



Preparing your child to spend time away from home

One of your main concerns as a parent might be whether or not your child is ready to spend time away from home. You might be nervous that they're not fully prepared for the experience or that they'll get homesick while they're away. From our experience...

*A little homesickness is normal in the beginning.
Once they adapt, they won't ever want to leave!*

We want you to know that it's normal for children to feel a little homesick during their first few days at camp. Don't forget, they're spending time out of their comfort zones, learning, growing, and maturing. All this change and growth can be scary at first. In most cases, they just need some time to adjust to the new routine, new friends, new language, etc. Once they adjust to camp life, they usually don't ever want to leave.

Nevertheless, it's a good idea to prepare your child to spend time away from home to reduce the possibility of homesickness and speed up the adaptation process. Here's what you can do to help your child adapt to their time away from home:

How to prepare your child to spend time away from home

1. Practice spending time away from home

Some children adapt to camp life and their time away from home much faster than others. Usually, it has a lot to do with the child's own previous experience with time away from home. Children who are used to sleeping over at friends' houses or with extended family often adapt to camp life more quickly. Their comfort zones are bigger, and staying away from home for two weeks at a summer camp isn't such a drastic change for them.

As the camp start date approaches, encourage your child to spend a weekend or two with friends or at a grandparent's house. The experience will help expand their comfort zones little by little so spending two weeks away from home at camp doesn't feel like such a drastic change.

2. Talk about the possibility of homesickness with your child

Children usually have high expectations for the camp and expect to feel good, make friends, and adjust to camp life right away. But, for many of our students, it really is their first experience outside of their comfort zones. As adults, we know that it's natural to feel uncomfortable when we're challenging ourselves and trying new things. For children, it's easy to confuse this uneasiness for the idea that they simply don't want to be at the camp and won't enjoy their time. The truth is, while their first few days might be a bit tough, by the time it's time to go home, they usually don't want to leave.

Talk to your child about the possibility of feeling homesick during the first few days so they're not blindsided. It'll help your child to keep an open mind, focus on the positive, and adapt to camp life quicker.

3. Encourage them to focus on the positive

In the beginning, when children are still adapting to change, it's easy for them to focus on all the things they miss from home and compare them to their experience at camp. They might talk about how they miss their bed, or your delicious, home-cooked meals, or maybe their friends, or their video games. The fact of the matter is, not everything at camp will be as great as it is at home. There's nothing like sleeping in your own bed or your mother's cooking. But, spending time at a sleep-away summer camp offers a long list of incredible opportunities that your child can't experience at home – fun camp activities, excursions, sports practice daily, making friends with international students, etc.

Remind your child that their bed and your food will be waiting for them when they get back from camp. Help them focus on all the rest of the incredible experiences and opportunities they get to experience while at camp.

4. Encourage them to make new friends at camp

One of the greatest benefits a residential, sleep-away camp can offer to your child is the opportunity to make friends that will last a lifetime. Attending a summer camp away from home is an exciting, scary, and completely unique experience. All campers experience similar intense emotions during their stay - first nervousness, then excitement, then joy, and finally, a special connection to a memory and an experience that changed their lives forever.

Encourage your child to share their emotions and feelings with other campers. Soon, they'll realize they're not alone, and that, in the end, these intense feelings have created a special, irreplaceable bond that will last a lifetime.

5. Encourage them to speak up

One of the most comforting truths about residential, sleep-away camps is that camp monitors and staff members have a lot of experience dealing with homesickness or any other kind of camper concerns. As soon as they hear that a student is having any kind of issue, they do everything in their power to solve the problem and help the child feel more comfortable. All your child has to do is speak up. They can either express their concerns directly to a camp monitor or simply let you know. **Then, you can contact us at Ertheo, and we'll contact the camp directly to sort out any issues.**

Your child might have certain worries or fears about their time at camp. Let them know that all they have to do is talk to you or directly to a camp monitor. Camp monitors are there to make sure your child has the best experience possible.

6. As a parent, try to remain calm

As your child adjusts to change and time away from home, they might experience many intense emotions like anxiety and discomfort. Naturally, as you listen to your child express their feelings, you might start to feel a bit anxious as well. It's really important for you to remain calm during this time so you can help ease your child's anxiety. Most problems, including trouble adapting to time away from home, are completely solvable.

When your child talks to you about their concerns and anxiety (either before arriving to the camp or while they're at the camp), it's important for you to remain calm so you can help ease your child's anxiety.

7. Send them away with special items from home

Does your child have anything that has special meaning to them? Sometimes something as simple as pictures of the family or a soft, special blanket is enough to comfort a child during their time away from home.

They're going to a new place where nothing is really familiar. One or two familiar items in their suitcase can help them feel close to home.

*The best thing you can do for your child to help them adapt to camp life is support them, encourage them, and reassure them that **everything will be just fine.***