

Camp Lakotah



**Parent Information
And Other
Other Great Things to
Know About Camp**

Contact Information

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Letter from the Director

Dear Parents & Campers:

It is a great honor and privilege to journey into our 13th year of excellence and service to the 1000s of families and campers who have come to know Camp Lakotah as their summer camp home. Your child's physical and emotional safety and well-being is our greatest priority. We are proud to provide what we feel is one of the best summer camp programs available; one that encourages positive character development and personal growth and that helps children become secure, independent, well-adjusted young people.

This guidebook will help you get ready for camp. While the information contained here applies to campers as well as parents, we have addressed it to parents because your leadership in camp preparation is vital to giving your child a successful experience. Please take time to read this information with your child and review it several times before arrival to make sure you and your camper understand and will be ready for camp!

Among the topics covered in this guide are camp policies and procedures, required medical forms, financial policies, deadlines, what to bring to camp, homesickness, and much more. Please call to speak with us personally if you have any questions about any topics covered.

Thank you again for entrusting your most precious earthly gifts your children to us for a short time during summer camp. We are excitedly anticipating the upcoming season, and we look forward to meeting each of you in person this summer!

Sincerely,

Sandy & Cliff

Pre-camp Visits /Open House Recruitment Events

Pre-Camp Visits: Being comfortable with our staff, facilities, and programs is very important to your camper's experience. In an effort to provide families with an opportunity to tour the facilities and meet some of the key year-round staff prior to the summer season, we are happy to arrange tours any time prior to the start of camp.

In-home Private Open House Recruitment Events: If you love what we do and would like to host a private open house event in your home or business as a way to spread the word about Camp Lakotah while earning referral rewards towards your camper's billing, please give us a call. We would love to arrange a time to come meet your friends and families that are interested in Camp!

Registration Information

Refund and Cancellation Policy: No pro-rates or refunds for late arrival. Early departure due to camper illness or family emergency may receive a pro-rated refund at the discretion of the director and based on individual case circumstances. Any balance for camp fees is due on or before June 1, 2021, or for Leadership Training Program any balance due on or before March 1, 2021. Cancellation of camp enrollment on or before June 1, 2021 or for the Leadership Training Program on or before March 1, 2021 for any reason, Camp Lakotah will retain the full deposit. If cancellation occurs between June 1, 2021 for camp enrollments or March 1, 2021 for Leadership Training Program and the start of the enrolled session, Camp Lakotah will retain 40% of total fees and the family will be issued a 60% program credit. In the event of cancellation during the enrolled session, dismissal due to misconduct, or withdraw due to homesickness, Camp Lakotah will retain 100% of the session fee.

Session Changes: Should it become necessary for you to change your child's session at camp, we will allow you to make one change free-of-charge (space permitting). Any additional changes will incur a \$50 service fee. No camper will be switched from a session without the written consent of a parent or guardian.

Payments: Camp balances must be paid in full by **June 1st** each year. If a timely payment is not received, your child's registration may be cancelled. All registrations made after **June 1st** must be paid in full at time of registration. We do not accept payments the day your child arrives at camp. There will be a \$35 charge for all returned (NSF) checks.

***Note:** Payment plans are available, please contact us for more information.

Insurance: The camp does not carry a health and accident insurance policy on campers. Any illness or injury requiring the services of local physicians, and/or hospital, or prescription must be covered by parent's/guardian's medical insurance, or by the parent/guardian themselves.

Cabin Assignments: Camp Lakotah is a very special place where independence, self-worth, and life-long friendships are made. Parents often make cabin assignment requests so that their child might be placed with a friend, cousin, neighbor, etc... These requests can hamper our staff's ability to develop the above mentioned attributes in your child.

Cabin assignments are based primarily upon age and gender, but our staff strives to eliminate cliques which can form when a disproportionate number of campers in one cabin know each other prior to arriving at camp.

We will do our best to accommodate prior **written mutual** cabin requests made 2 weeks or more prior to the start of the session. If requests cannot be honored parents will be contacted prior to the session start.

Arrival/Check-In & Pick-Up Times

Afternoon Day Camp – One-way bus transportation is provided from Parkside Middle School in Wautoma to Camp Lakotah for those enrolled in both Camp Parkside and a Camp Lakotah sponsored program. Drop-off is Monday –Friday at 1:00pm. Parents pick up from Camp Lakotah at 5:00 p.m.

Minikamp – Drop off is Monday- Thursday at 1:00pm. Pick-up is 5:00pm.

Day Camp – Drop off is 8:00am and Pick-up is 5:00pm Monday through Friday.

