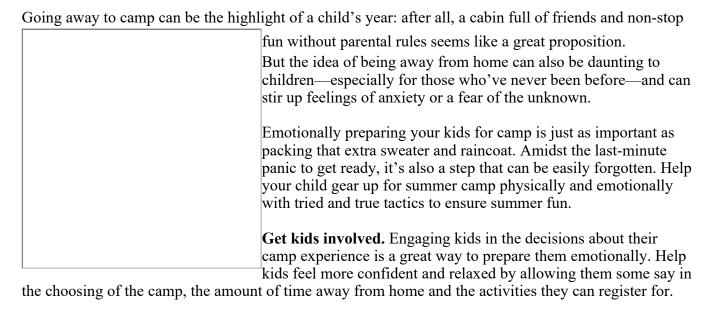
Your Employee and Family Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

## Camp countdown: helping kids emotionally prepare for summer camp



**Practice, practice.** Having short, overnight trips away from home can be a great way to prepare a child for a longer stay at camp. "Camping out" at a friend's or family member's house overnight allows a child to test the waters of separation in a comfortable and familiar environment. Kids can also practice writing letters during this time. Remember to provide pre-stamped, pre-addressed envelopes and paper before children leave home to make the task of writing a letter that much easier.

**Leave on a good note.** Stay positive when dropping a child off at camp. Avoid using phrases like, "I hope all goes well" or, "What will I do without you?" as they can leave a child worried that something bad might happen while away from home.

**Know what to pack.** Different camps have different activities. Knowing if a child will need a funny outfit for a theme dinner or whether there's a no two-piece policy for the pool will save both parent and child frustration. Camps often send out packing checklists which are a great starting point and when in doubt, touch base with the camp and ask what's expected. It might also be a good idea to connect with other parents whose children attended the camp in the previous year to find out about packing essentials.

**Keep the nurse in the know.** It can be hard to hand over the reigns of a child's care, especially when it comes to health. Gain some peace of mind by speaking directly to the camp nurse and counsellors to ensure they understand your child's medical condition, medication schedule and/or allergies fully and completely. It's also wise to provide these instructions in writing.

Accept that homesickness happens. Research suggests 90 per cent of children experience some level of homesickness while at camp. Let kids know it's normal and okay to feel sad and miss home while away and that they shouldn't keep these feelings to themselves. By recognizing and accepting homesickness as a fact of life, kids can manage their expectations and avoid a big "letdown" when they start to miss Mom, Dad and their own bed.

Camp is a great way for kids to meet new friends and bask in the great outdoors, but it's also more than

that. It's a unique opportunity to explore new activities, overcome challenges and discover a sense of independence. By helping kids prepare emotionally and physically for all these new experiences, you'll also give them the tools they need to build lasting memories.

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