

Missing Home and Homesickness

Missing home is a good thing! When people miss home, it means there's lots of love in that home.

Some factors which might cause Missing Home to become Homesickness:

- Over-attachment between camper and parent
- Attachment to friends or pets back home; lack of friends or pets at camp
- Longing for "city life" and customary amusements – TV, video games, etc
- Being unaccustomed to doing work
- Lack of skills in doing camp activities
- Being sent to camp against the child's will
- Timidity – fear of the dark, fear of being alone
- Physical factors – indigestion, constipation, allergies
- Absence of someone to lean on
- Noticeable physical handicaps – stuttering, crossed eyes, etc

What to look for – Be alert to catch it early:

- Watch for the camper who tends to "blow off" Camp activities
- Watch for the camper who has a tendency to go off by him or herself.
- Watch especially around mealtime and bedtime.
- Frequent requests to visit the Health Officer for no obvious physical reasons.
- Avoiding use of the bathroom.

Do not:

- Do not shame or publicly embarrass a homesick camper.
- Do not send the camper to the Support Staff, Assistant Camp Director, Nurse, or Camp Director right away.
- Do not tell a camper they can call home. (Although this may happen later in the process)
- Do not tell a camper they can go home early. (This is an absolute last resort)

Do

- Let the camper know that everyone, even you, miss home – and that is a good thing!
- Reinforce the idea of "making it through" the session, which is an important personal goal.
- The Counselor and Support Staff should discuss the problem so they are "on the same page."
- Review the Personal History Form and Get to Know You Letters.
- Find interests and activities that appeal to the camper and keep him or her busy.
- Make the camper feel important and needed by assigning him or her a special duty.
- Find a buddy for the camper – perhaps another staff member.
- Make sure the camper has something to do, with a friend.
- Let your Support Staff know you have a potential homesick camper.
- Ignore hysterical behavior – it is for attention. Deal with the problem when it is over.

