

# Camp Herrlich Summer Sleepaway Camp 2015!

## Parent-Camper Communication Policies:

At Camp Herrlich we want your children to have the best time they can with us. We know that it can be difficult for parents and children to be separated for the 6 or 12 days the campers are here and that is why we have the following policies in place for communication. Please review these policies with your child before camp starts.

**Phone Calls:** Camp Herrlich's policy is that your child will not be able to call home unless there is an emergency within the first week of camp and may be permitted one phone call home within the second week if it is necessary. The first week of camp is an important time for campers to transition, form bonds with their cabin and counselors, and to get acclimated to their environment. Phone calls home disrupt that process. We highly encourage letter and e-mail writing as well as care packages. Please see below for more information on that.

At any time, you as a parent or guardian can call the camp office with questions or concerns about your child. Most phone calls will be returned by a staff member within 24 hours. In addition, if you have an emergency, you will be able to speak to your child on the phone as soon as we can get them to the office.

**Cell Phones:** Cell phones are not permitted on camp. If a child brings a cell phone to camp it will be held in the camp office and given back to the child as they leave to go home. Please respect the camp's policy and do not send cell phones with your children. For more information, see the attached Cell Phone Policy page.

**Visits:** We have an open-door policy for visits at Camp, but we also have Sundays as our designated Visiting Day. Check out the enclosed invitation for Visiting Day.

**E-Mail:** If you would like to send e-mails to your camper, you can use the following address starting on July 1<sup>st</sup>: [camper@campherrlich.org](mailto:camper@campherrlich.org)  
Please put the child's name in the subject line of the e-mail. Your camper may not be able to e-mail you back but will know that you are thinking about them.

**Letter Writing:** Children have "Shoes Off" time each day to rest, take a shower or a nap, bond with their cabin and counselors, play games and cards, and write letters home. We highly encourage you to send your child with self addressed stamped envelopes so they can write to you while they are here. We also encourage parents and families to write letters to their child! It's a good idea to send the first letter while your child is still at home, that way it is waiting for them when they arrive. Care packages are also welcome. The camp address is:

Camp Herrlich

101 Deacon Smith Hill Road

Patterson, NY 12563

Please label letters and packages clearly with the camper's name.

**Your Contact Information:** Please make sure that we have the most up-to-date and thorough contact information for you! New or different cell phone numbers are a priority and it is important that we have at least one emergency contact number in addition to the parent's numbers.

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## Beating Homesickness at Camp

by Dr. Susan Bartell

Every summer, trunks are packed and excited kids wave goodbye to parents for a week or more as they head to sleep-away camp.

My kids, husband and I are fans of camp. This will be their seventh summer, and my children are counting the days until they return to Surprise Lake Camp. If you ask them, they bide their time for 10 months, just to get to the two months they spend swimming, singing and hiking in the mountains, on the banks of a sparkling lake.

Aside from the obvious fresh air and exercise, sleep-away camp offers kids a chance to master independent and cooperative living skills, form relationships with peers from different communities, and try out new personalities. Camp also offers parents a hiatus from parenting — admit it, the break is a bonus!

However, for a number of kids, **homesickness** interferes with a successful camp experience. But it doesn't have to be this way. Homesickness should not be a deterrent to sending your child to camp. By following some simple strategies, you can help your child develop the skills needed to combat it. This is important not only for sleep-away camp, but for all separations from home. By learning that he can master homesickness, your child will become more self-confident and self-sufficient.

Homesickness is common for both first-time and veteran campers, and you can begin to combat it before the summer arrives. To start, ask a prospective camp about staff training to support homesick campers. A great camp will train group leaders and counselors to manage homesick campers and their parents with skill and sensitivity. The director should be able to articulate the camp's strategies to you, and you shouldn't accept anything less.

Tell your child that homesickness is normal — especially at night. If she is prepared, she won't be surprised, and neither will you. Explain that if she feels homesick she should speak to her counselors. Remind her that homesickness is not a reason to leave camp. If your child goes to camp knowing she can leave, she will not help herself manage the tough feelings. If she does leave early, she will feel like she failed. Except in extreme circumstances (the camp director will inform you if your situation

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is one), it is better for a child to stay at camp until the end, even if she is homesick.

Inoculating your child against homesickness continues on departure day. If it is an option, send your child on the bus rather than driving him to camp. Goodbyes will be easier at the bus stop, and your child will have a chance to get to know other kids during the trip.

When you say goodbye, expect tears from your child, but control your feelings. Don't say you'll miss her, that the house will feel empty, or any similar words that may make her wish she wasn't leaving. Your goal is to help her leave for camp guilt-free and feeling strong. Tell her you know she will have a great time and that you can't wait to hear all about it.

Expect the first letter from camp to be filled with words of homesickness. Then remember that it was written several days earlier. Call and speak to your child's group leader, who will undoubtedly reassure you that your child is great! Even if he is still homesick, remember that you picked this camp because you felt confident that they could manage a homesick child. They can!

Many camps permit kids to phone home. I don't like this policy because phone calls trigger homesickness in even the most secure camper. If your child is homesick, I suggest you request that phone calls be waived. Discuss this with your child before camp, or have your child's group leader discuss it with her. One summer, just before a scheduled telephone call from my middle child, we received a call from her group leader saying my daughter hoped we wouldn't be upset, but she didn't want to call home. She was having a great time and knew the call would make her homesick and ruin her fun. We couldn't have been more proud of her!

Homesickness is not a disease; it is a life experience that almost all children can master, given the opportunity. The solution for homesickness requires two parts: a great sleep-away camp (there are many) and a parent willing to let a child experience and master his own feelings.

So send your child to camp — he or she will be fine, but you should hang on to this article so when you get your first homesick letter you can reread it. Then you will be fine, too.

*DR. SUSAN BARTELL is a nationally recognized psychologist, author and mother of three. You can learn more about her and her work at [www.DrSusanBartell.com](http://www.DrSusanBartell.com).*