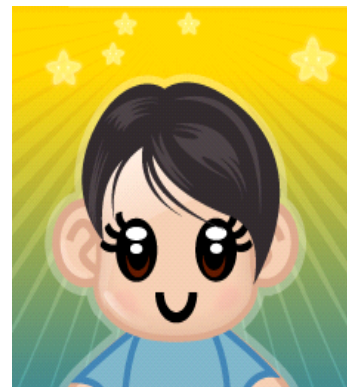




TIPS FOR PREVENTING HOMESICKNESS



Dear Parent or Guardian:

Do you remember the first time you were away from home? Did you make it? Sure you did. You're still here, aren't you? Releasing your child and allowing him or her to grow is one of the greatest contributions you can make to their future. Here are some tips to make it easier on your child, and let's be honest here, on you.

Anticipate success not failure. Do NOT tell your child that you will come and get him or her if they "don't like it." Instead, talk about all the new experiences they are going to have. Talk about how they will meet different people and how neat it is that God keeps the world from being boring by creating lots of differences. Talk about how excited you are to see them growing up and able to take care of themselves. Find out about the camp and talk about how awesome it will be to swim with new friends or stomp in the creek or (take a deep breath) get dirty without having to worry about it. Did you go to camp when you were a kid? Talk about how much fun you had.

Love your child. Some kids feel guilty about leaving their family and/or pets. Some are afraid that things will change while they're gone. Let them know that you will "hold down the fort" while they're away. (In other words, don't choose this time to dispose of their "blankie" or Teddy). Let them know you love them ALL the time: when they are with you; when they are away, and when they come home. Tell them that, yes, you will miss them, but you are really excited about their opportunity to go away on their own. Tell them you expect them to tell you all about it when you come to pick them up at the end of camp.

Try a trial run. If your child has never been away from home, perhaps you can arrange for a sleepover with a friend or relative. Use the strategies suggested above and build on success.

What not to do. Do NOT tell your child you will phone or email. This is difficult to arrange at camp. Once upon a time, we were not in constant communication with each other. Please give your child this gift. You will be giving them the gift of space, of silence, of learning who they are separate from you.

Feeling afraid? No, not your child, you. It's hard to be away from your son or daughter for the first time. Remember this: As much as you love them, God loves them, and you, even more. Trust in God.

