

Preventing Homesickness at Camp Jewell YMCA

Homesickness is preventable! By preparing your child ahead of time for their stay at camp, distress over homesickness can be diminished or avoided altogether. Our trained staff is skilled at helping campers overcome homesickness. Here are some tips for parents to do with their campers before and during their camping session.

- ***Attend one of our Open House events!*** It's a great opportunity to introduce your child to our very capable staff and our beautiful campus at Camp Jewell. Encourage your child to ask questions while they are here. This gives your child a sense of control and lets them know what to expect while at camp. Seeing familiar faces and surroundings can go a long way in avoiding feelings of anxiety.
- Utilize our Camp Jewell brochure and website as a starting point for a discussion with your child on what to expect at camp. Please be sure to click on our new short video link on our Home Page showing our campers enjoying various activities at Camp Jewell.
- Emphasize to your child how fun camp will be! A conversation about experiencing different activities, making new friends, and enjoying nature can go a long way in exciting your child about attending camp.
- Involve your camper in the decision making process of attending camp. This enables your child to have a sense of control.
- Assure your child that missing home and family is a very normal, healthy experience. So too, is the experience of being away and adapting to new people and surroundings.
- Sleep-away camp is an experience which will also help prepare your child for other experiences in life such as a hospital stay, leaving for college or moving on to an independent adult life.
- Practice time away from home by arranging short 2-3 day sleep-over visits with relatives.
- Practice writing letters beforehand. Make sure to pack a supply of self-addressed, stamped envelopes, pen and paper when sending your child off to camp. Keep your letters to your child light and happy and positive.
- Before sending your child off to camp, try to avoid comments like "What am I going to do without you while you're away?" or, "I hope you are going to be alright." Such innocent comments may spark anxiety in your child and make them worry about you and what is going on at home.
- Encourage your child to make new friends and get to know their cabin counselors.
- Sit down with your child and a calendar to show them precisely how long they will be attending camp and how much fun they will be having here.
- Once your camper settles in their cabin on Check-in Day, please do not linger. Make your good-byes "short and sweet" and above all, positive!
- Please do not promise your child that you will come and get them if they get homesick. This will only set them up for failure.
- If your child takes medication for behavioral, psychological, or attention span conditions, don't use their stay at camp as an excuse to take a "medication vacation." Make sure you give their medicines and medication schedules to the Camp Nurses at Check-in, and that your child understands the importance of sticking with their medication schedule.

Separation from home and family during summer camp can be an instrumental 'life training' experience for children by expanding their independence while encouraging self confidence, self-reliance, and social skills that they will need as they develop into young adulthood and beyond.

To read more about homesickness, please visit the American Camping Association's website at www.campparents.org or clinical psychologist Dr. Christopher Thurber's website at www.campspirit.com