

Preparing Your Child for 4-H Camp



"Summer camp is more than a vacation for children," says Bruce Muchnick, Ed.D., a licensed psychologist who works extensively with day and resident camps. " As a parent, there are a few things to consider to increase the opportunity for a rewarding camp experience for your child." Some helpful suggestions provided by Dr. Muchnick and the American Camp Association include:

Consider camp as a learning experience

- This is an opportunity for your child to explore a world bigger than his/her neighborhood and a chance for you and your child to practice "letting go."
- Letting go allows children to develop autonomy and a stronger sense of self, make new friends, develop new social skills, learn about teamwork, be creative, and more.
- This time also allows parents an opportunity to take care of themselves so that they will feel refreshed when their child returns home.

Prepare for camp together

- Decisions about camp — like where to go and what to pack — should be a joint venture, keeping in mind your child's maturity.
- If your child feels a part of the decision-making process, his/her chances of having a positive experience will improve.

Talk about concerns

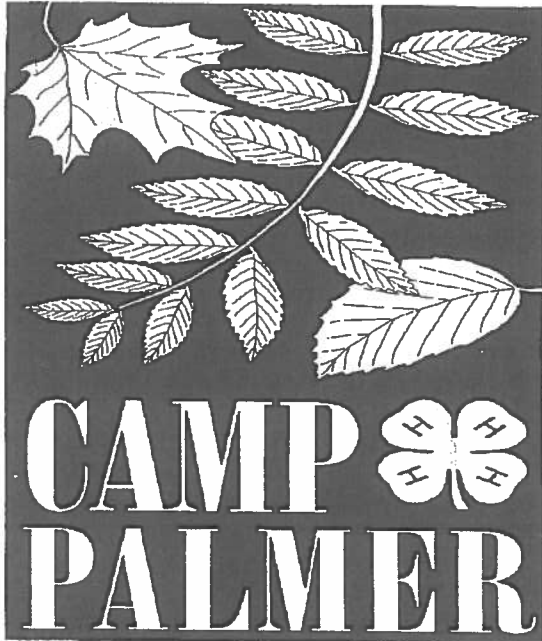
- As the first day of camp nears, some children experience uneasiness about going away. Encourage your child to talk about these feelings rather than acting on what you think his/her feelings may be. Communicate confidence in your child's ability to handle being away from home.

Have realistic expectations

- Camp, like the rest of life, has high and low points. Not every moment will be filled with wonder and excitement. Encourage your child to have a reasonable and realistic view of camp.
- Discuss both the ups and downs your child may experience. Your child should not feel pressured to succeed at camp, either. The main purposes of camp are to relax & have fun.

Hand in Hand

Preparing Your Child for Camp



For more tips on child development, visit

www.CampParents.org

Together — Talk about Camp as a Learning Experience

- Explore a bigger world.
- Gain a stronger sense of self.
- Make new friends.
- Learn to be more creative.
- Enjoy a new activity.

Together — Prepare for Camp

- Shape the talk about camp to a child's age and developmental stage.
- Make decisions as a family.
- Include your child in camp selection, activity choices, packing.
- Practice short separations — overnight with a friend, a weekend with grandparents.

Together — Talk about Special Concerns

- Acknowledge your child's feelings.
- Express confidence in your child.
- Help your child understand that slight homesickness is normal.
- Share your own camp experiences.

Together — Have Realistic Expectations

- Discuss the range of feelings that camp may evoke.
- Communicate that camp isn't a competition.
- Plan how to stay in touch during camp.

If your child's
camp isn't
ACA accredited,
ask why not?



www.CampParents.org