



PARENT'S ACCEPTANCE PACKET

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Congratulations and Welcome to this New Adventure!



In the past our focus has been on preparing the student for their travels. Since opening our doors Carpe Diem has long had a goal and a realization that we have a responsibility and an opportunity to prepare the parents of our students as well for this seminal journey. With the help and input of the parents of our "graduates", we created the Carpe Diem **Parent Acceptance Packet**. We hope this information will help frame the experience you undergo as your child is abroad and provide some resources to help you on your own echoing journey.

As one parent said at the end of their student's program: "I realized this program was as much about me and **my** relationship with my child as it was about my child."

Marking this time is equally about graduating adults to the world as it is about letting your young adults transition into full adulthood.

I felt everything we as parents needed was there. Of course I would have loved a really good fortuneteller to help me settle my nerves and tell me all is well when my youngest left. ~ **Fall INDIA Parent**

Inevitably, parents are thrust into their own stages of transition as their child transitions into independence and adulthood. This may be the first time your son or daughter has spent more than a week or two away from home. It may be the first time she or he has ever traveled abroad.

It's not only children who grow. Parents do too. As much as we watch to see what our children do with their lives, they are watching us to see what we do with ours. I can't tell my children to reach for the sun. All I can do is reach for it, myself. ~Joyce Maynard

It may be the first time you've really been forced to see your baby as an independent adult. We are so thankful for the gifts you've given your child, recognizing the hard work in raising them safely in this world. Now, as they are out in the larger global community, we have to reflect on the courage and self-awareness they've developed to embark on an adventure so far from what they've known. As one parent put it, "To a certain extent, a sign of good parenting is a child wanting to leave home..."

REQUIRED GEAR AND EQUIPMENT:

As you and your student were going through the packing list for their journey, you most likely were having some feelings come up about it. And while your student may have been more focused on and excited about the physical aspects of their travels, for you this time is rich with a different journey. Yours is a journey of something less tangible.

This packet will hopefully give you some tools that can become *your* rucksack as you prepare to embark with them in spirit. What will you pack? What kind of container could you use and move in to in order to keep *yourself* connected and in a place of acceptance and enthusiasm in this time of change?



If only this were as easy as hitting REI or EMS for the answers! Figuring this out may take some focused soul-searching on your part. Some of you may vacillate between enthusiasm and worry or anxiety. Congratulations! All of these are normal. As we love to say in the office: 'welcome to the sphere of being human!'

Going away from home at this age signifies a change every parent faces. This is the closing of a chapter in both your lives: a change that by its very nature implies some sense of loss. Your child most likely is unaware of this because they're in adventure-mode. They also have the added advent of being part of a surrogate family of their peers in order to consciously carry them forward. During this time, some people feel the need to pull in tighter, increase their momentum, and "occupy" themselves. Others find solace in the same way their students have – their peers. In all honesty, and in our experience, you'll feel and do aspects of all of these. The

*"Though your child may be **on an island**, remember that **you yourself are not an island**."* ~ Carpe Diem Parent

best advice that we've heard from a parent is to "let them make their own mistakes. I knew I needed to, and I finally did – kicking and screaming all the way."

Different parents experience change and subsequent loss to different degrees. Some experience loss around their changing role. Although you will always be a mother or father, the significance and details of the role must and will change if your child is to functionally mature. Suddenly this person who has depended on you for their every need is gone and you now stand at a crossroads.

Some parents feel loss at the thought they may not be needed anymore. Some parents realize how reliant they've been on being a part of their child's life, their activities and accomplishments. As your child ventures out into potentially new experiences and unfamiliar territory where *they* start making important decisions for themselves, parents are left with the reality of not being able to influence their child's safety, as well as the reality they will not share in this life experience as it unfolds.

In essence, a Carpe Diem parent's journey is one of letting go.

Odds are you've been on training wheels with this eventuality as your child has learned to drive or been dating. Now care of your student has been abdicated to two group leaders who are

virtual strangers to you. The students are in a foreign country where you *really* can't be there to look out for them and are unable to instantly touch base through text messaging. There are a couple of choices here for parents, wrestle with change or learn to let go. Letting go means accepting not always knowing where is your child or what they are up too. Letting go means managing worry or frustration of not hearing from them as frequently as you would like. Ways past parents have been able to let go have been everything from reaching out to a book group, or revisiting an old hobby. There have been many parents who have grown from this transition just as much if not more than their children by trying yoga again, revisiting their own sense of self, or going overseas on their own adventures.



YOUR EMOTIONAL ITINERARY:

How have you handled stressors in the past? Are you the type of parent that seeks out a best friend or spouse to lend an ear? Do you lean on your family or book group? Do you empathize and try to remember what it was like to be at your student's age and developmental level? Do you bottle up anxiety and wait for a justification to allow it to blow? Do you get angry and wonder why? Are you the sort of person that gathers as much information as possible in an attempt to make your journey seem less abstract, and more tangible?

"Change is hard, hard is good. Sometimes, hard is just hard." ~ a graduated CD parent

Grieving is an important part of transition. This is an equally important part of parenting. Teaching kids when to let go is teaching responsibility. This is the next leg of your own journey, one that is just beginning. Just as every student is different and has different proclivities for what their needs are, so it is for you. It is vital to the success of the semester, for you *and* your child, that you realize what effective coping strategy to use.

~ Fall CAM Parent ~

The major issue we dealt with was Matt's homesickness. Because he has traveled with his swim teams, I didn't expect him to be as homesick as he was. And, of course, now that we reflect on it, Matt experienced all new people, language, country, customs, etc., as well as leaving home for the first time for an extended period of time. It probably took Matt 5 weeks before he was content on finishing the trip. A tremendous amount of growth must have occurred before he came to that decision.

