

Homesickness!

What Can I do as a Parent?

The Bad news. . . 95% of campers attending Gallahue this summer will feel homesick at some point during their stay.

The good news. . . Only 20% of these campers will report moderate homesickness, and only 7% will report intense homesickness!

The bad news. . . even one intensely homesick kid can drain the counselors and depress the mood of the entire group.

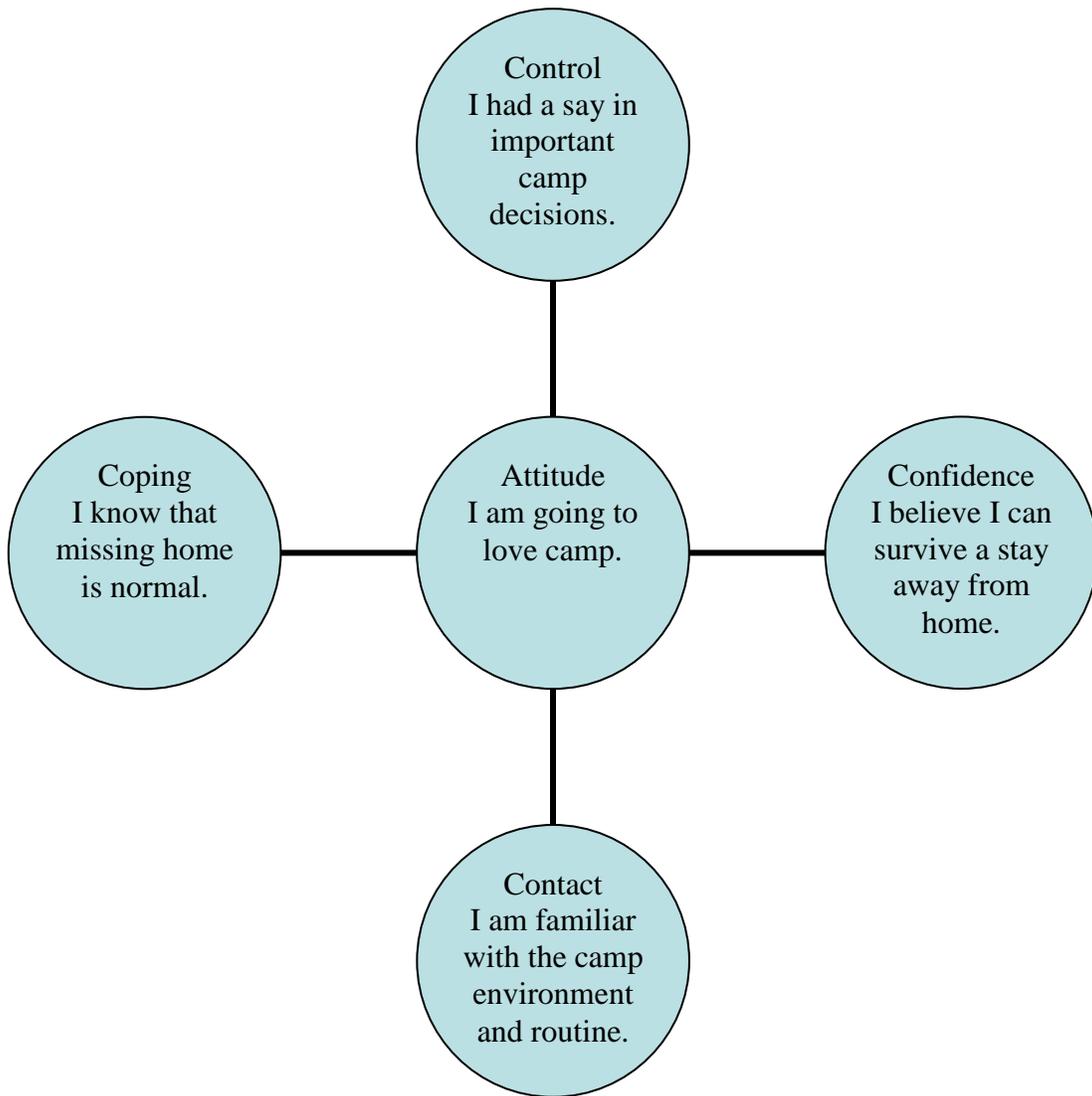
The GREAT news. . . homesickness is largely predictable and preventable! Effective prevention can reduce homesickness by 50% or more!

Homesickness predictors:

- Little experience away from home
- Negative expectations of camp
- Low perceived control (they feel forced to go to camp)
- Insecure attachment to new caregivers
- Expressed parental anxiety
- Expectations of intense homesickness

What can be done?

- Practice time away from home
- Provide detailed information about camp
- Visiting Camp (Open house June 2)
- Talk about it! Teach your child coping strategies.
- Provide reassurance and family guidance
- Normalize homesickness
 1. Dispel the myths
 2. It only happens to little kids
 3. If you feel homesick, there is something wrong with you
 4. Homesickness is something to be ashamed of
 5. Some campers think if they are homesick it means they should go home immediately.



