

Preparing Your Child to Attend Camp

For many children, time spent at Lonehollow is their first experience in living away from home without mom to wake them up, help them dress, fix their plates, and have their backpacks ready to go each day. While at camp, all these responsibilities now fall on the child. For many parents and children, the thought of this can be concerning.

Following are some suggestions for you on how to help prepare your child for his/her time away from home.

1. Involve your child in the decision-making processes related to camp, i.e., which camp to attend and when, what classes to take, what clothes to take, what pictures to bring along, etc. Having ownership over even the smallest decisions will help your child by increasing their perceptions of control over the separation.
2. Practice letting your child be on his/her own. Make sure he/she makes the bed each morning, serves his/her plate at the table, gets dressed for the day without help, etc.
3. Let your daughters wash and fix their own hair. Many are perplexed at how to use a ponytail holder on their own and get it to successfully hold back all of their hair.
4. Show your child how to fold and pack their clothes neatly so he/she can keep them neatly stowed away.
5. Let your child be responsible for keeping up with his/her own belongings and resist the temptation to always pick up after him/her. Sometimes it is better to learn a lesson the hard way about leaving things "lying around" and even better to learn it in the comforts of home than at camp.
6. Help your child learn to shower, dress and prepare for either the day's activities or bedtime in a timely fashion. With many kids sharing a bathroom, time may be limited.
7. Teach your child to write and address a letter. Consider sending pre-addressed, stamped envelopes with him/her to make it easier.
8. Speak openly about the possibility of homesickness and help your child know how to defend against it. Don't promise to immediately pick them up if they become homesick or say they don't like it. This will only send a message to your child that you are not confident he/she has the skills to cope with homesickness and can ultimately put you in a very difficult situation.
9. Practice good table manners with your child to prepare them for family-style dining. Teach him/her to appropriately use utensils, how to cut meat, etc.
10. Learn as much about camp in advance together with your child as possible. Arm him/her with names of staff members and what to expect by reviewing camp videos, brochures, mailings, web pages, etc. Walk through the first day so your child will be mentally prepared to leave you.
11. If possible, try to meet with other children who have or will be attending Lonehollow to let your child get to know them and ask questions in advance.

12. Resist the urge to tell your child over and over how much you will miss him/her and you don't know what you will do without him/her at home. This will only make your child feel guilty for leaving you and increase the risk of homesickness. Instead tell him/her you will miss having him/her at home but know what a fantastic experience it will be and you can't wait to hear all about it.

13. Be sure to ask your child about any concerns or questions he or she has. If you can't answer them, talk to a camp staff member in advance so you can't make sure your child feels confident.

Finally, think about ways to keep yourself busy so you don't worry as much about your children while they are gone. Remember you can keep up with the day's activities and see plenty of action pics on our CampMinder web site. News and photos are updated daily. And rest assured, your children will not be worrying ... they will be having a blast!