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APPRECIATE THE SIMPLE THINGS AND DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

- Warming cold bones by a fire
- The sweet kiss of cold water touching parched lips
- Scratching a long standing itch
- Taking off boots at the end of a long day
- Jumping into Panther Pond after a hot day at Camp T

The things I've just read have something in common. Each is a moment of relief that follows some degree of undesirable circumstance. But here's the catch. We often take these types of feelings for granted as we don't seem to notice them until they are gone. We prefer not to be cold. We only become cold and thus uncomfortable once our default setting goes below the temperature we are used to being. It is easy to look at our comfortable norm as the way it should be, a guarantee, something we are entitled to. But the problem is that this notion encourages us to look for the worst, or find something to complain about when faced with these uncomfortable circumstances. Now I don't suggest here that we do a 180 and strive to become more uncomfortable, less happy people. Quite the opposite, in fact.

The message here is gratitude. So that we can see the good in leaving our default settings of comfort rather than feeling cheated of something we've grown to expect. When we lose our bearings, we tend to have this idea that the world is out to get us, when we can't control everything. But let it be known that this sense of entitlement gets us nowhere. In fact, it doesn't even do that. If anything, thoughtless entitlement only moves us backwards. What I'd like to talk about today is the distinction between the small stuff and the simple things in life. If we can learn not to sweat the small stuff, like being wetter or colder than we want to be, while simultaneously appreciating the simple things in life, we become much better equipped to really get out there and make the most of our time. But first...let's sing If I Had A Hammer.

THE SMALL STUFF

- “He’s on my trunk!”
- “He took the last piece!”
- “No seconds on desert?!?”
- “No Desert?!?”
- “Hey, I got you out!”
- “But he got to jump off the tower!”
- “No Frees??”
- “I forgot to plug in my phone last night.....”

This is the small stuff. In the moment, it gets under our skin, irritates us, frustrates us, and even compromises our good judgment. It is the cancerous false notion that things are headed toward the fan. When really, we take a step back only to realize that we’ve unjustly preoccupied ourselves with these, then pressing, now silly complaints, fears, or just general misguided worries. If we’re not careful, the small stuff can consume us, divide us, drive us up the wall, or sometimes even define us. Always worrying, always frustrated, always feeling cheated. When what someone is doing over here is somehow ruined by that which is going on over there, we simply must take a step back. Now the party over there may be doing something legitimately annoying, or even morally incorrect, but worrying intensely over this far too often escalates a problem that likely never needed to exist in the first place. Now I’m not saying we should go around breaking all the rules or disregard the personal space of others. I am saying that once you tie your destiny, your well-being, how you are going to react, to something completely out of your control, like someone else’s actions, you’ve really missed out on an opportunity. And we’ve got to ask ourselves, what good this does. Getting all worked up. Where does that take us?

Now you don’t have to have cracked the code of life to see that flaws in the philosophy of sweating the small stuff. What is difficult is acting on this, actually going out and not sweating the small stuff. All of us will get worked up in the near future. I encourage each and every one of us to take a deep breath when we feel that selfish bubble boiling within us that makes us want to pretend that we’ve been railroaded! When we sweat the small stuff, we limit our ability to really

get out there and live it up. The truth of the matter is that life is far too short to sweat the small stuff. When you put forth an effort to let it go, to forgive someone, to forgive yourself, you've just taken a step in the right direction, and I am willing to go so far to say that you'll be the better person because of it.

Song – What a Wonderful World

THE SIMPLE THINGS

- A passing Hello down the bunkline
- The hootenanny of a full barn
- Meaningful interaction with people younger and older than you
- Seeing the glassy morning lake
- The whole camp cheering on a Mallard during Twilight League
- Pineman putting on a ninja turtle suit
- Hanging out on the benches outside the barn
- Taking a nice nap under a shady tree
- The hootin' and hollerin' down the bunkline at all hours of the day
- The sherbet sky of a Camp T sunset
- Nick Leyden taking my bacon

Did you hear how much longer that list was. These are the little things. These are the tiny parts that work together to make up the bigger whole. The things much smaller than you that when noticed and appreciated correctly make up something much larger than you or me, the simple things are what give our lives accent, color, and purpose. Without them, we wander aimlessly unable to appreciate that which is around us. Appreciating the simple things gives you that feeling. You know that “perfect free evening” (Describe free evening). It is what causes us to say “good game” rather than blame it on the refs, or our teammates, or any other factor out of our control. It can turn a rainy walk down the bunkline of dodging annoying puddles and forgetting that pesky raincoat into a prance through big puddles that aren't usually there, knowing that your shoes, those brand new Nike Elites will indeed dry. A high five with an older camper, a hot meal

on a cold camping trip. We are given a choice as to how we choose to look at these things. When returning from a camping trip, and asked how it went, we could say “our tent got wet” and true, maybe our tent did get wet. And maybe we choose to leave out the fact that Reed Spearman made the best breakfast hoagie we’ve ever had. Or that we had laughed all the way down Mt. Katahdin and forgot to stop ‘cause we were having such a good time. Both reports can come from the exact same trip. In one, someone sweats the small stuff, in the other, someone appreciates the simple things. It is these things we must see as a blessing rather than an expectation. Simple things that make us smile, believe are life’s most precious gifts and they sit before us everyday, ripe for the pickin’! And it’s up to us. I pity the one who says “Oh, I’ve had an apple before” and keeps moving. I wanna be around the people that say “Heck yeah brother” and pick that apple. And Timanous is a great place to learn how to be the apple picker over the apple passerby. The world is chock-full of people who pass it by or worse, complain about the fact that the apple must be picked and prefer it to fall into their laps.

Appreciating the simple things, that “good good”, while simultaneously not sweating the small stuff, better suits us to go forth into a world that desperately needs a breath of fresh air. It makes us simpler people. It makes us more flexible people, more insightful people, and at the end of the day, people more at ease. People who can confidently navigate the daunting task of peaceful human interaction. It allows us to extend our arm, open our hands. The friendly hand. The helping hand. The “I Love You”. And it keeps us from the clinched hand, the shaking fist, the fabled “Why Me?!?!”. No, my friends, we are not victims of this world. With the right perspective, we are those lucky enough to live in it. This is a call for each and every one of us to go forth and live it up, to appreciate more, to complain less, to recognize how lucky we are, and to simply be good to one another. If you take little away from this, listen to me here. Don’t expect the good life to just show up. It takes work, it takes effort. It is not just handed to us. Instead go out and find it, seek it out, knowing that it may take a different form than what you had in mind. I love each and every person here. We’ve got a big summer ahead and I just don’t think we have time to worry about the small stuff. So go forth and appreciate the simple things, as it tends to give way to a much more fruitful kind of life.