Control

Be sure that your children feel like they had a part in the decision to go camp. If they feel forced, it is likely to result in a high rate of homesickness. Let them choose when and which session to attend.

Confidence

Always communicate confidence in your children to be away from you for a time! If you believe she can do it, she will believe it too.

Contact

Make a plan for keeping in touch while she is away so she knows what to expect.

- ☺ Writing letters
- ☺ Bunk notes
- ☺ Care packages

Coping

Discuss coping strategies BEFORE she feels homesick.

- Talking to her counselors
- Looking at a picture from home
- Writing a letter home
- Setting goals

LETTERS TO CAMP... Some helpful hints!

Mail in Morgantown can be slow and unpredictable. If you want your camper to receive a piece of mail every day or on specific days, you may write them all before camp starts and leave them with me when you check in! I have a pile of mail that gets delivered on specific days each week.

Continue to communicate confidence in your camper! Things to include:

- I'm so proud of you for going to camp.
- I can't wait to hear about all the exciting things you are doing

Things not to include:

- I don't know what your father and I are going to do without you for a week.
- I hope I remember to feed your dog, cat, fish...
- The house is so lonely without you
- Your little brother, sister really misses you and cries because you are not here.
- I have written you a letter every day but you haven't written me.
- If you are homesick, just call me and I will come get you.

Bunk1 information

You may send your daughter a bunk note while she is away. These are one way e-mails that get printed every afternoon and get handed out with the mail. Once you send an email using bunk1, it is held until 8:00 a.m. and then sent to the camp email address in

a bunch with the other bunk notes. For example, if you send an email at 9:00 a.m. on Monday, your daughter will receive it Tuesday.

Pictures are available to look at on our Flickr account:
[Flickr.com/photos/campgallahue](https://www.flickr.com/photos/campgallahue)

We upload pictures everyday and guarantee that each camper will appear on the website at least one time. We have problems with our internet service at camp and try our best to get the pictures uploaded. Please be patient with us!

GOOD-BYE PLANS

Many parents find it helpful to have a good-bye plan before arriving at camp. This can be a very simple way to alleviate the stress of those final moments when homesickness can be intense.

Talk with your daughter before leaving for camp. Make a joint decision about how long you are going to stay at camp on opening day. I recommend you take her to the infirmary to get checked in, walk her back to your car to unload her gear, and meet her counselors, and **then say good-bye**. The longer you stay, the harder it is to leave. If your daughter is staying in Hill Crest, please do not unpack her gear and make her bed. Let her do this with her new camp friends and counselor's. This gives her ownership of her bed, and also gives her a story to tell you about in her letters, or when you pick her up. Make a deal about what is acceptable and what isn't (hugging, kissing).

Wait until you leave her sight to cry (if you must). Don't let her last view of her parents be one of them looking upset.

THE DREADED PICK UP DEAL....

Why not to do it:

The pick-up deal leaves two very unattractive alternatives:

1. Your daughter feels homesick and so you come "rescue" her from camp, robbing her of the chance to complete her stay and overcome a very normal part of childhood.
2. Your daughter feels homesick and you don't come to get her. This can damage her trust for you as a parent.

The pick-up deal also hurts us as camp staff!

- If you come and pick up your daughter, then other girls want their parents to come and get them. This starts a whole upset in the unit.

Other problems we have noticed:

- Sending your daughter to camp when you are moving, they are sad because of the move
- Telling your daughter someone has died right before you bring them to camp, or sending them a letter telling them so. Even if it is a pet.

- Sending them to camp, while the family goes on vacation, or having them go to other camps and then come straight to our camp before they even go home.
- Not being home all summer.
- Last but not least, you may always call the camp just to be sure she is ok. Understand that you won't be able to talk to her, but you will be able to talk to the Director who will go out and personally check on your daughter.

WHAT IS THE POLICY AT CAMP GALLAHUE WHEN IT COMES TO HOMESICK CAMPERS?

We like to deal with homesickness on an individual basis. This is very important as not every girl has the same symptoms or the same needs.

1. The first night of camp our counselors are trained to be reassuring and comforting when faced with a homesick camper: We keep the campers very busy so homesickness has a chance to pass. Homesickness is at its worst, when the campers are not busy. Last summer we kept a unit busy and the parents complained that we were acting like a boot camp. We do this so the girls are tired and will sleep at night. We hike, play games, swim, canoe, all the things you want your daughter to do at camp. We might not give them a big rest break the first day, to help with going to sleep the first night.
2. We keep them busy everyday, and if there is a camper with extreme homesickness, the counselor's contact the director. I promise that I call and let you know if your daughter is having a hard time at camp. I usually ask for some information to help your daughter with her stay.
3. I have sent girls home; I don't like to do it. But sometimes they are not ready to come to camp, they keep the staff so busy with their problems, they can't do any of the regular camp programs, or they upset the other campers to the point of the whole unit becoming homesick.

Remember homesickness is normal, predictable, and preventable! I want your daughter to have a great time at camp, and come back for many years. I want you to feel comfortable leaving your daughter in my care. Please contact me with any questions.

Thank you,
Barb Nichols
Resident Camp director

