



A Word About Homesickness.....

First time 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?

The first thing you need to know is 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 intensive two week staff 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; e.g., encourage the camper to stay busy with fun, physical activities, to remember and recall the fun activities of the day and the cool things you can do at camp, to make new friends, to talk with the staff, etc. Homesickness is something everyone can learn to cope with. Overcoming a bout of homesickness will build and nurture the camper's confidence and independence. The fact that second-year campers are usually less homesick than first-year campers is evidence of this important growth. Thus, when a camper experiences a strong case of homesickness, we teach the camper how to cope and how to overcome these feelings. Allowing the camper to call home or the parent to call the camper only makes the homesickness worse. Please help us as we encourage your camper to grow this experience by NOT hiding a cell phone in your camper's luggage and telling him/her to call home if he/she misses you.

There are a few things you can do and three you should NEVER do with your camper to prevent a strong case of 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.
- NEVER ever make a pick-up deal in the event of homesickness.
- NEVER say to your camper, "Your brother didn't make it the full week, so it's OK if you don't."
- When saying goodbye to your camper NEVER say, "what will I do without you" or "I hope you will be OK." Rather, ENCOURAGE your camper to have a great time.

While your camper is here at camp, NEVER send an email telling how much you miss the camper or tell the camper the fun things you are doing at home that the camper will miss. Instead, ENCOURAGE your camper to enjoy the many activities camp offers. Preparing your child for this amazing growth experience will pay huge dividends. After a week here, you'll see an increase in your child's confidence, social skills, and leadership. And while your camper is here, you can enjoy a well-deserved break from full-time parenthood. 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.