



**CUYAMACA**  
OUTDOOR SCHOOL  
**6TH GRADE CAMP**

## Tips for Handling Homesickness

Homesickness is a form of separation anxiety normally experienced by children (and often grownups) when they're away from home for extended periods. It's especially common for those with little or no previous experience being away from home. One study showed that nearly 96% of children who spent time away at a camp reported feeling some degree of homesickness during their stay. Homesickness is completely normal!

We've prepared some coping strategies to help students and parents deal with homesickness. Sure, they'll miss home, but they'll be prepared if and when it occurs. Overcoming a bout of homesickness can do wonders for a child's self-esteem and independence. Cuyamaca Outdoor School is truly a classroom for life's lessons.

### Do's:

- Educate your child. Explain that everyone misses something about home when they are away. Tell them that homesickness is normal and that it means that there are a lot of things about home that they love.
- Talk to your child about their upcoming trip. Ask them to imagine how it might feel to be away from home/parents, to meet new people, to hike on a trail out in nature, to sleep in a cabin with other students, to eat three meals a day in a dining hall, to use school restrooms all week, etc.
- The idea of showering in the cabin may cause anxiety for some children. Remind your child that they will have access to an individual shower stall with a curtain for privacy. Explain that they will not have to undress completely in front of others. Have them practice getting undressed and dressed while wrapped in a towel or bathrobe. Assist them with securing a towel if this is new for them.
- Discuss coping strategies they can try if they do become homesick: keep busy, read a book, talk to friends or to an adult, or write a letter (send self-addressed stamped envelopes or postcards). Tell them to remember that they will only be away for a few days and will be kept busy doing all the fun outdoor school activities.
- Allow your child to practice sleeping over at a friend's or relative's house.
- Pack a comforting personal item from home, like a stuffed animal.

### Don'ts:

- Don't force your child to attend against their wishes. This may leave them feeling that they have very little decision control. You and your child should be in agreement about whether or not to attend.
- **Don't tell your child that you'll come get them if they get homesick.** This implies a message of doubt that could undermine their confidence and independence. Also, please remember that children are not allowed to use the office phone during their stay. Cell phones should remain at home. Homesickness is completely normal. Our experienced staff, along with the classroom teacher attending from your child's school, will help with normal, routine homesickness. However, the classroom teacher may contact you if your child experiences severe and prolonged homesickness.
- Although you may be experiencing some separation anxiety of your own, try not to convey these feelings to your child, as this may cause them to feel unsure about being on their own. When saying goodbye to your child on the morning of the trip, be positive and upbeat. Try not to cry and let that be the last image your child sees. Smiles and positive reinforcement will empower your child to go forward with confidence.
- If you write letters, keep them simple and positive. Say such things as: "How are things going? Have you made some new friends? I hope you're having a great time!" Avoid such comments as "I've cried every night since you left," "Your little sister/brother keeps asking where you are," or "We all miss you very much."

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's upcoming trip to camp, please reach out to 760-765-3000.