

PHONE CALLS

This letter was sent to parents of campers at a midwestern camp regarding phone calls. It accurately states our policy at Winnebago.

Dear Parents:

With the coming of the electronic age, the telephone has become the primary channel for communication. Coupled with the instant everything (food, entertainment, etc.), it has become the new life style, invading every area of life, creating a new situation for camping - and not a very healthy one for campers.

Here at camp, we live in a kind of primary community within a self-contained environment. The sudden intrusion of the "home" world into the camp world is very jarring to the camper's mind-set, causing an abrupt switching of gears from one world to the next - a collision of two realities in his life, which are normally separated by time and distance. It takes emotional time and energy to adjust and re-enter each world, and is disruptive of the camper's own schedule and plans.

Creative separation is an important ingredient of growth, however difficult it is to realize in this day of immediate gratification. Overnight rail service has been replaced by airline flights, so that even time separation between home and camp has been diminished. Cards and letters respect that separation, giving the kind of distance needed for campers to absorb and accommodate the communications from home.

Therefore, we ask that letters and cards - frequent and regular - be the primary channels for communication while at camp. Otherwise, important lessons of independence and self-reliance beyond the home situation can be short-circuited by a quick call to or from home. And the availability of the telephone can interfere with another important learning: how to plan ahead, by playing into the hands of today's instant gratification mentality, which is not healthy. Whereas telephone calls are gone the moment they happen, letters keep. You will find them delightful, invaluable souvenirs for you and your son of an age, which passes too quickly.

Always feel free to call me at any time concerning a question, a concern or suggestion. Thank you for your understanding and help.

P.S. If you are homesick for your son, please drop him a line saying you're thinking of him, don't lay your own homesickness on his shoulders. Those "think of you" thoughts are always welcome and supportive and can help you re-affirm and re-establish the relationship that you as a person can dearly miss.