

Things That Do NOT Help Homesickness

What Kids Said:

1. Sitting around doing nothing. *The more I sat around, the worse I felt. I just thought about home and started feeling sorry for myself. It seemed like time went by so slowly.* —Fred, age 9
2. Giving up. *I thought there was nothing I could do to make my homesickness better. It was like, 'OK, I feel this way and I'm always gonna feel this way.' I didn't know what to think or do to make things better.* —Mollie, age 8
3. Wishing that things were different. *I just wished that I never felt homesick at all. And I wished that things at camp were more like things at home. I wished my parents would just come and get me right away. It didn't help.* —Charlie, age 11
4. Doing something to try to get back home on your own. *I thought about running away, but then I realized how dangerous that would be, like hitchhiking or something. What if some crazy person picked me up? After I talked with my cabin leader, I realized that wouldn't help my homesickness and it wouldn't be safe. I was lucky, though. My cabin leader gave me a lot of good ideas for feeling less homesick. Some of them really work.* —Ana, age 10
5. Doing something angry or mean to try to get sent home. *I thought about trying to break a camp rule to get sent home, but then I realized it wouldn't help my homesickness. If I got in trouble, I'd probably just feel worse. Instead, I talked to my counselor, and that was pretty cool.* —Hsin, age 13
6. Spending time by yourself. *A lot of times I just like to go up to the top of Hall Lodge and think. It's really pretty up there. But if I'm feeling homesick, it's not good for me to be alone. I just end up thinking a lot about my parents, and that makes it worse. Instead, I try to find some friends and just hang out together. We like to sing.* —Laurie, age 9

Get Ready To Go

And Beat the Homesickness Monster

- Practice walking around your yard or house at night with a flashlight. Wear shoes or sandals, just like you will at camp.
- Practice talking with other kids and adults about how you feel. Tell them what's on your mind!
- Bring something special from home to camp, if you think it will make you feel good.
- Bring pre-stamped and pre-addressed envelopes, so you'll be ready to write letters.
- Pack and shop for camp with your parents. When kids and parents prepare together, it's more fun.
- Go over the opening day of camp in your head. When will you leave the house? Who will be coming in the car? The fewer surprises, the better. If plans do change, go with the flow.
- Read the list of Things That Help Homesickness and pick your favorite strategies.



If your homesick feelings bother you while you're at camp, try thinking and doing what's on the following list of "Things That Help Homesickness." See what works best for you. Maybe you can even invent some ways to make your homesickness better that aren't on the list. Avoid stuff from the list of "Things That Do NOT Help Homesickness."

To give you a head start, here are the two things work for almost all kids who feel a little homesick:

- Do a Fun Activity
- Talk with Your Cabin Leader

Like we said before, cabin leaders enjoy talking with kids. That's one reason they choose to work at overnight camps. But your cabin leader can't read your mind. If you're feeling bad on the inside, it might not show on the outside. You need to tell him if you're feeling bad. No matter what he is doing, he's never too busy to talk with you. He can give you lots of suggestions for how to feel better and have more fun at camp.

As the old saying goes, "Time flies when you're having fun." It's true. Before you know it, your camp stay will be done, and you'll be packing up your stuff and heading home. You'll notice that you feel proud and happy. Maybe you'll be back next summer to see your new friends. We're sure you'll have a great time!

Kids know the best ways to deal with homesick feelings during camp

We asked more than 1,000 kids what they thought and did to cope with homesick feelings. Some things helped, but other things didn't. Here's what all those kids said about getting over their homesickness.

Things That Help

Homesickness:

What Kids Said:

1. Do something fun.

When I felt a little homesick, I just tried to stay busy. I did something with one of my friends, or I went to an activity. When I was doing something fun, I wasn't thinking about home, so I wasn't homesick.

—Mark, age 8

Things That Help

Homesickness:

What Kids Said:

2. Do something to feel closer to home.

There's a lot I do at camp to feel closer to home. I hang out with friends from home, I write lots of letters to my parents, and I look at the picture of my family that I brought. Some kids don't like to look at family pictures because it makes them feel more homesick, but it works for me.

—Sarah, age 9

3. Think about the good side of being at camp.

For me, looking on the bright side means thinking about all the fun things to do at camp. At home, I can't do archery or sailing. We have a pool, but the lake here at camp is better. Plus, there are more friends to play with at camp than at home. When I remember all the things I have at camp that I don't have at home, I don't feel so homesick.

—Phillip, age 11

4. Try to be happy and have fun.

When I have homesick feelings, I just change the way I feel. I mean, sometimes homesickness can feel bad, but actually be good. It means that you love your parents, and that's a good thing. So while I'm at camp, I just try to be happy and have fun.

—José, age 12

5. Remind yourself that your stay at camp is not that long after all and that you'll be home pretty soon.

What do I think or do when I feel homesick? Well, I tell myself that four weeks is pretty short. I mean, I've already been here a week, and it's gone by really fast. School lasts thirty-nine weeks and camp lasts only four. When I remember how short camp is, I know I can make it through. I don't get that homesick actually.

—Natalie, age 9

6. Talk with someone who can make you feel better.

Sometimes when you feel homesick, you feel really alone. I mean, there's lots of people around at camp, but you still feel like you're the only one who is homesick. When I talked to my cabin leader, she told me that it was normal. I found out that almost every kid feels a little homesick at camp. After I talked to Sina I felt a lot better. She helped me think of ways to make my homesick feelings go away.

—Kath, age 13

