

## CHAPTER 8

# MAXIMIZE YOUR CHILD'S ENJOYMENT

(and yours)

### WRITE LOTS OF LETTERS - but not too much!

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Getting a letter means a lot to your child(ren). Even before they get to camp, write in advance so letters are there in the first few days. Mail service is slow both to and from camp. Letters can take 10 days to arrive.

Don't get carried away! Parents who fax every day can sometimes, although well intentioned, make a child homesick. We have had some campers that have received a letter every day, some even three letters a day and often those kids tend to be more homesick from so much mail. Although campers need to hear from their parents, please understand that many campers do better with mail 2-3 times a week rather than short faxes or letters each day.

Note: if you live out of the country and you find mail is taking a long time feel free to phone the office and we will arrange to get a letter to you via another means of communication.

### UNDERSTANDING LETTERS HOME

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If your child sounds distressed in a letter, do not be overly concerned. Remember that the letter was written about a week beforehand. Campers' letters home are usually a "snapshot" of their feelings at that particular moment. We know that when kids feel upset, they'll use a letter to express their frustration. These moments are most common in their first few days of camp. It is probable that an hour after writing it, they're up, onto something new and back to being themselves. We are aware of the kids' emotional swings, but we can use any information we get. If upsetting letters become a trend, let us know. EACH YEAR WE RECEIVE PARENTS PHONING IN A PANIC ABOUT A BAD LETTER AND IN ALMOST ALL CASES 99 out of 100, the child is having a great time but used the letter to get out his frustrations at that moment. Also many times it takes awhile for a camper to adjust. There is much truth to the famous song "Hello Muddah":

Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh  
(A Letter From Camp)  
Hello Muddah, hello Fadduh,  
Here I am at Camp Granada.  
Camp is very entertaining,  
And they say we'll have some fun if it stops raining.  
I went hiking with Joe Spivey.  
He developed poison ivy.  
You remember Leonard Skinner.  
He got ptomaine poisoning last night after dinner.  
All the counselors hate the waiters,  
And the lake has alligators.  
And the head coach wants no sissies,  
So he reads to us from something called Ulysses.  
Now I don't want this should scare ya,  
But my bunk mate has malaria.  
You remember Jeffrey Hardy.  
They're about to organize a searching party.

Take me home, oh Muddah, Fadduh,  
Take me home, I hate Granada,  
Don't leave me out here in the forest, where  
I might get eaten by a bear.  
Take me home, I promise I will not make noise,  
Or mess the house with other boys.  
Oh please don't make me stay,  
I've been here one whole day.  
Dearest Fadduh, darling Muddah,  
How's my precious little Bruddah?  
Let me come home if you miss me.  
I would even let Aunt Bertha hug and kiss me.  
Wait a minute, it stopped hailing.  
Guys are swimming, guys are sailing.  
Playing baseball, gee that's better.  
**Muddah, Fadduh, kindly disregard this letter!**

## UNDERSTANDING HOMESICKNESS

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Homesickness is normal. In fact, it is developmentally appropriate. This is basically the first thing we tell a child who is missing home. They need to know that what they may be feeling is not abnormal or unusual. And it does not strike exclusively around any particular age, although it is more prevalent among the youngest campers for whom this is the first time away from home. We do know that in the vast majority of cases, any homesickness is over quickly.

When dealing with homesickness, we give one-on-one attention, and the staff involved may be anyone from the counsellors to the camp directors. Our goal is to keep the children busy – at first doing the things most familiar and enjoyable to them. We are also wary of the point when too much personalized attention by a staff becomes used as a crutch instead of help. At that point, the emphasis will turn to getting them to be fully attentive and involved in their activity of the moment. Another tactic is to give the child a role in a game, project, show, or even a harmless prank (like throwing a director in the water), which enhances their self-esteem, and importance in the cabin group. Usually homesickness subsides after a day or two, because the pace of camp life is so busy and distracting from thoughts about home. The good news is... like all things, time heals homesickness too.

