

Homesickness

It is natural for children to experience homesickness while away from home and their regular routine. Our staff has training and experience in working with campers that are homesick. We try to work with the campers to help enable them to have fun and participate in all camp activities. *Campers are not immediately sent home when they experience homesickness.* Parents will be contacted at the discretion of the camp director.

Talk to your camper before camp about some of the things that will be different, such as strange sounds in the woods at night, sharing a tent or cabin with other girls and eating meals in a large dining hall. Prepare campers to expect to compromise with other campers, help with campers and share the counselor's attention. Talk about what will happen at camp: making new friends, learning new skills, having fun and receiving mail. Do not make promises that she can go home whenever she wants. Please encourage her to have the confidence to enjoy her experiences at camp and have the courage to be open to new friends and activities.

The following are researched suggestions from camping professionals at the American Camp Association:

Before camp:

- Visit an Open House on one of the following dates:
 - Camp Small Valley: May 3rd, 1-4pm
 - Camp Archbald: May 18th, 1-4pm
- Girls are more likely to have a positive experience if you prepare for camp together.
- Pack her favorite stuffed animal.
- Practice staying the night away from home before coming to camp.
- Do not tell your child that you will "rescue" her from camp if she doesn't like it. Don't bribe. The reward will be self-confidence and independence. Please don't tell your camper she will be able to call you, or that you will call her. They are promises that only worsen homesickness, since that becomes all a homesick child can think about.
- Acknowledge that you will miss her. Reinforce you know she will have a great time at camp & she will be safe.
- Encourage her to write home – send addressed envelopes with stamps.
- Ask your child if she thinks she will get homesick.
- Acknowledge her feelings regarding camp before she leaves.
- Let her know things at home will be taken care of - pets will be fed, etc. It's very hard for her if she feels worried or guilty for being away from home.

During camp:

- Drop off a letter or care package during check-in to ensure she receives mail.
- Send her positive letters from home.
- Send pictures of friends and family to camp.
- Avoid the temptation to pick up your child early.
- Don't feel guilty about encouraging your child to stay at camp.
- Trust your instincts; most homesick incidents will pass in a day or two.