

# How to Help Your Child Have a Great Time at Camp

## -Getting Ready For Camp-

Summer at 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.

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 autonomy and 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 her 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 her ability to handle being away from home and remind her about "small victories," successes she 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 she 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.