Overnight Camp – Drop off is on Sundays from 2:30pm to 3:00pm. Depending on your camp session, pick-up will either be Friday evening's at 7:00 pm or Saturday morning at 10:00 am. Refer to on-line registration for details and reminders will be posted at drop-off.

Early departures are discouraged due to the interruption it causes to your child's overall camp experience, but if it is necessary, please notify the office with a detailed time of pickup so we can have your child ready at the Camp Office when you arrive.

Campers will not be released to anyone but their legal guardian without prior written consent from their guardian. While we understand that this may be an inconvenience at times, it is done to protect your child. We are firm in our commitment to safety. We would rather error on the side of caution and appreciate your support with this. Please notify the Camp Director in writing if there is someone who should not be allowed to pick up your child. Campers cannot be released to anyone under the age of 18 years.

You may purchase items from our camp store during pick-up. The store has various items including t-shirts, plush animals, flashlights, key chains, blankets and other fun logo items.

Camper Mail Packages

Mail call at camp is a much-anticipated daily event for the overnight campers and staff. Write your camper often but try not to mail letters after Wednesday of the week he/she is to return home. If you are sending care package please limit the amount of candy you send and please encourage your son/daughter to share with their cabin mates. While we encourage campers to write frequently, you may only get one or two letters from your camper (it is not that they don't miss you, they may just be too busy having fun). If your camper would like to send a letter to their favorite staff member following camp that is always appreciated. Address all mail and packages to:

Camp Lakotah
Attn: You Child's Name
N1875 21st Avenue
Wautoma, WI 54982

Birthdays While at Camp

We love to celebrate birthdays! If your child has a birthday while away at camp, please feel free to drop off or mail a special card, care package, or balloons. We will provide the fun and a special treat for your birthday camper & his/her camp mates.

Visiting your Camper

Because of the shortness of our sessions and to prevent homesickness and interruption of the camp program, we do not schedule any visitor days, or allow unannounced parent visitations. If there are special circumstances in which you need to see your child, (such as picking him/her up for a special event), contact the camp office prior to your arrival. You must sign your child out of camp and sign them back in upon your return.

Standards of Behavior

Camp is a place where children can be free to have a good time in an un-regimented atmosphere and enjoy many activities with others. We do not expect any discipline problems; however, if a camper's behavior creates a situation which is detrimental to the other campers, the staff, or the camp program or property, the parents will be notified to pick that camper up immediately. No offensive language or behavior, no pranks, no bullying or intimidation of others, no smoking or tobacco use or vaping, no weapons, no cell phones or electronic devices, no alcohol, no drugs or inappropriate reading materials are allowed at Camp Lakotah. (Discuss this with your camper.)

Camp Lakotah respects the rights and dignity of all campers and staff, including individuals with varying abilities, cultures, genders, races, and religions. We expect all individuals to act respectfully when they are on our property and to respect the rights of others regardless of their differences. Camp Lakotah is inclusive to all and staff are trained to set the highest examples of behavior for campers.

Also, traditional attire is appropriate at camp. Please avoid unusual or non-traditional clothing, jewelry (such as belly-button rings & large earrings), makeup or hair styles.

Transportation

The camp does not normally provide transportation. Campers flying to camp are picked up and returned to the arranged airport for an additional fee. Please talk with us about the best arrival/departure times before making reservations.

Telephone & Laundry

Please explain to your camper(s) that the office phone IS NOT for campers' use since calls interrupt the camp activities. Campers are not allowed to bring mobile phones. Parents will be called immediately in case of an emergency. NO LAUNDRY facilities are available at camp. Pack a dirty clothes bag and enough clothes for the length of the session. Please mark all items with your camper's name. Talk with your camper about caring for his/her clothes and belongings. The camp is not responsible for lost clothing or other items. Emergency laundry service for campers who soil their clothes/bedding is available at an additional fee.

Homesickness

It is really not a sickness. It should be called “missing home.” And, it is normal for some children to experience fleeting moments of homesickness, i.e. missing home. This is a part of growing up. Our program keeps camper so busy that we rarely see anything more than very minor homesickness. We have found that homesickness can manifest itself in many ways: most children do not admit to being homesick, instead they will say they do not feel good or have a tummy ache. Many times, a homesick child will be homesick one minute and the next minute he/she is going off to activities and running and playing and apparently not homesick anymore.

Since letters home are written during quiet times when homesickness may be more manifest, some parents may receive a “homesick letter”. Usually these letters do not say “I am homesick” but instead may state things like “I don’t like camp”, “My counselor is mean”, “I am really sick” etc.

