

Homesickness

At first, I was afraid of sleeping a whole week away from home but Hidden Villa made me feel more comfortable.

– Hidden Villa Camper

It's normal for campers to miss home while they're away from camp. At Hidden Villa Summer Camp, no news is good news! If you have not heard from us, they are doing great! If a camper is struggling to adjust, our staff will call you for strategies to better support your youth.

If you or your camper are concerned with homesickness, there are some key things you can do ahead of time that will help prevent intense homesickness and help your camper enjoy a full camp experience! The best remedy is a two-pronged approach:

- 1) Prevent homesickness at home, before it starts.
- 2) Actively cope at camp, if natural feelings of homesickness reach problematic levels.

The best at-home prevention strategies include:

- working together as a family to select a camp, plan, and pack
- spending practice time away from home, such as a long weekend at a friend's or family member's house
- experimenting with the best coping strategies during this practice separation
- preparing pre-stamped, pre-addressed envelopes to bring to camp so your camper can write to you

The best in-camp interventions for homesick campers include:

- staying busy
- talking with someone
- remembering that you're not at camp for your whole life - just a few weeks
- writing letters home
- thinking of all the fun activities that camp offers and doing them!

Watch out! The most common mistake parents make is the Pick-Up Deal. It's normal for children to ask, "What if I feel homesick?" Tell your child that some feelings of homesickness are normal and help them practice coping before camp starts. But never say, "If you feel homesick, I'll come and get you." This conveys a message of doubt and pity that undermines children's confidence and independence. Pick-Up Deals become mental crutches and self-fulfilling prophecies for children as soon as they arrive at camp. If, after spending practice time away from home, a child is still very anxious about overnight camp, consider waiting until next summer.

The Good News

When youth arrive at camp with a repertoire of coping strategies and some practice time away from home under their belts, they are ready for those normal feelings of homesickness. Sure, they'll miss home, but they'll know exactly what to think and do when it bothers them. Best of all,

the staff at a high quality camp will be there to help. Nothing boosts children's self-esteem quite like overcoming a bout of homesickness and learning how good they are at controlling the amount of fun they have. Camp truly is a classroom for life lessons. This information was provided by the American Camp Association. Please visit their website (<http://www.acacamps.org/media-center/how-to-choose/homesickness>) for more details.

Chilsickness

Are you worried you will miss your child while they are at camp? Like homesickness, this is very common! Here are a few strategies for those missing their camper:

- stay busy
- talk with someone who can support you, try not to project your concerns onto your child
- remember that your camper is not at camp for their whole life - just a few days or weeks
- write letters or emails to your camper focusing on the wonderful thing you are providing for your child: the opportunity to live and play in a new environment, gain independence and self-reliance, improve their ability to make new friends, develop the social skills required to live with a group of people you aren't related to
 - Please do not tell your campers how much you miss them – that can inhibit your camper's ability to fully enjoy their experience and have fun.