

# HOW TO MAXIMIZE YOUR CHILD'S SUMMER ENJOYMENT... AND YOURS

## *Write lots of letters.*

*It means a lot to them. Even before they get to camp, write in advance so letters or postcards are there in the first few days. The postal service can be very slow.*

## **UNDERSTAND THEIR LETTERS HOME**

If letters from your child sound sad or upset, it will understandably worry you. But keep it in perspective. Keep in mind that the letter was written about a week beforehand. Campers' letters home are usually a "snapshot" of their feelings at that particular moment. We know that when kids feel upset, they'll take refuge in a letter home. These moments are most common in their first few days of camp. It is probable that an hour after writing, they're up, on to something new, and back to being themselves. We are aware of the kids' emotional swings, but we can use any information we can get. If you do receive a concerning letter or the sad letters become a trend, let us know.

## **UNDERSTANDING HOMESICKNESS**

It is natural to get homesick to some degree. In fact, it is developmentally appropriate. That is basically the first thing we tell a child who is missing home. They need to know that what they may be feeling is normal and not unusual. And it does not strike exclusively among any particular age, although obviously it is more prevalent among the youngest campers for whom this is the first time away from home. We do know that in the vast majority of cases, any homesickness is short-lived.

Our approach generally begins with one-on-one attention, and the staff involved may be anyone from a Junior Counselor to the Camp Directors. Usually homesickness subsides after a day or two, because the pace of camp life is so busy, ambitious and distracting away from thoughts about home. But the times when we pay most attention are during the lull periods of the day – mealtime and bedtime – when there is no particular programmed activity. Our goal is to keep the children busy – at first doing the things most familiar and enjoyable to them. Sometimes too much personalized attention by staff becomes more of a crutch than a help to the child. At that point, the emphasis will turn to getting them to be fully involved in their cabin group's activities. Often times, giving them a significant role in a project, evening program, camp show, or even a harmless prank by a cabin group, can provide a child with a sense of importance, lessening a feeling of homesickness. The good news is... like all things, time heals homesickness too. Getting over homesickness is an important milestone in a child's early camp days.

We are aware of how parents worry about their homesick child as they think of their children miles away from camp. As we have said before, if a letter home mentions feeling a bit homesick, it has likely already been resolved well before that letter is received at home. Nevertheless, we encourage you to call us if you sense discouraging trends in your child's letters home. We welcome you to share any signs of unhappiness with us. It helps us get to the bottom of any real problems. But rest assured, attentive, caring adults, among them teachers, experienced professionals and parents, are caring for your child(ren). Missing home and family is healthy. This is part of the camp experience.

## **CABIN ASSIGNMENTS ARE MADE JUST BEFORE THE KIDS ARRIVE**

As you know, campers get to request cabin mates. We always try (and are usually able) to oblige one of the two requests. We value the importance to children of being with their friends. We also value the importance of making new friends and the importance of avoiding cliques and the feeling of exclusion from a group. All of this is the essence of the camp experience. The dynamics that go into making cabin assignments are diverse, including: age, grade, requests, maturity, interests, housing resources and limitations, and much more. In fact, where possible, we think cabin groups benefit when the campers come from a variety of geographic locations. The bottom line is always the campers' well being and happiness. Trust us to provide that, and please convey that assurance to your children before they come to camp.

