



Preventing Homesickness at YMCA Camp Piomingo

Homesickness is preventable! By preparing your child ahead of time for their stay at camp, distress over homesickness can be diminished or avoided altogether. Our trained staff is skilled at helping campers overcome homesickness. Here are some tips for parents to do with their campers before and during their camping session.

Before Summer Camp

- Attend one of our Open House events! It's a great opportunity to introduce your child to our very capable staff and our beautiful campus at Camp Piomingo. Encourage your child to ask questions while they are here. This gives your child a sense of control and lets them know what to expect while at camp. Seeing familiar faces and surroundings can go a long way in avoiding feelings of anxiety.
- Utilize our Camp Piomingo website as a starting point for a discussion with your child on what to expect at camp. Please be sure to click on our new short video link on our Home Page showing our campers enjoying various activities at Camp Piomingo.
- Practice time away from home by arranging short 2-3 day sleep-over visits with friends or relatives.
- Encourage friends to attend camp with your child. This will offer them a sense of familiarity in a new environment. Your child and his/her friend will be able to bond and share this camping experience together.
- Practice writing letters beforehand. Make sure to pack a supply of self-addressed, stamped envelopes, pen and paper when sending your child off to camp. Keep your letters to your child light and happy and positive.
- Be sure to review the Parent Information Guide available on the website. It will provide important information about pick-up, drop-off, medications, necessary forms, etc and will help answer questions relating to your child's stay at camp. Please review the rules and expectations with your child prior to his/her stay at camp.

Conversations to Have with Your Child

- Emphasize to your child how fun camp will be! A conversation about experiencing different activities, making new friends, and enjoying nature can go a long way in exciting your child about attending camp.
- Involve your camper in the decision making process of attending camp. This enables your child to have a sense of control.
- Assure your child that missing home and family is a very normal, healthy experience. So too, is the experience of being away and adapting to new people and surroundings.

- Before sending your child off to camp, try to avoid comments like “What am I going to do without you while you’re away?” or, “I hope you are going to be alright.” Such innocent comments may spark anxiety in your child and make them worry about you and what is going on at home.
- Sit down with your child and a calendar to show them precisely how long they will be attending camp and how much fun they will be having here. Review the daily schedule and talk about what activities they have to look forward to.
- Encourage your child to make new friends and get to know their cabin counselors.

Communication with Your Child While he/she is at Camp

- Once your camper settles in their cabin on Check-in Day, please do not linger. Make your good-byes “short and sweet” and above all, positive!
- Please do not promise your child that you will come and get them if they get homesick. This will only set them up for failure.
- Please **do not send your child to camp with a cell phone**. Cell phones are prohibited at Piomingo for the safety of your child as well as the safety of other campers, specifically the use of camera phones. Also, cell phone use can increase homesickness rather than decrease it because the child will begin to focus more on home and less on their experiences at camp. Your child may feel disconnected from home without the use of their cell phone. However, this is key to their growth and development while at camp. Cell phone use is detrimental to your child’s stay at camp. Please leave them at home.
- Explain to your child that you will not be able to call them while at camp. In the first few hours of homesickness, campers may ask to call home. The staff is trained to help children transition during this time of separation anxiety. In the event that the Administration Staff feel that a parent needs to be contacted, we will be sure to call for advice on how we can continue to help your child progress.
- Visit Bunk1.com to view photos or purchase Bunk Notes. Bunk1 is a great opportunity for parents to see into their child’s week at camp. Show your child the website and express to them how excited you will be to see photographs of all the cool activities they will be doing while at Piomingo.

After Camp

- After camp is over, talk with your child about their stay. Be sure to ask them specific questions about their experience such as “Did you make any friends?” or “Who were your counselors?” or “What were your favorite activities?”. Show them that you are interested in how they did and get some details about their favorite activities.
- Please complete the online evaluation about your camper’s experience while at Piomingo. This will help us know where we excelled and what we could improve on. It also helps us reward our staff for a job well done.

Separation from home and family during summer camp can be an instrumental ‘life training’ experience for children by expanding their independence while encouraging self confidence, self reliance, and social skills that they will need as they develop into young adulthood and beyond. To read more about homesickness, please visit the American Camping Association’s website at www.campparents.org or clinical psychologist Dr. Christopher Thurber’s website at www.campspirit.com.