



TOP TIPS FOR LONG-DISTANCE PARENTING

HOMESICKNESS

This material is to provide parents with some useful ideas to support their children through the adjustment experience commonly called homesickness. We hope that the following information will aid you in understanding and supporting your child through this important phase of growing up.

Homesickness is a normal, predictable response to an important crisis – transition from home to camp. Separation from one's family and friends, loss of daily contact with familiar surroundings, and the normal, resultant grieving of that loss are aspects of relationships that each of us experience, learn how to handle, and integrate as part of becoming and being adults. Seen in this light, homesickness is a necessary and growth-producing process, a crisis with a built-in sense of opportunity. It is a dynamic process of adjustment rather than a static problem.

While some campers may exhibit fever, stomachache, headache, or loss of appetite, the core issue is one of adjustment to a new environment. Our camp program is designed to anticipate the relocation needs of all campers within the first hours of arrival.

Most cases of homesickness are dealt with directly by the counselor. Successful methods include "special time" with the counselor, pairing up the child with another camper, and engaging the camper with program.

We feel that parents know their child best and we welcome extra information and advice about your child. Should a camper have a great deal of difficulty dealing with homesickness that is not being successfully addressed by the counselor, psychologist and camp activities, the director will contact the parents by phone for additional information about the child.

GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESS

- **OWNERSHIP** - The child needs to have some say in the decision to attend camp. If they feel forced, they may have some feelings of abandonment. These are generally much more difficult to help children through than just homesickness.
- **GOAL-SETTING** – Sit down as a family and set goals for the week. Whatever the goals may be, being away from each other is a good time for everyone to grow. Goals may include things like: overcoming a particular fear, making new friends, trying everything, or just getting comfortable with being away.
- **VISUALIZATION** - If the camper is a first timer, discuss with the child how they are feeling about leaving the family for what may look to them as a long time. Let them express their worries and then let them know that it is okay to feel that way, perhaps relating a time when you felt the same way and how you were able to deal with it.
- **LETTER WRITING** - Write letters that are newsy, understanding and expressing delight in the things that your camper is doing at camp. Lonesome letters about how much the dog misses the child or how the house just isn't the same usually contributes to feeling homesick. Include in your letters wishes of fun, good times, and support for the camper adjusting to the new experience.
- **CONNECTIONS TO HOME** – Send along a few familiar things (preferably small), such as pictures of the family, stuffed animals, etc.
- **ENTHUSIASM** - When packing first-time campers, be positive, excited, and encouraging. Please cover travel plans, especially if the child is flying to camp. Bolster your camper's confidence by assuring them that they can handle flying on the plane by themselves. The airlines are very good about handling minors, and we have a staff on hand at the airport to assist all campers upon arrival.
- **COMPLETE DISCLOSURE ON THE APPLICATION** - Information completed on the application assists us in working with your child. These provide guidelines and a baseline to help the camper have a transformative week.
- **UPDATES** - Please inform us of any recent changes or upheavals in your family. Divorce, death, serious illness, a recent move or intense competition in a sport or school area may still be unsettling for the child and cause additional stress. We find that camp is a very healthy place for dealing with stress because of the supportive environment.

Be prepared just in case you receive some forlorn and lonely letters on how much your child misses you and how terrible things are. This is a normal response and shows that the child is working through the process of adjustment by expressing their feelings. If several of these letters come to you, contact the director to discuss your camper.

DO NOT, under any circumstances, make deals with your camper concerning their length of stay at Cheley. Sending children home early is terribly disruptive to the camp and to the camper. A deal such as “if you don’t like camp, you can come home after two days” is terribly detrimental and does not encourage personal growth.

Please do not call camp and ask to speak to your child. Telephones are not available to the campers. Be confident that we are able to assess the best time, if at all, that it is helpful to speak with your child on the telephone. Emergencies are a different matter, and we are happy to arrange a time for the camper to be near a telephone if the emergency dictates. If the child is having serious adjustment problems, we will call you.

Any questions or concerns about your child should be handled through Trudy Boulter or Jeff Cheley. If you will follow these suggestions and if you will trust us to provide guidance and care for your child, we know being away from home for a period of time will be a process of growing independence, confidence, and new friendships for your camper. Meeting homesickness head on and in a healthy way is one of the great steps toward adulthood and responsibility.

MAILING ADDRESS:

**CHELEY COLORADO CAMPS
P.O. BOX 1170
ESTES PARK, CO 80517
(970) 586-4244**

Thank you and we look forward to sharing an inspiring a life-changing experience with your child. Please contact me if you have any questions prior to camp.

Best,

Trudy Boulter, OTR CHT
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