

7 Ways to Prepare Your Child for Camp Interlaken JCC

Don't tell your children horror stories about camp.

Sharing your negative experiences with your child only increases their anxiety. Instead of horror stories, share the great times you had at the lake, playing sports, or making lots of new friends. Remember to advise relatives and friends to share their positive stories as well.

Create Night Time Rituals.

If your child has a bedtime ritual that involves you, now is a great time to begin to create a routine they can do by themselves. Not only will this help your child at camp, but it will show your child that he/she can be independent and in control.

Communicate Wisely.

Be sure to write letters/emails often. Ask lots of questions. Stay clear of telling them all the fun you're having (without them), how miserable you are without them, or other news that may upset them.

Practice personal hygiene.

Basic daily living skills and good personal hygiene are critical at camp. We at camp will help strengthen and reinforce these skills, but you can help them by practicing beforehand.

No Deals!!

Because we love our children and want to ease their (and our own) anxiety, we may be tempted to make 'deals' that might have a negative impact on their success at camp. The truth is that most children have a tough day or so when they first come to camp (returning campers can also experience this), but settle in once they get used to the camp routine. Your children will hold you (and us) to these 'deals' and we may be powerless to help!

Be a Role Model.

Help your child be successful by encouraging them (and relatives/friends) to follow the camp rules. Please leave cell phones at home. Also, please send mail and packages without food. We will find it and donate it locally. Parents who break camp rules reinforce to campers that breaking rules is okay.

Help us help your child to be successful.

Finally, you trust us with your wonderful children. Please also trust us with important information that may affect their time at camp (sick relative, death of a pet, relocation, divorce, etc.). We will treat this information with respect, and it will ensure a successful camp experience for your child. We have excellent camp professionals that include a Social Worker who are trained and skilled in helping children cope with challenges.



Harry & Rose Samson Family
JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER

Are You (and your new camper) Ready For The Summer?

A helpful parent guide



Getting your campers (and you) ready for the best summer of their lives!

Sending a child to camp for the first time can be daunting, and not just for the camper! Many times, parents are unprepared for the separation.

But first let's talk about your child. Here are a few questions:

- Has your child slept away from home with a friend or relative?
- Can your child dress themselves, brush their teeth, and brush their hair?
- Does your child have a nighttime routine?
- Did you (the parent) go to an overnight camp as a child?
- Does your child take medication during the school year?
- Is something important about to happen over the coming months?

Your answers to these questions are important. For example, if your child has never slept away from home, try sending him or her to stay with a grandparent or friend for a night or two. Daily living skills are an important element of any quality overnight camp program. We expect campers to make their bed, clean their area, and shower. Nighttime routines can be adapted for camp by removing the parent as a central component of the ritual (how about a stuffed toy or book!).



Many children take medication during the school year and some discontinue usage during the summer months. Check with your pediatrician prior to camp and discuss your plans with him or her. Please be wary when advised that "they don't need it at camp" as these medication vacations can be tough on children. Camp is a busy place which may be difficult to manage without the medications they need.

Finally, each summer, some children may learn of a significant family event while at camp. This may include illness of a loved one, death of a pet, relocation, or a divorce. If something important is about to happen, please prepare your child and the camp administration in advance. Telling your child as they get on the bus (it's happened) or by letter (yes, that's happened, too) is not a good idea. However, telling the camp is appropriate. Please trust us with this information as it can make a world of difference if we know there may be an issue.



Now we should consider how we prepare our parents for camp.

Because we love our children, we can make elementary mistakes as we struggle with a child who is anxious about attending camp. For example, before camp a parent might say, "If you don't like it, I will come and pick you up early." This 'deal' may prevent camp staff from helping your child process their homesickness (something many campers experience). The alternative is to be positive and reinforce that these feelings are common and that there are plenty of people who will be able to help if the going gets rough. Our counselors have all been homesick at one time or another, too! Don't dismiss the campers' concerns, but do be realistic and provide comfort. Perhaps tell them about your experience at camp by explaining how you felt a little homesick, too. Remember to also tell your child that camp was also one of the most glorious times of your life and so much fun. Children look to parents for comfort and stability. Provide it. Horror stories about camp don't help (save them for **after** the summer).



For some parents with children out of the house, this new found freedom can be exciting for some or depressing for others. Prior to camp, don't talk about all the exciting plans you have while they are away that they will be "missing out on." The same is true for communications with campers during your time apart. Letters from parents that reinforce how miserable or sad you are without your child is not something a camper should receive. While it is important that they know you love them, are proud of them, and are so excited about the great experience they're having, hearing how sad you are (or are not!) can be tough.



So, the bottom line is to recognize there is a process to the summer separation. Not only do you have all those camp supplies to purchase, you also have a human being that needs your support, love, and guidance. Think about what you say and how you convey it. Going off to Camp Interlaken will be a remarkable growing experience for your child. If you need help, call us! **We are here to help with the process for our parents as well!**