Parents should understand that the camp director and counselors are aware of everything that is going on at camp and that we make a conscious effort to visit individually with every camper daily. We are usually aware of homesick campers and give them extra attention to make sure they get over it easily.

In over 40+ years of camping, we have practically never had to ask a parent to pick up a camper due to homesickness, however there are several tips we can give parents and campers to help minimize the impact of homesickness:

1. Before camp discuss this with campers and explain that they may experience an occasional feeling of homesickness. Tell them that the best thing to do if they feel homesick is to find an activity or friend to get involved with.
2. Let campers know that camp is a big step in their growing-up process and that you are proud of them for being able to take this first step towards independence by going to camp.
3. Explain that they will not be allowed to call home even if they are homesick.
4. Tell campers that they can discuss any personal problems (personal hygiene, homesickness, interpersonal problems) with their counselor or the camp director in private and have confidence that the staff member will understand without making them feel embarrassed.
5. Make your farewell on check-in day brief; do not linger at the cabin area for longer than necessary.
6. Avoid sending letters that contain statements that could aggravate homesick feelings. Avoid statements like “we miss you so much here at home”, or “your dog or cat or pet really misses you” etc.
7. Parent (and other family member) visits are discouraged: while visits may seem like a good idea, we have found that they disrupt the camp program and can cause unnecessary homesickness.

In many cases, the parents are more anxious than the campers (kind of a reverse homesickness). As parents ourselves, we understand your concern for your child’s well-being especially when sending them to camp for the first time. We occasionally get calls from anxious parents who need reassurance; and while we understand your apprehension, you can be assured that we are aware of and are constantly supervising all aspects of camp.

Food and Snacks

If your son or daughter has specific dietary requirements, please inform us in writing prior to arrival at camp.

Please refrain from sending cookies, candy, gum and snacks to camp, we provide three healthy home cooked meals and a snack every day and your child can purchase candy, ice cream or soda from the camp store during free-time if they so choose.

Camp Store

Camp store punch cards, (nonrefundable), can be purchased during the registration process. Cards can also be purchased at check-in time. ****Store cards are nonrefundable**** As your child makes purchases at the store, their card will be punched for the dollar amount they spend. You may purchase as many cards as you wish but remember that they are nonrefundable. We recommend @\$30.00 per week, this amount is adequate for your child to purchase most memorabilia items. No cash will be accepted from your camper during the camp session.

Your child will receive their store card back on their last day of camp if they have any remaining value on the card. The store is open the last day of each session. Parents are invited to visit the store and purchase any additional items at that time. Camp memorabilia items make great gifts for the holidays and birthdays, so contact us any time of the year for ways to purchase Camp Lakotah items.

General Program Information

With the guidance of our experienced, well-trained staff, each camper develops their own adventure. There are three things we strive to provide every camper while in our care; the sheer delight in experiencing and mastering a new skill, being a key part of a tight knit family, and the building of friendships that will last a lifetime.

Our staff is selected for their maturity, character, and leadership abilities, as well as their desire to be positive role models and mentors to our campers. Prior to being hired they receive a thorough interview, reference, and background check by one of our Directors to verify their character and moral standing. Once hired they must complete two plus weeks of intensive training where they not only learn about working with children, but have to demonstrate back what they have learned.

The instruction our campers receive, both individually and in small groups, is an advantage that only a family run camp our size can offer. Our wide range of programs contributes to the development of self-confidence, sense of accomplishment, and physical and mental growth.

Within their cabin group, the counselor and campers develop group living dynamics that cannot be found at many camps. Laughter, camaraderie, a helping hand and new friendships that will long endure are the goal. All camp groups are limited to no more than eight campers of similar age, a counselor, and program staff member.

Camper Developmental Goals

Each camper will:

- Learn new activity skills or increase the level of skill proficiency they may already have obtained.
- Spend at least one night outside the cabin in a primitive natural area and prepare their own meal/s (weather permitting).
- Assume responsibility for personal hygiene, care of personal possessions, and eating a balanced diet.
- Become a fully functioning member of their cabin group, taking an active role in cabin meetings, dining hall responsibilities, selecting cabin activities, etc...
- Develop their personal values system by being exposed to and understanding the camp values of caring, respect, honesty, personal responsibility to one's self others and the world, while providing service to the camp's community.
- Be exposed to persons of different countries, races, lifestyles, and beliefs, and develop an understanding and appreciation of these differences.
- Have time with their cabin leader in a one-on-one discussion focusing on and supporting the interests, concerns and positive qualities of each individual camper.
- Understand and experience the relationships between themselves and the natural world, and to increase their enjoyment and comfort in the outdoors. Participate in at least one nature exploration activity while in camp.

