

Quite often first time campers ask, "Can my mom come with me?" As a parent, you might hear, "If I don't like it, do I have to stay?" It is very common for children to have some anxiety when leaving home. For many, this will be the first time away from home. Upon arrival, the newness of the camp environment, making new friends, and the natural longing for the "old and familiar" make moments of homesickness happen for a camper. Experience has taught us to expect the symptoms of homesickness to occur over the first few days of camp – often during rest period and/or lights out. That's why we start each camper's experience with an activity and then a rousing time at dinner so that new and returning campers feel part of the community. If feelings of homesickness occur, a few conversations with counselors or head staff and the new "routines" of the cabin help to overcome any problems.

Talking with your child is a great way to show support as your child gets ready to take this important step on the road to being more independent and resilient. For you as a parent, it can give you more peace of mind as you allow your child to participate safely in a broader world.

To help reduce homesickness we have a few recommendations for both before and during camp.....

### **PRIOR TO CAMP**

- Have a positive family attitude.
- "Live out of a suitcase" for a couple of days.
- Discuss expected camp activities.
- Mark a calendar with days until camp starts- HOORAY!!!
- Give gentle encouragement that missing home is "ok."
- Go shopping for the things he/she will need at camp.
- Avoid phrases such as "If you stay until Wednesday, then we will come and pick you up."
- Pack things to go to camp together!!!

### **DURING CAMP**

- When writing letters to your child, avoid phrases such as "we miss you," "wish you were here," or detailed accounts of what siblings and the family are doing. Instead, ask about camp activities, counselors, specific programs, etc.
- Pack "surprises" or notes of encouragement amongst your camper's belongings.
- Express your confidence in his/her ability to be away from home and explain that the counselors are there to assist them if he/she should need anything as you are departing.