

# Preparing your Child for their Camp Experience

Parents can do a lot to enhance their child's camp experience. For children, going to camp for the first time can be exciting as well as upsetting. However, kids usually adjust quickly. The following are suggestions meant to help you as a parent:

## Avoid Causing Stress

**Please don't send letters that could cause stress.** Your letters should be upbeat. Express interest in hearing about what your child is doing at Camp. Writing about how much your child is missed or how much fun everyone else in the family is having, may cause homesickness.

## Letters Home

**Letters from campers sometimes express temporary concerns they have at the moment.** By the time you receive the letter, time has passed and the child has moved on from that moment in the company of our sensitive staff. In most cases, by the time you receive the "bad news," there is already "good news" to take its place!

## Realistic Expectations

**Have realistic expectations.** Make your child feel *your* confidence in his/her ability to cope with the Camp experience. 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 s/he may feel unhappy or bored. And kids may not always get along well with each other. The staff is prepared to help the campers feel comfortable and confident.

## See You Later, Not Goodbye

**Don't prolong the "pain of separation" by staying around too long.** If your child says "goodbye," gives you a kiss, and then takes off with the camp leader, don't be disappointed.

## Special Concerns

**Let the Camp staff know about any special concerns you have as a parent.** The staff can then be prepared to help the camper if problems do arise that are related to the concern.

## Tech Free

**Please do not tell your camper to call home.** We will call you if there is a problem or an emergency. When a camper wants to call home, it is a clue that s/he is homesick. We are prepared to work with this. Inevitably, campers who, in a loving way, have been denied a call home soon get involved and start making friends and having fun.

## No "Cop-Outs"

**Avoid giving children last minute warnings or advice.** For example, don't say, "If you misbehave, I'll come to Camp and take you home!" A child, who starts out feeling unsure about Camp, may decide to misbehave so that s/he can go home.

## Phone Calls

**Please do not call campers.** Camp is an "away from home" experience. A phone call can either start or aggravate a homesick situation. If you are concerned, have a problem or an emergency, please call Camp. Depending on the nature of the call and its effect on the child, we will work out with you the best way of handling the situation.

## Be Positive

**Send your child to Camp with positive feelings.** "I'll be lonely without you" and "I'll worry about you" do not give a child what s/he needs. Words of encouragement and anticipation of a good time and new friends are most helpful. Camp offers a wonderful opportunity for both you and your child to practice "letting go" – an experience that can contribute to the development of healthy independence.

There is no substitute for mom and dad. On the other hand, there is no substitute for being directly involved in a Christian camp experience. Camp Wartburg staff have been trained to do their job as safely, creatively, competently, and caringly as possible. The staff is selected for various reasons, but above all because they are caring, Christian people.