



Dear Parents, Family Members and Guardians:

Sending your child to camp is very exciting and at the same very nerve wrecking! We are aware of this, and I want to take a moment to let you know that your child will have a very safe and memorable week with our highly trained staff. Your child is going to have the adventure of a lifetime, and will return home to you a changed person – in a good way with a sense of confidence and independence! We already know that we will have a few homesick children, but we know we have homesick parents by the dozens!! Homesickness can prevent your child from a successful experience at Arrowhead Ranch, so below are some tips to help you be a stronger support for your child.

- **NEVER say “If you feel homesick, I’ll come and get you.”** This conveys a message of doubt and pity that undermines children’s confidence and independence. Pick-up deals become mental crutches and self-fulfilling prophecies for children as soon as they arrive at camp.
- **Encourage your child’s independence throughout the year.** Practice separations, such as sleepovers at a friend’s house, can stimulate the camp environment.
- **Discuss what camp will be like before your child leaves.** Talk about the exciting adventures and rugged hikes in the mountains, having a fun week with their friends!
- **Reach an agreement ahead of time that there are no phones and no calls allowed.** Phone calls are not allowed, especially in homesick situations because it almost guarantees that a child will end up leaving camp early. We encourage toughing it out and at the end of a week the pride and confidence a child grows in them is visual and rewarding.
- **Send a note or a care package!** Remember students may not have snacks and candy but this is a great way to remind the child they are both loved and missed – but in a positive way. For example, you can say “I am going to miss you, but I know that you will have a great time at camp.”
- **Don’t use bribery.** Linking a successful stay at camp to a material object sends the wrong message. The reward should be your child’s new found confidence and independence.
- **Pack a personal item from home,** such as a stuffed animal, pillow pet or special blanket!
- **Don’t feel guilty about encouraging your child to stay the whole week at camp!** For many children, camp is a first step toward independence and plays an important role in their growth and development.
- **Give your child pre-addressed, stamped envelopes or postcard** so that they can keep you informed of camp activities.
- Although there are benefits in keeping youngsters informed of what’s going on at home, do not go into great detail since the young adventurers might feel they’re missing something back home. As camp professionals who have worked with thousands of children, advise you not to mention how much you miss them or that the dog and cat miss them.
- **DON’T WORRY!** Your natural reaction is to call and check on how your camper is doing. Remember, the camp staff is trained to recognize and deal with symptoms of homesickness – they are in good hands!

Here are more resources for you to reference if interested:

- Preventing homesickness – www.acacamps.org/media_center/how_to_choose/homesickness.php
- Understanding homesickness – www.kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind/emotions/homesickness.html

Good Luck and remember it is only four or five days, your child will be in your arms again with lots of adventures to tell you about. A little encouragement and support from you will translate into large rewards for your child!

Charlie Young
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