

# Preparing Families for the Summer Camp Experience

*Compiled from the American Camping Association Resource Library and our colleagues at Camp Foley*

## **1. Consider camp as a learning experience.**

Summer camp is an amazing opportunity to develop autonomy, a stronger sense of self, make new friends, learn new social skills, strengthen teamwork and responsibility, and become a better musician and artist.

## **2. Prepare for camp together.**

Conversations about dates and programs, what to pack, and what to expect can improve the chances of a positive experience.

## **3. Talk about concerns.**

Encourage your camper to talk about their feelings about camp as the first day approaches. Help teach them how to work through common challenges such as meeting new people, fatigue, homesickness, and remembering important information or items. A smile and good listening skills go a long way!

## **4. Have realistic expectations.**

Encourage your camper to have a reasonable and realistic view of camp. Discuss both the ups and downs your camper may experience. The main purposes of camp are to learn, have fun, and relax.

## **5. Practice limited communication periods.**

Texting and messaging are not a part of camp life; set up some times to practice communication without access to phones at all times. Campers will be able to use their free time to use our pay phones with phone cards to call home, but this will likely be between rehearsals and activities.

## **6. Be clear with your camper about your expectations.**

Do you expect your camper to be on time to rehearsals, follow the rules and expectations, eat their fruits and vegetables, and be respectful to their peers? Tell your camper what you expect from them.

## **7. Separation is a part of growing up.**

Just like the first crawl, first school bus ride, and first overnight, the summer camp experience helps our campers grow into the independent young adults that we want them to become.

## **8. Recognize that separation may be more difficult for the parent than the camper.**

We post snapshots of life at camp throughout the week but are unable to fully document everything that happens for every camper. We encourage you to write letters or send a care package (they may need to be sent in advance to make it to camp on time) and be ready to share about your week when your camper returns. More than likely (after sleeping on the way home), they will be ready to share with you everything that happened over the course of the week.

**We look forward to a great week with your camper this summer! Please let us know if you have any questions as you prepare.**

