

How to Help Your Child Have a Great Time at Camp

-Homesickness: Coping at Camp-

This summer, your child 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.

- **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 her home, resist the temptation to rush to camp. Avoid making deals, such as *Give camp one more day.. If you're still unhappy, we'll bring you home.*

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.

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 her, if necessary, that she 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 day later. Most adjustment difficulties can be worked through.

- **Trust your instincts.** The occasional child who is truly not enjoying anything, having a miserable time and not adjusting to camp life at all will be allowed to return home after a reasonable amount of time and effort.

Keep in mind that some kids feel guilty when an experience like camp does not work out for them. They may feel they have let their parents down.

If your child leaves camp, let her know she has not failed and there will be other summers with other adventures.