



Guide for Parents Of First Year Campers (Also valuable to parents of returning campers)

Many first year campers have never been away from home for an extended period of time. Therefore, they may be reluctant to leave friends and family. It is with this in mind that we offer the following suggestions.

Homesickness is a natural result of changes in a child's environment. Parents can take courage from the fact that many campers do not experience this, and those who do usually recover swiftly. All of us at camp, from the directors down, are prepared to help your youngster with the adjustment, expedited with your cooperation.

The following suggestions are designed to help you prepare your child for the enriching experience that camp provides.

AT HOME

If your youngster exhibits concern about going to camp, encourage him or her to talk about it. Your child is worried about the unknown and is looking for your understanding. It is helpful to tell your child that such concerns are normal and that many other campers feel the same way. If there are specific worries about bunkmates, activities, or anything else, feel free to contact us.

It is imperative that you not be ambivalent with your child regarding his/her length of stay at camp. He/she will be there for the full time period and should understand this. A try-out approach is a sure loser, certain to create a serious homesickness problem. **Never, never tell the camper that if he/she is unhappy, you will allow him/her to come home early.** On the other hand, don't make your child feel that he or she must go to camp, no matter how enthusiastic you may feel about the benefits of the experience. Try to emphasize the positive aspects of the camp experience. Do not emphasize how much you will miss him/her. If you have anxiety about sending your son or daughter to camp, please do not express these feelings to your child. We will be happy to help you with any concerns. It is imperative that you be positive when discussing your child's upcoming camp experience with him/her. Let your child know that we have supportive staff at camp to assist with their adjustment in a warm, nurturing way.

Reassure your child that everything at home will be the same as when he or she left: the pets will be cared for, possessions protected, etc. If, for some reason this is not possible, let us know so that we can offer effective support. When writing to your child, please do not make them feel as if they are missing out on events going on at home or on your travels. This could lead to additional homesickness.

Please notify us of any upsetting event that may have occurred prior to camp, or is to occur during the summer. This might include illness or death in the family, poor school grades, divorce, or moving to a new house or city.

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When seeing your child off at the bus, make your parting brief and pleasant. Long good-byes and floods of tears are upsetting. Please keep your farewells brief on Visiting Day.

Please be sure that you complete the medical, profile, and transportation forms as quickly and thoroughly as possible. While the camp is designed to provide instruction and recreation in many areas, certain youngsters may have a more rewarding summer experience if encouraged in specific activities. Our knowledge of your child's interests (and phobias) can be helpful in arranging the most appropriate program from the wide variety of activities offered.

AT CAMP

Your cooperation is needed to ensure a successful summer for your child. Most children are resilient and assimilate readily into new situations. Parents, however, sometimes find it difficult to adjust to the youngster being away from home. To prevent any negative effects on your children, be sure to write frequently with good news and a cheerful tone. Be chatty and pleasant. There is an outside possibility that we will call you to help us with your child's transition to camp life. If we do, please realize that we have years of experience in this area and might need you to work with us. Together, we can ensure a safe and happy camp experience for your child.

CONCLUSION

Camp is an experience that cannot be duplicated in any other environment, offering the opportunity for your child to achieve the poise and confidence that comes with the mastery of skills and the sociability developed as a vital participant in a structured and democratic society of his or her peers. At Sports & Arts Center at Island Lake, we have assembled the best staff available. Countless hours throughout the year have gone into preparation and evaluation of our program. We feel that you have chosen wisely in sending your child to our camp and we are well prepared to serve the needs of your youngster with your help.