

How to Help Your Child Have a Great Time at Camp

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Summer af'camp is more than just a vacation. At camp, kids learn to appreciate the outdoors, experience the companionship of other children and young adults working as counselors, learn skills that enhance self-reliance, cooperation with others and a sense of life larger than one's self. Hopefully, the acquisition and refinement of such skills will contribute in positive and significant ways to the child's adjustment and will carry over into his/her adult years. Camp makes it easy for kids to have fun, relax and experience the spontaneous joys of childhood. A summer at camp is often perceived by children, parents, community leaders, clergy and social service agencies as a respite from the strains of everyday family life and the pressures and tensions of school.

To help your child have a successful time at camp this summer...

* Think of camp as a learning experience. Sending your children to camp offers a wonderful opportunity for both you and your children to practice "letting go" -- an experience that can contribute to the development of healthy independence. Learning to let go allows children to develop a stronger sense of self. It also gives parents a chance to take care of themselves and get to know each other again. When children return, parents will, hopefully, feel refreshed and will be available and accessible to them again.

- Don't buy a whole new wardrobe. Camp is more rugged than life at home. A child doesn't need new clothes... and having well-worn clothes and familiar possessions will help ease the transition. This is especially important for first-time campers.

- Listen to and talk about concerns. As the first day of camp nears, some children understandably experience uneasiness about going off to camp.

Rather than acting on what you believe his feelings to be, ask good questions such as: "We've been busy packing your gear. What are your thoughts about heading off to camp in a few days?" Communicate your confidence in his ability to handle being away from home and remind him about "small victories," successes he has experienced in other situations.

- Have realistic expectations. Camp, like



the rest of life, has high points and low ones. Not every moment will be filled with wonder and excitement. At times, your child will feel great while at other times he may feel unhappy or bored. And kids may not always get along well with each other. Solution: Try to maintain within yourself -- and encourage within your child -- a reasonable and realistic view of camp by mentioning "ups and downs." Opportunities for problem solving, negotiating, developing greater self-awareness and increased sensitivity to the needs of others can help your child cope with successes and failures in everyday life. Resist sending your child off to camp feeling pressured to succeed. The main purpose of camp is to have fun.

WHEN YOUR CHILD IS AT CAMP

- Communicate in writing. Summer camp offers kids and parents the chance to develop a rarely practiced skill -- letter writing. Write as often as you want. Keep in mind that this is your child's connection to home and family.

- Packages are appreciated every now and then. But don't send food - it's disruptive if some kids in the cabin receive food packages and others receive nothing. Receiving food packages may be contrary to camp policy. If your child asks you to sneak food packages, don't. Even if you think the rule is silly, breaking a camp rule might interfere with your child's sense of right and wrong. Better: Send postcards, cartoons, newspaper and magazine articles, comics, game books, puzzles and other items that can be shared with friends. Tell your child... I understand that you're hungry. That's why you have three great meals each day and snacks. I'll send you some comic books. Hope you enjoy them. Why don't you share them with your bunkmates?

- Don't make major changes at home. This is not the time to reconfigure your marital relationship, move to a new

neighborhood, sanitize or gut and redecorate your child's room or get rid of his fossilized frog collection. When most kids return from camp, they like to find things exactly as they had left them.

- Help your child cope at camp. Most kids need a few days to adjust to life at camp and being away from home. During this time, kids miss their parents, pets, friends and familiar surroundings. Most kids cope with these concerns and - with the help of camp staff - build support systems. If your child's letters contain urgent pleas for you to bring him home, resist the temptation to rush to camp. Avoid making deals, such as "Give camp one more week. If you're still unhappy, we'll bring you home", Better: Support your child's efforts to work out problems with the help of the director and the camp's staff. Communicate your love and confidence in your child's ability to work through problems. Remind him, if necessary, that he has made a commitment for the summer. Overcoming a longing for home, dealing with upsets in the cabin and learning to care for oneself are important challenges to be faced at camp. Important: If you sense legitimacy in your child's complaints, talk candidly with the camp director. Allow the director and staff an opportunity to apply their expertise in helping kids adapt to the routines of camp life. Follow up with another call a few days later. Most adjustment difficulties can be worked through.

WHEN YOUR CHILD COMES HOME

- After a summer of fun, adventure and freedom, fitting back into the family and assuming responsibilities may be a challenge for some kids. Strategy: Give him time and space for this reentry process. Support the positive changes you observe. Reintroduce "house rules" with patience and awareness that your child has done some maturing over the summer.



Camp Packing Tips

Dennis Randall

What do you pack when you send your kid off to camp? Some parents ship their children out with enough stuff to equip Patton's 3rd Field Army. Other kids are lucky to leave home with a toothbrush and a change of underwear. Somewhere between the two extremes is a happy medium - check our handy tips for the balance that's right for your child.

