



Important Information for Parents attending the AoM with children 7 and under

So much about having young children at the Art of Mentoring is a delight: seeing your child woven into the multi-generational AoM village; watching your children's delight as they romp with the youth staff; sharing meals with other parents of young ones; and witnessing your child's growing independence within the community are all elements we see parents enjoying every year at the Art of Mentoring.

And there are aspects to having a young child at AoM that can be very challenging. If you have never attended before, you may find AoM to be an intense experience. There is always a lot going on, starting early in the morning and wending late into the night. The stimulation of the dining hall is high and can be overwhelming. In addition, the transformational experience of the adult program may bring up strong emotions for you, which can be challenging to process while also caring for a young child. Just getting yourself up and ready for the day can be taxing enough, and getting your child ready as well while camping with primitive conditions can be exhausting. Your child may also need extra care and connection with you, pulling you out of your adult programming when you would really love to play with the grown-ups!

We don't share this to deter you from bringing your child! On the contrary, having young children at AoM adds a special joy that feeds the entire community. We just want you to come with realistic expectations around how your adult experience may need to be adjusted in order to meet the needs of your child within this new environment.

Having experimented with many ways to work with parents and young children at the AoM over the past 15 years, we are aware that every family is different, and every child is different. Some young children are ready to run off with the youth staff without a glance back at mom or dad. Others take half the week adjusting to the new environment and weaning themselves of the comfort of familiar arms to hold them.

For this reason, **we require that parents children 3 and under either participate in the Oaks & Acorns Program or bring a designated caregiver** that will be connected with the child all week. This allows the parent to fully attend the program, while keeping the emotional needs of the child fully met. The caregiver/young child pair is welcome to participate in the youth program, or stay close to the village where there are staff facilitating the village hearth experience. We support the pair to meet the needs of the child in whatever way we can.

For families of children 4-5 years old, bringing a caregiver is recommended but not required. This can be decided in conversation with Dan Yacobellis, our Youth Program Director.

The following questions may help guide you to a decision about whether bringing a caregiver is the right step for your family:

- Does your child currently participate in outdoor programs?
- Has your child been involved in full day activities without you or other family members?
- Does your child have napping needs? What happens if naps are skipped?
- Is potty training complete?
- How would you feel if your child wanted you to stay with him or her after lunch instead of returning to your Adult Program?
- Are you prepared to miss major components of your program if your child needs you?
- How does your child flow with changes to his or her routine?
- How do you think your child would do if you are involved in evening programming without them?

For parents with children aged 6-12, your child can participate in the youth program independently, and we do not anticipate that your adult programming will be curtailed, with the exception of some evening programming. Our youth staff is off duty after dinner, and you will need to put your child to bed before the evening programming is complete. However, each child is different, and no one knows your child better than you do! Please discuss your child's anticipated needs with Dan Yacobellis, the Youth Program coordinator before AoM. Dan can be reached at miye_yelo@yahoo.com.

Thank you!

The AoM Staff