

The Psychology of Preparing for Camp:

DON'TS

- **DON'T:** Express worry yourself — kids pick up on *your* fears or anxieties and then take them on themselves.
- **DON'T:** Make a “Pick Up Deal” — never promise that escaping camp is just a phone call away.
- **DON'T:** Bribe your kids to go to camp — camp *is* the reward. Bribing them makes camp seem like something to dread.

DO'S

- **DO:** Express optimism — camp WILL be fun, exciting, and interesting!
- **DO:** Express confidence — you chose camp for your children for its excellent counselors and tutors who are eager to spend time with them and teach them new things!
- **DO:** Answer your child's questions about homesickness honestly — yes, sometimes missing home or another emotional challenge will happen and **that's a natural part of learning and growing.**
- **DO:** Share your own camp experience or a positive anecdote about the first time you did something away from home and family.
- **DO:** Share your own excitement about your child going to camp. For example: “You're going to have a great time at camp, and I'm going to have a great time, too! We're going to do XYZ while you're gone and I'm excited about it. Let's plan a pizza night for afterward just to share stories when we all get back!”

NET-NET: A great parenting tool

In the camp world the parent preparation skill we encourage is called **NET-NET** (thanks to camp guru [Dr. Chris Thurber!](#)). It's a simple, double-duty acronym for helping you *and* your child to get ready for camp.

On the DON'T **NET** side you:

Never make a pickup deal.

Encourage perseverance.

Teamwork, not trauma — work together for a positive outcome.

On the DO **NET** side you:

Normalize — camp is a regular and exciting part of being yourself and growing and changing.

Empathize — feelings are real, and let's keep them in perspective.

Teach [coping skills](#) — encourage letter writing, deep breathing, self encouragement — “I can do it!”

The NET result is a successful preparation *for* and *time at* CAMP!

Resources

Here are a couple more resources where you can find more tips on homesickness if you want to explore this topic more:

- [*Homesick and Happy: How Time Away from Parents Can Help a Child Grow*](#) by Michael Thompson
- American Camp Association article with Dr. Christopher Thurber [on homesickness](#)