- Call ahead for a list of recommended items. Every camp has different requirements.
- No matter what they say, always pack an extra pillow case.
- Mark or label everything with your child's name.
- Include a list of emergency phone numbers and email addresses.
- Pack a few family snapshots (quick cure for homesickness).
- Pack a disposable camera.
- Pack several pre-addressed postcards WITH POSTAGE and encourage your child to write (but don't hold your breath).
- Disposable flashlight.
- Pack at least one set of warm clothing. The weather may not be kind and the nights are always colder than you thought they would be.
- Send nothing to camp (except your child) that you can't afford to lose. Expensive radios, CD players, and cameras have the annoying habit of breaking or disappearing.

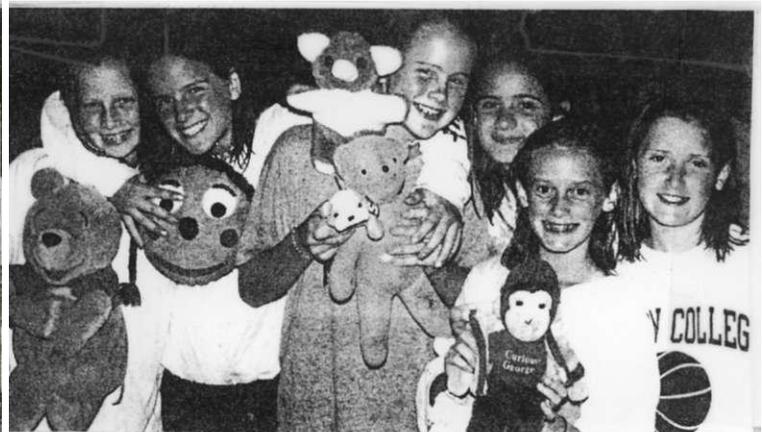
**Have your child help pack their bag/trunk, so they know what they have. Camp is a busy place and kids may not take the time to look through everything in their trunk!



HELPING PARENTS SURVIVE CAMP

Just as kids get homesick, parents get "kidsick". "Single parents, especially, worry if they're doing the right thing, if they should be spending more time with the child," says Edie Klein, President of the American Camping Association. "There are also parents who experience a void once the child goes off to camp." Experts offer this advice:

- Keep the lines of communication open with the camp staff. It's not easy entrusting your child to total strangers. Knowing you can call or will be called if a problem arises will set your mind at ease.
- Talk to another adult-whether it's your spouse, a friend, or even the camp director- and verbalize any anxieties you may have about sending your child to camp. Don't let your child know about your concerns. "If you're asking your child to master a situation, you need to be able to master it yourself first," says therapist Bob Ditter.
- Plan something for yourself- whether it's an exercise class or a well-deserved vacation. A word to the wise: Don't suddenly announce vacation plans, or your child will feel abandoned. Instead, plan the vacation at the same time your child is making plans to attend camp. "That way, it will seem as though you're both going on separate vacations," advises Klein.
- Don't expect kids at sleep-away camp to write everyday. They get busy and lose track of time.
- Be supportive. If your child has difficulty learning a skill, such as swimming or horseback riding, don't encourage him to drop it right away. "Camp gives kids an opportunity to learn how to face fear and cope with it," says Ann Woods, codirector of a day camp. "But we need the parents support." Camp should be fun, she emphasizes, but "we also want children to grow, and sometimes there's pain with the growth. Catherine Winters
Parents May 1989



SUN SAFETY TIPS

FROM THE AMERICAN ACADEMY-OF DERMATOLOGY

- Try to avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun's rays are the strongest.
- Apply a broad spectrum sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor(SPF) of at least 15.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours when outdoors, even on cloudy days.
- Wear protective, tightly woven clothing, such as a long sleeved shirt and pants.
- Wear a 4-inch wide broad brimmed hat and sunglasses, even when walking short distances.
- Stay in the shade whenever possible.
- Avoid reflective surfaces, that can reflect up to 85 percent of the sun's damaging rays.
- Protect children by keeping them out of the sun, minimizing sun exposure and applying sunscreens beginning at six months of age.

For more information on sun protection for children, send a self-addressed , stamped envelope to: American Academy of Dermatology, PO Box 4014., Schaumburg IL 60168-4014.

Prescription for Camper Homesickness

More camp advice for parents!

This summer, millions of children will get their first taste of independence at a summer resident camp. For many, it will also be their first experience with homesickness. But parents don't have to feel helpless when homesickness strikes. The prescription for camper homesickness is a simple solution of preparation and patience.

