

Handling Homesickness at Camp

Imagine this scenario... It's been 3 days since you dropped off Susie at camp. You get a letter from her saying, "I hate it here! The activities are not fun! I didn't get the top bunk like I wanted! It's rained every day and I miss you! All I want to do is give you a big hug! I have so much more fun with you at home. PLEASE COME GET ME!!!"

What should you do?

First of all, take a deep breath and realize that it's perfectly natural for campers (and staff members!) to experience some degree of homesickness during their stay at camp. Most letters are written during rest hour or before bed which are times when campers tend to feel the most homesick. While there can be moments when homesickness arises, these rarely mean that your camper truly dislikes camp. Typically, these feelings are infrequent throughout the day and will go away after a day or two. Usually by the time you receive these letters, your camper will most likely be just fine!

If you do receive a homesick letter, please take a moment to write a positive and encouraging response. You can send this as an email for a faster reply. Let your camper know that you are confident in their ability to cope with new adventure and you are proud of them. Validate their feelings. Share a story of a time that you felt the same way! Ask them about camp, their activities, their counselor and friends. And remember, please don't tell them how much you miss them or how you cannot wait for them to come home. Statements like these will only make them worry about your feelings of sadness as well.

Of course, you are welcome to check in with our office if you have any concerns. If you are a new family, our Summer Camp Director and your campers Unit Leader will be contacting you before camp begins (after your camper registers) and then again once your camper has been here for a few days. We strongly discourage a phone conversation with your camper as this can often make the homesickness worse.

Be proactive! If you think your child may be homesick, please don't hesitate to contact us in advance. One of our directors will be ready to help. We also encourage all parents to speak to their child's counselors on the first day of camp. During this conversation you can tell the counselors about any anxieties your child might have about camp and give them some ideas for what helps to make your child feel better during these times.

Think of camp as a learning experience. Sending your child to camp offers a wonderful opportunity for both you and your child to practice "letting go." Learning to let go allows children to develop autonomy and a stronger sense of self, make new friends, develop new social skills, learn about teamwork, be creative and more.