Swimming

All campers receive a swim competency assessment within 24 hours of arriving at camp. This assessment helps our staff better understand your child's comfort and ability in and around water. Once the assessment is completed each camper will receive a swim band which is a visual tool used by the staff to help your child choose aquatic activities appropriate to their ability.

Red Band – Participant is unable to complete minimum requirements. Allowed to participate in shallow water swimming and boating with an adult or an LLT.

Yellow band – Participant completes four lengths of the swimming area using any recognized swimming stroke, comfortably submerges and resurfaces, but cannot complete two minute treading water in deep water without assistance. Allowed to participate in shallow and intermediate depth swimming and boating with an adult, LLT, or Green Band swimmer.

Green band – Participant completes four lengths of the swimming area using any recognized swimming stroke, comfortably submerges and resurfaces, and can tread water for two or more minutes in deep water without assistance. Allowed to participate in shallow, intermediate and deep water swimming and can boat with an adult, LLT, Yellow Band or fellow Green Band Swimmer.

Severe Weather

Local weather radar and the National Weather Service is monitored 24 hours a day for changing weather conditions. If during your child's stay at camp we experience excessive heat our daily program will be altered to provide more water related activities such as swimming, water balloon tosses, slip and slides etc... During severe or electrical storms campers are brought indoors where they participate in fun indoor activities until the all clear is given.

Preparing for Camp

Health History: Physical Examinations are not required to attend camp, but it is important for our staff to know if your camper has any medical restrictions while at camp. Share with us any recent illnesses or injuries, travel, medication or behavioral concerns so we can better serve your campers needs while at camp.

For a camper with a significant medical history or chronic illness (e.g., asthma, seizures, diabetes, depression, anaphylactic allergies, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, or any other), we ask that you consider working with your camper's doctor to develop a management plan. Get written orders for prescription medications, special diets, physical activity limitations, or special medical devices like inhalers or Epi Pens. Some doctors may recommend a "drug holiday" from medications for psychiatric problems or ADHD. We do not recommend this practice. Campers must be at their best to cope with their new environment and daily schedule.

Health and Illness Policy: In the event that a camper becomes ill or is injured, the camper is brought to the Health Center for assessment. If the camper has a temperature of 101 degrees or higher, or if the injury needs further medical attention, a parent/guardian will be contacted. A decision will be made if the child should return home to recuperate. If a communicable disease is suspected, the Camp Director will notify the local health authorities and other parents, giving the symptoms of the disease to look for. Children will be readmitted to camp by a physician's written statement or after the known incubation period of the disease.

Notice of Exposure to Illness: Please be respectful of other camp families. If your child is exposed to or contracts a contagious illness within 15 days of arrival to camp, please call and let us know immediately. We would recommend attending camp at a later time so as not to expose others to the illness.

We also ask that if upon arriving home your child is diagnosed with a contagious illness to immediately contact us so we can respond accordingly.

Camp Health Care

Camp Medical Staff are on duty 24-hours a day while your child is with us. We utilize the services of local physicians and local hospitals for any health emergencies or consultations as needed. If there is an illness that would hamper your child's camp experience (other than a minor symptom) or an emergency, you will be notified immediately by the Camp Medical Staff or Camp Director.

Medications:

Non-prescription medications need to be in the original package with an intact label, and your child's name clearly marked on the package. Our Medical Staff will dispense non-prescription medication according to manufacturer's recommendations unless the parents or doctor provide written dispensing requirements.

Prescription medications need to be in the original container with the original prescription label containing the child's name, dosage, etc...

Note: Our Medical Staff cannot dispense any medications which are not in properly labeled containers. Medications must be turned over to the Medical Staff, Camp Director, or Cabin Counselor upon arrival. All unused medications will be returned at the end of the session.

Sunscreen/Insect Repellent: Please send sunscreen and insect repellent to camp with your child. For your child's and other's safety we recommend rub on insect repellent over spray products. Your child will have frequent opportunities throughout the day to apply sunscreen. By signing the registration form you are giving Camp Lakotah staff permission to apply sunscreen/insect repellent to your child as needed.

Homesickness: Our counselors receive detailed training in dealing with homesick children. However, for both your child's and our counselor's success, we depend upon your cooperation. **Please do not encourage your child to call home while at camp**, this just tells your child that you do not trust the camp staff. Instead let them know that if they are having a

problem while at camp they should let their Counselor, Unit Director, Medical Staff, Camp Director or a Leadership Trainee know. That is what we are here for. If you receive a letter in which your child sounds distressed in any way, contact us immediately. We will follow-up with your child and his/her counselor. Please do not arrive at camp unannounced. It may cause your child to become homesick or worsen the homesickness if they are working to overcome it.

