



A note to parents on homesickness from Director Rob Hammond

Dear Parents,

We think that just about every boy that comes to camp will experience some of the feelings of homesickness while he's here. Most boys overcome these feelings—without ever letting the camp staff know that they've been homesick at all.

However, you may be one of the parents who receives the classic homesick letter or card. This is probably what it will sound like:

Dear Mom and Dad,

This camp stinks. Nobody in my cabin likes me. Most of the counselors are mean. Nothing here is fun. If you really love me you'll come get me now!

P.S. I go to the infirmary every day!

As a parent your second reaction will be to call me at camp (your first reaction, which we hope you will suppress, will be to get in your car and come to camp)!

Hopefully, by the time you receive the card or letter your son will be over his homesickness. He will probably be on our "homesick list." Every morning at staff meeting the counselors report to us any camper they think is homesick. The whole staff then works to keep the camper busy and tries to make sure he feels part of the group. We try to determine if there is anything at camp that is really bothering him. We also assure him that homesickness is a natural feeling that many people experience. One of us will share our own experience with homesickness with him, and let him know he will make it.

It has been my experience that if the camp and the parents work together, the homesick camper will adjust to camp, and in the end have a great time and feel good about himself for successfully making it through a difficult time. That is why it's very important for you to call us if you have any concerns about your child.

If a homesick camper does not seem to be making progress, I will call you and set up a time for you to talk with him. Be prepared for an emotional time over the phone. Homesick campers are not reasonable. They will pull all of your emotional strings, and raise your parental guilt level to an all time high!

In your response to a homesick letter or call, whether you are writing to your son or speaking with him, be loving but firm. Tell him you understand his feelings, that you love him, and that you have confidence in him to overcome his difficult time. Try to get him to think of the fun and positive things he was looking forward to at camp.

Before he comes to camp, never make a "deal" that you will bring him home if he does not like camp.

One of your thoughts when you learn that your son is homesick might be, "Life is just too short for him to be unhappy. I'll just pick him up." Please "stifle" that thought. The easiest think for both of us would be to quit working with him and let him go home. But by doing this we would be saying, "I'm giving up on you, and don't have any confidence in your ability to grow up."

Enclosed you will find a parent's response to a homesick letter and points to consider when writing a homesick camper.

95% of you won't need this homesick packet. But if you get **the** letter, please read all the information, call me, and we'll work together.

Sincerely,

Rob Hammond
Director



Consider these points when writing your homesick camper:

- ▶ Acknowledge his feelings. (“Thanks for letting us know how you feel.”)
- ▶ Let him know that it is OK to miss mom and dad (and for mom and dad to miss him) and still have fun at camp.
- ▶ Tell him homesickness is normal and many boys experience it. Given a little time and space most boys get over it and have a great time.
- ▶ Encourage him to concentrate on the things he likes at camp. Mention activities he was looking forward to like the climbing wall, or the horses, tribe hunt, the rope swing, etc.
- ▶ Feeling uncomfortable in a new situation is normal. Learning to cope in those situations and being away from mom and dad is all part of growing up. (**Being at camp is like practice for growing up**)
- ▶ Frame his stay at camp in terms he can understand—camp lasts about as long as the Christmas holidays and you know how fast that goes!
- ▶ The counselors and directors are there to help you and talk with you about any problems you are having.
- ▶ Fill your letters with questions: “What new things have you tried?” “Are you making any new friends?” “What is the most fun thing you have done so far?”
- ▶ Be careful NOT to use these “DON’Ts”
- ▶ Don’t write things that incite nostalgia or would make him miss home or worry. “We’re at the beach having a great time.” “The dog is sick and at the vet.”
- ▶ Don’t bribe. “I’ll buy you a new bicycle if you make it.”
- ▶ Don’t make deals. “If you’re not better in three days, we’ll come and get you.”

Dear

I hope that by the time you get this you will be feeling much better, and not so homesick, I am sorry that you felt sad, but remember that I told you it is okay to miss us and still have a good time at camp.

Daddy and I were so anxious for you to go to camp where we knew there would be so many exciting things to do — things you can't do at home — and so many nice boys to get to know.

The times you spend at camp and the things you do there and the friends you meet can be things you will remember with pleasure for the rest of your life — But only if you try!

When you get this letter, your time at camp will be half over. There won't be many days left to have a good time, so I hope you won't spoil it by being sad. Daddy and I are looking forward to seeing you and when camp is over, and we want to hear all about the many wonderful things you have been doing.

You are a big boy now, and I have a lot of confidence in you, and I just know you can have a great time if you try.

Daddy and I love you very, very much! You are special to us, and we like to do special things with you and for you. Camp is just one of those things.

I love you!
Mama