

## HOMESICKNESS

Homesickness is a normal experience in the process of growing up, and every counselor at Kaleidoscope Camp is trained to help a homesick camper through encouragement, lots of activity, and building new friendships. Parents can help by writing friendly and encouraging letters, writing often, and not promising a camper s/he can come home if they get homesick. Please feel free to call and talk with the Program Director at any time. Plan ahead with mail; many letters arrive after a child has left Camp.

Here is some helpful information from the American Camping Association website on homesickness. Please check out their website for additional homesickness tips.

- Encourage your child's independence throughout the year. Practice separations, such as sleepovers at a friend's house, can simulate the camp environment.
- Involve your child in the process of choosing a camp. The more that the child owns the decision, the more comfortable the child will feel being at camp.
- Discuss what camp will be like before your child leaves. Consider role-playing anticipated situations, such as using a flashlight to find the bathroom.
- Reach an agreement ahead of time on calling each other. If your child's camp has a no-phone-calls policy, honor it.
- Send a note or care package ahead of time to arrive the first day of camp. Acknowledge, in a positive way, that you will miss your child. For example, you can say "I am going to miss you, but I know that you will have a good time at camp."
- Don't bribe. Linking a successful stay at camp to a material object sends the wrong message. The reward should be your child's new found confidence and independence.
- Pack a personal item from home, such as a stuffed animal.
- When a "rescue call" comes from the child, offer calm reassurance and put the time frame into perspective. Avoid the temptation to take the child home early.
- Talk candidly with the camp director to obtain his/her perspective on your child's adjustment.
- Don't feel guilty about encouraging your child to stay at camp. For many children, camp is a first step toward independence and plays an important role in their growth and development.
- Trust your instincts with most incidents of homesickness. If your child is not eating or sleeping because of anxiety or depression, it is time to go home. However, don't make your child feel like a failure if their stay at camp is cut short. Focus on the positive and encourage your child to try camp again next year.