

## Handling Homesickness

Camp parents often have many questions about homesickness: Can I call my child? Can my child call me if he is homesick? What if my child doesn't know anybody?



First, understand that missing home or "homesickness" is normal. Studies have shown that 97% of campers in a two-week program experience some degree of homesickness. While our camps are only a week, our campers often miss home - it's normal and a sign your child loves you and misses something about life at home! Some campers miss siblings or parents, others miss their pet or Mom's cooking. While they miss something about home, this usually does not stop them from having a great time here. In fact, at the end of the week they may not want to leave their new camp friends.

Our days are structured to minimize the impact of homesickness. For example, after registering your camper, the camper is quickly integrated into the assigned cabin group and kept very busy with a variety of activities designed to keep their minds and bodies active. They literally do not have time to think about home. The second day is very similar. Our counselors are trained as part of their training to spend some one-on-one time with each camper to make the camper feel at home in the new surroundings and a valued part of the camp community.

If a camper experiences homesickness, our counselor will provide the camper several strategies to overcome the sad feelings. Homesickness is something everyone can learn to cope with and overcoming it can build and nurture the camper's confidence and independence. When a camper experiences a strong case of homesickness, we teach the camper how to cope and how to overcome these feelings.

A few things can interfere when overcoming homesickness. Allowing the camper to call home or the parent to call the camper only makes the homesickness worse. This is one reason we do not allow campers to have cell phones.

Here are some tips that will help prevent homesickness:

- Make camp decisions together. Involving the child in the decisions builds a sense of control.
- Arrange lots of practice overnight time away from home with friends or relatives.
- Show the camper the fun camp activities in the brochure or the web site.
- Share your optimism, not your anxiety.
- Do not make a pick-up deal in the event of homesickness.
- Do not say to your camper, "Your brother didn't make it the full week, so it's OK if you don't."
- Be positive about you camper attending camp and encourage him/her to have a great time.

While your camper is here at camp, keep emails positive and encouraging while trying not to dwell on topics that might make the camper homesick. Remember: Homesickness is part of normal child development. Our job should be to help children grow through the experience, not to avoid the topic altogether. Thanks for sending your child to Camp Io-Dis-E-Ca and please call us anytime you have questions.