Homesick parents make homesick campers and often make it much harder for a camper to have a good time at camp.

Clothing

Campers should pack simple, non-restrictive clothing that you do not mind getting dirty, muddy, wet, and possibly ruined. Shorts, jeans, sweatpants, and t-shirts are a good choice. Campers are encouraged to wear sturdy, closed toed shoes at all times on camp. If sandals or “Crocs” are worn, they must have heel straps. **Flip flops or slide-on type sandals are not permitted** for use as daily footwear.

To minimize the chance of misplaced clothing, please label with your child’s name. We are not responsible for lost or missing items.

Please do not bring any of the following clothing items to camp.

1. Articles of clothing that are not in good taste or appropriate for promoting a healthy lifestyle such as:
 - a. Clothing that is sexually suggestive or explicit Clothing that advertises alcohol or tobacco.
 - b. Clothing that contains symbols, which are drug, tobacco, alcohol or gang related.
 - c. Clothing that does not appropriately cover the body causing distractions to others.
 - d. All swim wear must be in good taste. (See swimwear policy).
 - e. Our rule of thumb is that if you can’t wear it at school, you probably shouldn’t wear it at camp. Campers wearing inappropriate clothing will be required to change.
2. Expensive or name brand items that could be stolen or damaged due to normal camp activities.

Swimwear Policy: Appropriate swimwear does not have detachable straps, strings or ties (including halters). Fronts and backs need to be fully covered and should not inhibit a camper’s ability to participate in all aquatic activities (meaning suit is secure in all situations). One piece suits, tankinis, and sports bikinis are recommended for females and boxer style swim trunks are recommended for males.

Camp Lakotah is not responsible for loss or theft of personal belongings. We discourage campers from bringing valuable items or expensive clothing to camp.

Following Camp

Camp Evaluation: Your evaluation of our program, facilities, equipment, staff, and service is very important to us. On the last day of camp, you will receive a parent’s packet which will contain a camp evaluation form for you and your child to complete. Please take a few minutes to fill out the form **with your child**. The information gained from these evaluations helps us improve and expand our programs and services.

Lost & Found: Our staff makes every effort to keep your camper’s belongings with your camper. However, a Lost & Found box is maintained for all misplaced items found throughout the session. Please check the Lost & Found before departing. We do not mail any lost items.

Packing List

(please label all personal items with your child's full name)

The following list is a suggestion for a 6 day session of overnight camp. Increase what you pack appropriately for the number of days you will be staying with us.

Remember to pack old clothes appropriate for participation in camp programs. Remember to look through the lost and found before you take your child home at the end of the session, as we do not mail lost and found items.

6 shirts (t-shirts)	2 washcloths
1-2 pr. long pants (cool nights)	2 swim towels
5 pr. Shorts	comfortable hiking/walking shoes (broken in athletic shoes no flip-flops)
6 pr. underwear	Medications (properly labeled)
6 pr. socks	1 reusable water bottle
1 sweatshirt or sweater	1 laundry bag
1 light-weight jacket	bath soap or body wash
1 pr. warm pajamas	shampoo
1 pr. cool pajamas	deodorant
2 swim suits	toothbrush / tooth paste
facial tissue	shower sandals (not for activity use)
1 sleeping bag or bedding (twin mattress size)	sunscreen
1 pillow with pillowcase	wipe on insect repellent
1 flashlight with extra batteries	pen/pencil/paper/note cards/stamps, envelopes
1 hat to block sun	rain poncho or rain jacket

Optional Items: (Keep inexpensive)

1 white cotton t-shirt (for tie-dying)

Fishing equipment

Playing cards

Do Not Bring!

Smoking or vaping materials

Illegal drugs or alcohol

Soda or sugary drinks

Expensive jewelry

Fireworks

Firearms or ammunition

Pocket knives

Mobile phones, iPads, tablets or laptops

Radios or personal stereos

New to Camp

Camp is designed for healthy living: When we think about it, camp practices what parents and health professionals are always preaching: be active, get up off the couch, turn off the TV and computer, stop snacking before meals, listen to others, cooperate, eat a variety of foods, sleep well. Despite eating three healthy meals and a snack each day, it is not uncommon for your child to lose some weight and improve their muscle tone while away at camp. They will be outdoors and kept active from sunrise to sunset, something many children in today's society are not used to.

Misconceptions about Summer Camp: Whether it is from Hollywood movies or a lack of experience, do not let misconceptions about summer camp prevent your children from going and experiencing the time of their lives! Let us try to clear up so misconceptions we see every day regarding attending summer camp.

