UNIT 11: The Fun Was In Tents!

Address: http://www.destinationsuccess.com
The Fun Was In Tents!

by Karen Connolly

My daughter is very stubborn. She is warm, kind, and funny—but very stubborn. When she first declared that she wanted us to attend Circus Camp together, I was filled with dread. I tried to offer a few excuses, but they sounded weak. I knew she was going to get her way in the end. Of course she did.



Rachael had heard about the Circus Camp through school. Apparently, a couple of kids from her class were going with their parents. Rachael's dad died a few years ago, so it would be just the two of us.

I used to worry that not having her Dad around in these situations would make her feel left out or sad, but not anymore.

Are you curious about how the author will feel about going to Circus Camp?

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I've learned that she's a pretty strong kid, far tougher than her Mom! I'm not very outgoing. In fact, I'm really shy. I'm also clumsy and not very good at sports. Can you see why I wasn't enthusiastic about Circus Camp?

"It'll be great, Mom," argued Rachael, once we were on our way. "You haven't done anything fun in ages." I grumbled back, "We'd better not have to wear leotards."



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The camp was only about 20 miles from our house in northern California. Upon arriving, we were shown to our room and handed our schedule for the week.

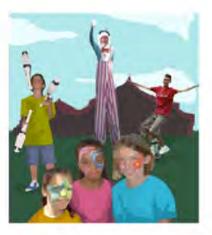
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8 AM - 9 AM	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast	Breakfast
9 AM - 12 PM	Juggling	Tumbling	Trapeze	Clowning & Mime	Tightwire Walking
12 PM - 2 PM	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
2 PM - 5 PM	Face Painting	Unicycle	Juggling	Stilt Walking	Trapeze
5 PM - 7 PM	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner	Dinner
7 PM - 10 PM	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time	Free time

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After glancing at the schedule, Rachael was impressed. Being a gymnastics star, she had nothing to fear from the week's activities. On the other hand, I was already feeling nervous. I could easily picture the scene: me falling off a unicycle and everyone else laughing. "Don't worry, Mom," Rachael reassured me. "You'll be fine!" Here was a 12-year-old girl offering support to her overly anxious Mom! I decided that I was going to quit worrying and try to enjoy the week. And I did!





Why do you think being a gymnastics star meant that Rachael had nothing to fear at Circus Camp?



The word "laughing" uses the letters a, u, g and h. Together, they make the sound "aff". But there are other words that use the same letters in the same way, but they aren't pronounced in the same way. Try and think of some examples.

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From the moment we stepped into the big top tent, I felt a rush of excitement. The smell of the wood shavings on the floor, the colorful attire of the coaches, and the cavernous red tent—it just seemed so exotic. The regular world of school and work seemed a million miles away from this extraordinary place. Rachael looked up at me and beamed. I smiled back.





How do you pronounce this word? It uses the same letters as used in the word "laugh" – a, u, g, and h. Does it rhyme with the word "laugh"?

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The first activity was juggling. Our coach was a clown called Chico, and he started with an impressive demonstration. Clubs, balls, and knives flew through the air four and five at a time. Suddenly, he threw two balls at Rachael, and she deftly caught them. "Let's see your juggling skills," Chico grinned. Rachael easily juggled two balls, but when Chico handed her a third, she struggled to keep them all in the air.



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Eventually, after a few tips from Chico and a bit of practice, she had three colorful balls flying through the air. Soon everyone else joined in. I was awful, but a few other parents were pretty clumsy too. We all just took it in good fun.

In the afternoon we tried face painting. I enjoy art, so I had no trouble giving Rachael an orange-and-black-striped tiger's face. Unfortunately, art is not Rachael's strong point. By the time she had finished, my "clown face" looked more like a donkey. "Sorry, Mom," she smiled sheepishly.

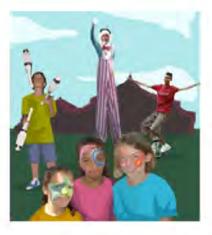
Forgivingly, I replied, "It'll wash off."

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The remainder of the week provided even more fun and entertainment. Juggling, tumbling, and stilt-walking—we tried them all. There were a few mishaps, of course, and my attempts at unicycling had most people in hysterics. Still, Rachael and I enjoyed every minute of it. The camp coaches were wonderful, and on the day we left, we were really sorry to say goodbye to them.





Earlier, the author said that she was nervous about people laughing at her falling off a unicycle. Here, she says that people did laugh at her, as she had expected. Do you think she was right to be nervous?

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On the way home, Rachael announced that since Circus Camp had been so successful, next semester we should go on a white water rafting trip together. I immediately protested. "But I hate water, and I don't like rafts, and--" "Good, it's settled then," Rachael interrupted firmly. "We can start looking at brochures next week." I sank back in my seat, and all I could do was laugh.





What have you learned about how the author enjoyed Circus Camp?



And have you learned anything about how the author gets along with her daughter?