Usually the letters sound worse than the reality at camp. Nevertheless, we encourage you to call us if you sense discouraging trends in your child's letters home. We welcome you sharing signs of unhappiness with us. It helps us get to the bottom of any real problems. But rest assured that attentive caring adults are caring for your child. More information on how we handle homesickness is available at [www.manitoucamp.com/homesickness.htm](http://www.manitoucamp.com/homesickness.htm)

## CAMPER INFORMATION FORMS, WATERSKIING/WAKEBOARDING/SWIM

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At Manitou we take pride in encouraging all of our campers to expose themselves to as many activities as possible and try new programs every year. Manitou is about having a well-rounded experience while also allowing campers (as they get older) an opportunity to focus on a list of activities. Regardless of what type of program your child prefers, there is nothing better than hearing about campers who do activities for the first time. In fact, many of our oldest campers have greatly benefited from learning new skills and trying activities for the very first time!

**PLEASE UNDERSTAND IT IS OUR PHILOSOPHY THAT KIDS SHOULD BE EXPOSED TO AS MANY NEW ACTIVITIES AND THEREFORE IT IS ASSUMED THAT OUR FRESHKIDS AND SOPHOMORES TAKE THEIR ACTIVITIES EVERY OTHER DAY (unless swim or theatre require it).** They can choose from over 30 activities and they get to make those decisions with your input (as indicated below). These are the years when they should be exposed to all facets of the camp program. When they are juniors and seniors they can start to specialize and ski or wakeboard every day if they wish but **due to numbers not twice a day. In addition to once a day, however, many campers ski early morning if they wish.**

We will provide a form in the spring, allowing you as parents to indicate any specific instructions with respect to your child's activity program and anything else we need to know. Please be realistic and if you indicate a specific request, please discuss it with your child ahead of time so that it allows us to follow through without any negative feedback from your child.

**SWIM:** Please note that due to the different swim levels in a pool versus a camp, the fact that some campers are participating in Red Cross swimming levels and others in LifeSaving, it impossible for us give your child a particular level, but we can instruct and test them so that you know what they are at once they commence classes in the city. We do test for Bronze Med and Bronze Cross at camp.

## CAMPER INFORMATION AND ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT TO TELL US!

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On this same form you have one final opportunity to let us know about anything that will help make your child's summer a happy and safe one and also assist the camp in being prepared for any possible issues that could arise.

### **PARENTS HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO ADVISE US OF ISSUES IN ADVANCE AND TO GET THEIR FORMS IN BY MAY 1st**

If you do not provide proper information as required on the application, activity and information form, medical form, or on the parent information page, regarding any physical, social, emotional, psychological or other relevant issue regarding your child, (including any prior school discipline, suspension, etc) and/or do not provide information on historical visits to psychologists/psychiatrists you are being unfair to your child and placing your child and Camp Manitou at a huge disadvantage. If we have proper information we can be prepared to deal with any concerns with regard to your child and will make every effort to do so. We must be informed of any experience or issue that could affect not only your child **but also other children at the camp**. Also, please make sure we are kept up to date on all such matters once you complete the personal information page, by contacting us right up until camper arrival. If something has occurred just before camp that could affect your child or others we need to know.



If you did not provide proper disclosure and your child has acted inappropriately or against camp policy, we will have no choice but to act on a zero tolerance policy. **If we are informed we can do our job.** By informing us well in advance of camp we can better advise our staff on how best to deal with your child, encourage your child in the right direction while at the same time allowing our staff to be extra aware of signals or clues relating to the success of your child's stay at Manitou. We are always better off knowing more than less, for the benefit of the entire Manitou family!

**IF YOUR FORMS ARRIVE ON TIME (by May 1<sup>st</sup> received), THE CAMP DIRECTOR WILL personally double check each and every form, review them, and make sure they are fully understood.** If the forms come late, but by June 1<sup>st</sup> the information will be inputted and the counselors and appropriate medical staff, unithead or otherwise will be given such information **but it will not be reviewed by the CAMP DIRECTOR as we are already busy preparing for camp, often at camp with groups and preparing for pre-camp.**

**PLEASE TRY TO GET YOUR INFORMATION IN ON TIME!**