My child is too young or is not ready for camp.

Families who send children to camp at a younger age report a much better overall experience. Older children sometimes have a more developed sense of fear, which may make it harder to adjust. Any age child can go to camp if the parent is encouraging and positive.

I cannot find a camp that is a good match for my child.

There is a camp for every child. Parents should look for a camp that fits their child's personality and interests to determine where he/she might fit best. Some camps are better for first-time campers and others offer higher adventure-type activities for the veteran camper. If parents choose carefully, they can rest assured the camp is targeted toward the specific personality traits of their child.

The camp is too far from home.

Proximity of the camp to home should not be a deciding factor. It's better to select the right camp, regardless of the location. In an emergency, parents can't be at the camp immediately anyway. One can generally fly to camps farther away and get there just as easily as driving to one that may be closer to home.

My child gets homesick too easily.

It is normal for some children to experience fleeting moments of homesickness (missing home). This is a part of growing up. Most camp programs keep campers so busy that camp directors rarely see anything more than very minor homesickness. Many times, a child acts homesick one minute and the next minute he/she is going to activities and running and playing (apparently not homesick anymore). In many cases, the parents are actually more anxious than the campers. It's important for parents to remain positive about the experience before check-in.

My child is too shy to go away.

At camp, campers develop newly found confidence by taking on various leadership roles — whether it be in planning skits and devotionals, leading songs, making campfires or in their activities. Typically, the older campers emerge as leaders by serving as role models for the younger children and motivating or coaching them in games or sports. Campers are bound to return home more mature than when they left.

My child loves basketball so I'll send him to basketball camp.

If the child has attended a general camp before and is a little older and is ready to handle the intensity of one activity all day, this may be okay. But a general camp is best for a child's first camp experience. They expose children to a variety of activities, which often create new interests for a child.

My child must go with a friend.

Plenty of children attend camp without knowing anyone. Sometimes friends that go together do not branch out to meet new friends. Many camps have a great deal of returning campers each year, along with new campers. At Camp Lakotah, we encourage the returning ones to pair up with new campers to develop friendships and provide re-assurance and confidence. Children bond so quickly. Within the first couple of hours of camp, they've made new friends, and are enjoying the program and activities.

If my neighbor's son like the camp, it must be good for my child.

Program offerings and philosophies differ from camp to camp. What's right for your neighbor's child may not be right for your child. Do some research to find what is right for your child.

First Time at Camp: Sending your child away to camp for the first time is a major milestone for most families, one that is often marked by excitement, anticipation, and perhaps even some anxiety. Though camp is certainly about making friends and having fun, it is also about being on your own and being a part of a community. The most important thing you as a parent can do to help prepare your child for both these aspects of camp, is to talk about it before he/she arrives. In fact, it may be better to have several occasional, shorter talks rather than one long conversation as children often absorb more when there is less to think about at one time. Also, children may do better with this sort of conversation if it is part of a more general conversation, and if it is part of a pattern of talking, either at the dinner table or while riding in the car doing errands.

The following are some sample topics for discussion that will help prepare you and your child emotionally for their experience at camp.

Friends: Camp is about making new friends. If you are shy about meeting new kids, then learn to get to know others by being a good listener. Remember also that not everyone in your cabin or group has to be your friend, and you don't have to be everyone else's friend. As long as you treat others with respect, and they do the same with you, then having one or two friends at camp is fine. If you have more, that's great.

Activities: There are many exciting things to do at camp, many of which your child may never have tried before. If your child tends to be a bit homesick, or worried about being homesick, remind them about the excitement of going to camp. Remember when you first decided to go to camp, what made you so excited? You may not like all the activities, or you may be better at some more than others, and that's ok. I, however, hope you are willing to try. The more you put into camp, the more you will get out of it.

Cooperating: You, like every other camper there, will be part of a cabin or group. As your parent, I hope you will cooperate with others and help out. That's part of what makes camp so special it's kids helping each other out. Most kids will help you if you are friendly and help them.

Give yourself time: One thing about camp is that almost everything is new, the kids, the activities, the routines, and the bed you sleep in, and the bathroom. It takes a few days to get adjusted, so be patient with yourself. Most of the time you will be having so much fun you won't mind all the changes, but if you do, remember that you will get so used to things that by the time you come home, you will miss all those things.

Helping Out: Camp is about fun, but it also requires that you help out. Clean-up is part of camp. You do it every day. As your parent, I hope you will cooperate.

Getting Help: Everyone has good days and bad days. If you are having a problem, your counselor is there to help you. You don't have to wait to tell us if you are upset about something. After all, if your counselor doesn't know what might be troubling you, he/she can't help you. Be honest and ask for what you need. If your counselor doesn't seem to be concerned or doesn't help you, then you can go to the Unit Director, Summer Program Director, etc.

