learn an evidence-based treatment for selective mutism and interact with amazing children. I heard about amazing experiences and successes of Adventure Camp from professionals and other graduate students in my program and got to see them firsthand at camp last year. By incorporating the skills learned from Adventure Camp, this experience will allow me to grow professionally and challenge myself to provide better services to children with anxiety.

**How can you integrate this experience into your academic or professional goals? What do you hope to take away from this experience?**

As a Ph.D. graduate student clinician, I am dedicated to learning about different conditions that impact wellness. Learning about selective mutism and an evidence-

based treatment for children with selective mutism will expand my knowledge about this specific condition and how to better provide treatment to this population. I plan to use the knowledge from this experience to become a better clinician that would use this treatment with clients that have selective mutism. I also hope to gain amazing memories and experiences with campers who are working hard to use their brave!

**How do you "use your brave?"**

I use my brave every day by meeting new people, learning about different experiences, and trying things that are new and a little scary. Our world is filled with the unexpected, which can make people nervous. The important part is to be open to trying new things and learning from those experiences. Even though I get nervous in new situations, I try my best to not let that stop me from doing something new and exciting! Most of the time, I am rewarded for using my brave by getting to know new people, having fun, and gaining more confidence in myself and my abilities.

**If you could talk to your camper now, what would you tell him/her? What would you want him/her to know?**

I would let my camper know that we will have a lot of fun at Adventure Camp! There are many opportunities to play, learn, and use our brave. We will have an amazing time with lots of other kids and counselors that are also doing something new and exciting, which can be scary. We are all in this together! The important part is to try your best, be open to doing something new, and have fun!