Communication had been quite frequent in the beginning of the trip. In the first few weeks, he seemed to use a telephone as much as he could, which I think was to his detriment. I think it would have been better had he not actually spoken with us (and had that crutch, so to speak) until he was better acclimated. I would strongly discourage the phone calls in the beginning. Email is less personal and emotional, still allowing contact. As an indicator on how far Matt has come, communication is less frequent now that he has overcome his homesickness. He hasn't telephoned us in several weeks (and we don't expect any more calls!) And his emails, though less frequent are more detailed and meaningful. His focus has turned from his own homesickness to what he is experiencing on the trip.

As the student groups arrive in their destination country, they are inundated by the newness of not only their surroundings, but also this new group that will be their family for the next 3 months. They may be in fairly remote areas the first couple of weeks. We have asked them to abandon their cell phones. They will also be dealing with jetlag. Know that for all of these reasons you may not hear specifically from your child right away. We invite you to just notice what happens to your own peace of mind as you go through the emotional rollercoaster of those communication gaps and flurries.

~ Fall CAM Parent ~

Regarding the telephone calls, I speak from experience. 25 years ago I spent a summer in Honduras as a high school AFS exchange student. My Honduran family thought they were doing me a favor by having me call my family in the states when I arrived (it was by ham radio!). I was doing fine until I got on the phone with my mother and cried - barely being able to speak! It was more emotion than actually being homesick. It would have been better not to have spoken with home so soon.



Educational theorists long ago established that the way humans best learn is by finding a carefully crafted balance between the anxiety of what isn't known or understood with knowledge and experience already integrated. To that end, the Carpe Diem semesters were born and itineraries created for your student. Now, by proxy, you may find yourself on a path of anxiety, but you will be given tools to deal with that uncertainty, while exhorted to utilize your existing emotional skill set. In the end you too will graduate along with your student, and before you know it the two of you will enter a new chapter of life together.



SUGGESTIONS:

- ☞ Send a care package. It may not be the best way to let go, but it's a great way to soothe a difficult transition for your child and a good opportunity to make them a bit more popular within the group (ie, students can never have enough Jolly Ranchers). If you'd like to send a care package, please consult the Carpe Diem office before doing so as there are certain carriers and details that need to be addressed. Please don't attempt to send anything worth more than about \$50.
- ☞ DO NOT wire extra funds to your child. In the past we've seen students spend as much as \$5,000 despite the fact that all their meals and program fees are covered as part of their Carpe Diem tuition. Part of our mission is teaching students how to budget funds and when parents are constantly funding their students' purchasing and spending habits, they unwittingly undermine our ability to teach responsible finances. It's through years of running these programs that we've arrived at the recommended amount that each student brings for gifts and other purchases. Those students who spend more are typically buying things and leaving them behind, or in some cases have used their extra funds to finance everything from gambling to taking private taxis at every juncture rather than experiencing the local culture and systems. Please help us teach students how to budget.
- ☞ Carpe Diem has created blog sites for each specific program. They are regularly updated so you can follow the group's travel and learning progress throughout the semester. Many of you have already become savvy in navigating the blogs. For those of you who have not yet investigated it, these are the simple steps to get there: Direct your web browser to www.carpediemeducation.org. Notice the link "Blogs" in the furthest upper right corner and click on it. Find your student's program, and click on it—that's it! Blog entries are listed as most recent on top and are typically updated around once per week.

~ Fall '08 FANZ parent ~

Words of wisdom for parents.....hmm.....first of all, get a grip. Some of these are developing world countries so don't expect the Ritz-Carlton, actually, don't expect Motel 8... a little dirt and discomfort will not hurt your precious child and will maybe even help them (and believe me, it will be much tougher on you as a parent than it will be on them as a young adult). On the other hand, if you suspect a problem, be it health, safety, relationship, etc., don't hesitate to contact the program director and staff. They have lived this before with many other parents sharing similar worries and concerns. Expect answers and explanations to valid concerns, reassurance, honesty and prompt responses. Remember, you can always put more money in the ATM if need be,Email, phone calls and correspondence will differ for each individual child and parent. It will always be too much for the child and too little for the parent, a warm home and loving parents will be appreciated more by a slightly homesick child. Illness, no matter how small, will taint one's perspective about everything especially if it is the first time away from home for all involved.



Here is a brief list of resources that you may find at the very least *interesting*, and possibly helpful:

The Four Agreements, by Don Miguel Ruiz, 1997. Amber-Allen, Inc.

The Power of Now, by Eckhart Tolle, 1999. New World Library.

Loving What Is-Four Questions That Can Change Your Life, by Byron Katie, 2002. Harmony Books. <http://www.thework.com>

One to One: Self-Understanding Through Journal Writing, by Christina Baldwin, 1992. M. Evans and Company

Letting Go: A Parent's Guide to Understanding the College Years, 4th Edition.

Written by K.L. Coburn & M.L. Treeger, 2003. Quill Publishers.

You're On Your Own (but I'm here if you need me). Written by M. Savage, 2003. Simon & Schuster, Inc.

Empty Nest ... Full Heart: The Journey from Home to College, by Andrea Van Steenhouse, 2002. Simpler Life Press.

When Your Kid Goes to College; A Parent's Survival Guide, by Carol Barkin, 1999. Harper-Collins.

How to Be An Adult by David Richo

Conscious Parenting by Lee Lozowick

At the Speed of Life by Gay and Kathlyn Hendricks

New Earth Awakening by Eckhart Tolle

In addition, you might want to consult the suggested reading list in your student's acceptance packet for their specific program so that you can get a more contextual view of what your child is experiencing in their respective countries. If you need a copy of this, call or email the office and we'll get one off to you.