Being Positive: It's a great thing to remind your first-time camper about his or her strong points. I would focus not just on what they do well, but their positive qualities as well, such as what makes them a good friend or the type of person other kids would want to know. Helping children identify their strengths can help them when they are having a setback, one of those inevitable growing pains all children have from time to time.

Talking with your child about these kinds of issues is a great way to show support as your child gets ready to take this important step on the road to being more resilient and self-reliant. For you as a parent, it can give you more peace of mind as you allow your child to participate safely in a broader world.

Am I Ready? What Parents Should Know About Overnight Camp: Your child is ready for camp, but the big question is.... are you, the parent, ready?

Many parents never attended summer camp as a child, so feeling a little emotional tug before taking your child to camp is typical.

Remember overnight camp provides a rich environment full of new friends, songs, achievements, and memorable activities. It provides supportive relationships, challenging opportunities, but most important it gives all children a level playing field from the start. Camp is an important rite of passage where kids can explore, discover and just be themselves among their friends — without Mom or Dad tagging along.

Here's what you can do to prepare yourself for your child's first sleep-away:

Find out if the camp is accredited. Safety is usually the number one concern among all parents. If the camp you've chosen is accredited by the American Camp Association, you can rest assured it exceeds the highest standards in the industry. Certified lifeguards and instructors in all activities, along with safety helmets, harnesses and life jackets are essentials in providing a safe camp experience.

Next, get to know the camp's staff.

But what about your child's emotional safety at camp? Parents tend to be concerned about their child fitting in at camp and being well adjusted. How do you know who is going to encourage your child to eat well? Who will make sure those teeth get brushed and shorts gets changed? What happens if your child "has an accident" at night?

While nice facilities and activities are important, they should not be the main factor in selecting the right camp for your child. The most significant factor in camping is the quality and character of the individuals who work with your children. Find out how the camp recruits its staff and how many counselors return each year. What is the staff training like? Check into the directors' background. Make sure the director is more than an "administrator of paper," but someone who's working directly with the counselors, the activities and the campers. Being comfortable with who is working with the campers' gives parents' peace of mind.

Next, check out the camp's "sense of community." Does the camp provide a close, family-like atmosphere? This is where the comfort factor comes into play. Eating as a "cabin family" three times a day in a society where families rarely eat together is comforting to children.

While sometimes it seems like kids are screaming for freedom and independence, children thrive on schedules and boundaries. Therefore, they gain great comfort in predictability, and camp is predictable. Knowing exactly what to expect makes a child feel safe and secure. And safe is good. That predictability and associated comfort that comes along with it is why children treasure traditions. Going to bed and waking up to the camp bugle Cabin skits. The pudding eating contest. Sleeping under the stars. All these traditions give kids joy and comfort. And that's how the camp's sense of community is defined.

Get to know the camp's schedule. You will relax if you know exactly what your child is doing and when. It helps to understand how the day is structured so you will know what is going on.

Finally, know that deprivation is good, and it leads to appreciation. Home equals luxuries. At home, kids are rarely deprived, so they rarely appreciate what they have ... a warm shower, television, cell phones, junk food, and video games. At camp, kids sleep in bunks, wait their turns, cook out and wait for warm water in the shower. And when they get back to reality, they tend to appreciate Mom and Dad more, along with those little extras at home.

Homesickness Tips: We are delighted your child is coming to Camp Lakotah this summer! We hope the following tips and guidelines will help you prepare for a successful camp experience not only for your child but yourself.

Many parents never attended summer camp as a child, so feeling a little emotional tug before taking your child to camp is typical. If you feel a bit of anxiety, try to relax, that is normal.

Potential Homesickness (HS)

Do not worry. Homesickness (missing home) is normal. According to psychologists, 95% of children experience some degree of HS when they are away from home. It is typically a fleeting moment.

One of the best things you can do to avoid HS is to provide assurance and encouragement to your child before camp. Being positive and upbeat is the key to your child's success.

What else can parents do?

- Encourage practice time away from home
- Assure your child that YOU will be doing fine without him
- Provide detailed information about our camp
- Teach your child coping strategies and tell them what to do if they feel homesick.

Coping Strategies

Research shows the most effective ways of coping are staying busy, talking with counselors, writing letters, making friends, focusing on what is fun, maintaining a positive attitude and remembering camp will be over before you know it. Please review these with your child before camp.

What do I do if I get a Homesick Letter?

Believe it or not, it's normal to receive a "missing home" letter.

