

Before we know it, camp will be starting. Even if it's not the first time your camper is going to overnight camp, or even if your camper's siblings have gone to overnight camp, you may find that you, your camper, or both are experiencing some worry about homesickness. To help ease your concerns and lead to a great experience for you and your camper, I am happy to share with you this guide for preparing for camp. These concepts come from Dr. Chis Thurber, a world-renowned expert on all aspects of camp.

- Karl

The Psychology of preparing for camp:

DON'TS

- **DON'T:** Express worry yourself — kids pick up on *your* fears or anxieties and then take them on themselves.
- **DON'T:** Make a “Pick Up Deal” — never promise that escaping camp is just a phone call away.
- **DON'T:** Bribe your kids to go to camp — camp *is* the reward. Bribing them makes camp seem like something to dread.

DO'S

- **DO:** Express optimism — camp **WILL** be fun, exciting, and interesting!

- **DO:** Express confidence — you chose camp for your children for its excellent counselors and tutors who are eager to spend time with them and teach them new things!
- **DO:** Answer your child's questions about homesickness honestly — yes, sometimes missing home or another emotional challenge will happen and **that's a natural part of learning and growing.**
- **DO:** Share your own camp experience or a positive anecdote about the first time you did something away from home and family.
- **DO:** Share your own excitement about your child going to camp. For example: "You're going to have a great time at camp, and I'm going to have a great time, too! We're going to do XYZ while you're gone and I'm excited about it. Let's plan a pizza night for afterward just to share stories when we all get back!"

NET-NET: A great parenting tool

In the camp world the parent preparation skill we encourage is called **NET-NET** (thanks to camp guru [Dr. Chris Thurber!](#)). It's a simple, double-duty acronym for helping you *and* your child to get ready for camp.

On the DON'T **NET** side you:

Never make a pickup deal.

Encourage perseverance.

Teamwork, not trauma — work together for a positive outcome.

On the DO **NET** side you:

Normalize — camp is a regular and exciting part of being yourself and growing and changing.

Empathize — feelings are real, and let's keep them in perspective.

Teach [coping skills](#) — encourage letter writing, deep breathing, self-encouragement — “I can do it!”

The NET result is a successful preparation *for* and *time at* CAMP!

Resources

Here are a couple more resources where you can find more tips on homesickness if you want to explore this topic more:

- [*Homesick and Happy: How Time Away from Parents Can Help a Child*](#)

[Grow](#) by Michael Thompson

- American Camp Association article with Dr. Christopher Thurber [on](#)

[homesickness](#)