

## THE IMPORTANCE OF 'DOING' CAMP (as seen through our eyes☺)

If we asked most parents why they are sending their child to camp, most would say something like this "So she will be more confident, to learn to work well with others and develop some new skills at a bunch of activities. It's good for her to be away from home... away from her parent(s). And I want her to make friends...maybe some who are different from her friends at home... unique friendships that will last a lifetime. I want her to get away from the pressure of the city and be herself, and not rely on technology but rather have good old fashioned fun."

So, we all know camp is fun, but it also provides community living with independence, away from home, in an outdoor recreational setting. So its no surprise that camps accelerate children's development in ways that school and home do not, as it provides an experience that promotes social skills, independence, healthy risk taking, and self-esteem. The result: children at camp gain one of the most important character traits, **resilience**.

We all know that having challenges in life is necessary to create strength of character. It's a balancing act. When we learn to lose, or fail a task, or are hurt and recover, that is how we grow up to be confident and empathetic adults. Everyone who attends summer camp, experiences healthy challenges in some form or another, whether they are on a canoe trip, or through mastering numerous camp skills at various activities.

Similarly, having children deal with a camper in their cabin who is being uncooperative or disruptive (although unfortunate) can be a great learning experience, as it may teach a child how to problem solve, how to work together as a group and how to develop patience and understanding.

In addition, physical challenges present conditions that require real work and create healthy, hard working, confident children. Some children "in the city" never experience the responsibilities of cleaning their washroom, the grounds or their table after each meal. These same children are not only learning to look after themselves, more importantly they are gaining an appreciation for helping the people around them.

One of our favourite authors, Wendy Mogul, who wrote "The Blessing of a Skinned Knee" (the title says it all) no doubt has shaped the "Manitou" view of how to help children grow up into healthy happy adults; resilient adults. Sometimes it's ok if life is not perfect for our kids. At camp that may mean having a mouse in the cabin, or running out of a second helping of lunch, or getting back laundry that is one size too small. As Wendy says, "sometimes it's good for kids to be bored, unhappy, disappointed, confused, to feel deprived, to tolerate longing, and to be cold, wet, or hungry for more than one and a half seconds before they graduate from high school. It is good for them to have a crabby, unenlightened, uninspiring fifth grade teacher. Why? Because they are absolutely for sure going to have a crabby, unenlightened, uninspiring boss when they have a job one day."

Now obviously our goal is for your child to have life changing, nurturing counselors, have mice free cabins and lots of great food. But it's how your child is taught to deal with every day "controlled challenges" that allows them to grow up so quickly at summer camp.

At Manitou we ensure that we can attain our ambitious goals for your children without giving in to webcams, online photos and other technologies. We know that you need not be concerned about what might be going on that you can't see. **Instead, you can celebrate the fact that you can't see any of what's going on.** The fact that your children are having an experience **of their own** is what makes camp the most fertile ground for positive youth development and makes them secure and confident. **As parents, you don't really need to see camp happening; you need and want to understand what happened to your child because of camp.**

Our greatest leaders in the world and the happiest people as well, ironically were not all straight 'A' students, instead they have other qualities in common. They are **resilient** as a result of having high levels of emotional intelligence (including **empathy, optimism, good teamwork, patience, a sense of humor**, as well as the ability to bounce back from failure.) Great camps put their emphasis on all these character traits of social development. In most cases, with clear adult supervision, advice and support, your children are far stronger and smarter than we give them credit for. No doubt we are far from perfect but sometimes just a little imperfection within a safe and nurturing environment can go a long way to help making your child's summer a true success.

Looking forward to a safe, fun, and positive Manitou summer.

Mark Diamond and Jeff Wilson