Keep in mind the letter is a few days old by the time you receive it, and the counselors have already helped make things better. And homesickness passes by quickly. In your reply, be sympathetic but encouraging. Remember, children exaggerate negative emotions and remind them that their feelings are normal, and you know they are capable of thinking and doing lots of things to make them feel better.

To Pack or Not to Pack the Cell Phones

The following article is by Stephen Fine Ph.D.

When packing the kids off to summer camp an increasingly common issue has become whether or not to include a cell phone along with the sunscreen, lifejacket and insect repellent. Cell phone use among children and adolescents is becoming widespread and the marketing trend is towards increasingly younger age groups. Kid's cell phones make good sense for reasons of contact and security. But is it good sense to send a cell phone into camp with your child?

Camp directors have noted an increase of personal phones coming into camp. Although these devices can give parents a feeling of closer contact, control, and peace of mind, are they necessary or indeed appropriate in a camp environment? The question a parent or guardian should ask themselves is what was the rationale for giving their child a cell phone in the first place?

Cell phones have a real purpose in our fast-paced lives. That purpose has much to do with security, the communication of ever-changing schedules and the "comfort" to children and their parents or guardians of instant unimpeded contact anytime anywhere.

But what purpose is served by sending a cell phone into camp? Is it a concern with safety? Parents and guardians presumably select a camp with discretion and a confidence that the administration and staff will maintain their child's safety on a 24-hour basis. Is it the need for instant communication? Camp is a place where time is slowed down to a walking pace. It is a place for personal development, interacting with cabin mates, and reflecting on the natural surroundings. Details of day to day life are best communicated with a good old-fashioned postal letter. Letter writing is not mere nostalgia. Opposed to a hasty utterance into an electronic device, composing a letter allows for introspection and gives a young person the time needed to reflect on new surroundings and new experiences.

What Could Happen

Let's look at two examples of campers who are packing cell phones.

Alicia is a first-time camper. Although she is excited about camp, she still has the normal pre-camp jitters. "What if I feel homesick and want to come home?" Her parents wisely point out to her how much fun she will have and talk about new friends and the exciting activities. However, as camp draws nearer her anxiety increases and so a deal is struck. Alicia will take a cell phone packed in the bottom of her suitcase. If she becomes really homesick, she can just call home.

Not the Best Plan

This plan seems to do the trick and Alicia happily goes off to camp. However, the plan is flawed and has set Alicia up for potentially isolating herself from her peers and mentors. If in the first few days of camp she begins to experience normal separation anxiety she will likely turn first to the cell phone. She is less likely to turn to her counselors or cabin mates who would help her get over her temporary feelings while allowing her to develop the independence and interdependence that her parents supposedly sent her to camp to learn.

Many camps have a "wait and see policy" regarding campers making phone calls home. A good call home is pre-arranged and made when the parent or guardian will be available to receive the call. Calls are never made at night but always during the excitement of the day's events. They are also timed so that the camper will go off to a favorite activity immediately after talking and ideally the counselor should be available to speak with the parent or guardian and then spend some time with the camper after the call.

Wayne has gone to camp for the last five years. He and his buddies attend every summer and they quite literally spend their winter counting the days until the bus rolls off to camp. Wayne has the latest in cell phone technology – camera, Bluetooth, MP3 playback, gaming capability and even video. He is particularly taken with its gadgetry and displays the phone to everybody at camp. All around camp you can hear Wayne's voice. "I'm not using it as a phone – it's my camera!" "It's not a phone it's my MP3 player!" "Hey, Shawn brought a video game to camp – this is the same thing!"

Missing in Action

One day after lunch Wayne cannot find his phone. He is certain he had it at the ropes course and now he cannot find it. Wayne becomes frantic. Was it lost or stolen? The phone was very expensive; what is he going to tell his parents? If it's lost that's bad enough but what if somebody's raking up phone bills? Although many offers to help Wayne in his search he has become suspicious of everyone.

The rest of Wayne's camp days are spent in complete distraction from camp life. He is preoccupied with the whereabouts of his missing phone and doubts the sincerity of his cabin mates and counselors. He has lost not only his phone but also his standing with his friends, his involvement as a member of a community and the opportunity to have the benefit of a favorite summer pastime.

Many camp directors are emphatic that cell phones, video games and MP3 players have no place at camp. I believe what they are trying to convey is that a break from technology can offer the opportunity to experience daily life in a simpler and more basic fashion. Camp life offers this occasion through physical activity, face to face interaction and living close to nature – something that is becoming a rarity in today's world.

Dr. Stephen Fine is the Chair of Educational Research of the Ontario Camping Association.