University of California Psychologist Chris Thurber studied homesickness in 329 boys between the ages of 8 and 16 at resident camp. According to his results, homesickness is the norm rather than the exception. A whopping 83 percent of the campers studied reported homesickness on at least one day of camp. Thurber and the American Camping Association (ACA) suggest the following tips for parents to help their child deal with homesickness at camp:

- Encourage your child's independence throughout the year. Practice separations, such as sleep overs at a friend's house, can simulate the camp environment.
- Involve your child in the process of choosing a camp. The more than the child owns the decision, the more comfortable the child will feel being at camp.
- Discuss what camp will be like before your child leaves. Consider role-playing anticipated situations, such as using a flashlight to find the bathroom.
- If your child's camp has a no phone calls policy, honor it.
- Send a note or care package ahead of time to arrive the first day of camp. Acknowledge, in a positive way, that you will miss your child. For example, you can say "I am going to miss you, but I know that you will have a good time at camp."
- Don't bribe. Linking a successful stay at camp to a material object sends the wrong message. The reward should be your child's new found confidence and independence.
- Pack a personal item from home, such as a stuffed animal.
- When a "rescue call" comes from the child, offer calm reassurance and put the time frame into perspective. Avoid the temptation to take the child home early.
- Talk candidly with the camp director to obtain his/her perspective on your child's adjustment.
- Don't feel guilty about encouraging your child to stay at camp. For many children, camp is a first step toward independence and plays an important role in their growth and development.
- Trust your instincts. While most incidents of homesickness will pass in a day or two, Thurber's research shows that approximately seven percent of the cases are severe. If your child is not eating or sleeping because of anxiety or depression, it is time to go home. However, don't make your child feel like a failure if their stay at camp is cut short. Focus on the positive and encourage your child to try camp again next year.

****Make sue you do not give your child a "pick-up deal."** Camp is two weeks long and your child should feel comfortable sleeping away from home. If you tell your daughter that you will pick her up early if she isn't having fun, then no matter how much fun she is having she will be determined to go home at the suggested time.

TIPS FOR FUN-FILLED LETTERS AND CARE PACKAGES

(tips taken from parent magazine and our experience)

Mail call is one of the highlights of a young camper's day, but parents need to understand what to say and what not say in letters to their children.

Be cheerful and positive. Assume your child is having a good time and say so in your letters.

Show enthusiasm and ask questions about the food, the activities, the staff, the weather, new friends, and new experiences.

Questions are asked not so much in hope of getting an answer but to suggest to the child what to be aware of during her stay.

DO NOT write bad news of any kind.

Do not say how much you miss your child or how much the dog or cat or gerbil misses her. Such reminders only reinforce any homesick feelings.

Do not write a lot of home news that will make her feel like she is missing something. Save the list of movies you saw or places you went to eat until your camper comes home.

Do not scold your child for not writing. For most children, writing letters is a wearisome task. To encourage writing, send addressed and stamped post cards to camp with your child.

It is very helpful to drop a letter off at the office when you leave camp, so she will receive a letter on Monday. Also you may want to mail a few letters a couple of days prior to her coming to camp. Mail is very **slow** in Freedom!

Any cheery letter is fun to receive, but if you want to send a special treat try a few of these:

Send a comic, paperback, or crossword puzzle book.

Write a message in code, but make it simple enough so your camper is not frustrated. One code might substitute numbers for letters(A=1 B=2, etc) or assign a number to each vowel(A=1 E=2 etc).

Write one word per postcard, number the cards, and mail one each day.

Write a post card to everyone in your child's cabin. On each card, write a word or part of a sentence, number the cards. Tell them to put the card together to read the message.

End a post card or letter in mid sentence. Add "to be continued". Finish the letter and mail the next day.

Cut a circle out of paper and, beginning at the outer edge, write your letter around in circles.

Paste a letter, hand drawn picture of magazine photo on a piece of cardboard and cut into puzzle pieces.

Paste cartoons or jokes on a post card.

Send newspaper/magazine article about someone the child knows(only if good news) or on a subject that she is interested.

Buy one or more paperbacks that your child would enjoy and cut them apart. Send your child a chapter every day or two.

Sealed with a Kiss Packages are always a hit. They have an agreement with camp to send large envelopes.

CAMP HUCKINS HAS A STRICT NO FOOD-NO BOX POLICY.

Food will be thrown away and boxes will be held in the office until your camper leaves camp.

During every session of camp some child does not receive any mail. So however you correspond with your camper, just do it and do it often.

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT CABIN SPACE IS LIMITED TRUNKS MUST BE NO LARGER THAN THE FOLLOWING:

13 1/2 INCHES TALL

18 INCHES WIDE

32 INCHES LONG

It is important that your trunk or suitcase fits under the bed so the aisles between bunk beds remain open.

CHEST OF DRAWERS MUST BE NO LARGER THAN THE FOLLOWING:

27 INCHES TALL

15 5/8 INCHES WIDE

12 5/8 INCHES LONG

A chest of drawers is not required but is a convenient way to store everyday items.

Please address your daughter's mail with her cabin letter.

Miss Mary Jones/Cabin M

Camp Nellie Huckins

17 Camp Huckins Road

Freedom, NH 03836