



American Dance Training Camp

The ULTIMATE Overnight Dance Camp!

www.AmericanDanceTrainingCamp.com

Phone/Fax: (866) 383-ADTC Email: ADTC@ASDance.com

SECTION 6

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR PARENTS



SOME NOTES ABOUT HOMESICKNESS

***Did you know that 70% of homesickness starts before the camper even leaves home?
Make sure your camper is set up for success at camp this summer!***

Homesickness risk factors include:

- Little previous experience away from home, including little or no day-camp experience.
- Negative attitudes about camp and leaving home on the part of the child, including feeling forced to go. (If coming to camp doesn't feel like "her idea," she will not enjoy the experience.)
- Parental anxiety expressed to the camper. (Includes ambivalent statements made by the parent such as, "I don't know what I'll do without you!" Negative and/or ambivalent statements will be interpreted by your camper as a reason to be worried.)
- Uncertainty on the part of the parent and/or child about how reliably and positively adult camp counselors and staff will behave, especially in times of need. (If the camper is told she may not be safe in the care of our staff, she will feel unsafe, uncomfortable and homesick.)
- Expectations of intense homesickness on the part of the camper, based partly on a lack of discussion about and understanding of the reasons behind homesickness.

What can you do NOW to ensure your child has a positive experience away from home?

- Begin preparing your child emotionally for the separation from home as early as possible.
- If this will be the child's first sleep-away camp experience, try to plan smaller separations leading up to the summer (weekends with grandparents / aunts & uncles / family friends).
- If this will be the child's first camp experience, try to sign up for a spring break day camp, or another day camp program at home before coming to ADTC.
- Share your own anxiety about your child going to sleep-away camp, if any, ONLY with other adults and NEVER with your camper or even with your other children.
- DO NOT make pick-up deals with your camper, meaning, do not offer to pick her up early if she's feeling homesick. It may seemingly help her feel better, but very often such "deals" set the camper up to fail. Instead of trying to cope with her feelings, join the camp community and engage herself in the fun, she may focus only on leaving.
- Assure your child that anxious or nervous feelings about going to camp are perfectly normal. Tell her it is O.K. to miss home and to miss her family when she is away at camp, Acknowledging and talking about negative feelings is FAR more helpful then to your child then telling her you don't need to feel that way" or otherwise dismissing or glossing over a problem
- Check out "The Great News About Homesickness" article later in this section

Let your child know that the ADTC staff will be there to help her if she should feel homesick. Our staff is used to handling homesickness and will support your child with understanding and respect while engaging her in all of the exciting opportunities that ADTC has to offer.

THREE REASONS THAT CELL PHONES ARE NOT ALLOWED AT ADTC

ADTC has a firm “no-cell phone” policy during camp. Here’s why...

For one, cell phones are expensive and can easily be lost or broken - the physical camp environment is not kind to such items.

Also, we find that having a cell phone prevents a camper from fully engaging in camp activities, because she may be preoccupied with calling home frequently, texting friends back home, etc.

Most importantly, having a cell phone at camp inhibits a camper’s ability to learn self-reliance and to assert her independence. The very fact that the camper is away from her parents and out of her “comfort zone” is one of the major benefits of camp. As a child learns to trust other, caring adults, she also learns, little by little, to solve some of their own challenges – to cope on her own, to be resilient, and to trust herself.

Having the ability to contact her parents at-will unfortunately means a camper will miss out on this fundamental benefit of camp. It prevents our staff - as your child’s temporary caregivers - from getting to the bottom of any problems that may arise and from addressing them quickly. Sending a cell phone to camp is like saying to your child that you as a parent haven’t truly come to peace with the notion of them being away from you and in the care of our staff. It is like telling your child that you do not think she will be safe at camp!

We promise that we will not hesitate to tell you if your child is experiencing an abnormally hard time in her adjustment to camp. Meanwhile, you can help her by talking with your camper *before she leaves for camp* about any nervous feelings she may be having. Tell her that you trust her, and that you know she will be safe and taken care of while at ADTC. Tell her that there will always be someone there to help her while she is at camp.

We are all here to help, but if you don’t trust us to take care of your child, she certainly won’t!

If you &/or your camper are having a hard time thinking about leaving her cell phone at home, please use this as a springboard for a larger conversation about nervous feelings. Use the other tips in the “About Homesickness” section and in the following article as a guide.

And as always, please call us if you have any questions or concerns: 866-383-2382.

THE GREAT NEWS ABOUT HOMESICKNESS

By Dr. Christopher Thurber

That's right...there's great news about homesickness! For starters, you should know that:

- Homesickness (or "missing home") is normal. In study after study, researchers found that 95% of boys and girls who were spending at least two weeks at overnight camp felt some degree of homesickness. Children at day camp may also feel pangs of homesickness, but less frequently.
- Homesickness is typically mild. Nearly everyone misses something about home when they're away. Some campers most miss their parents; others most miss home cooking, a sibling, or the family pet. Whatever they miss, the vast majority of children have a great time at camp and are not bothered by mild homesickness.
- Homesickness is something everyone can learn to cope with. In fact, research has uncovered multiple strategies that work for kids. (More on that below.) Most kids use more than one strategy to help them deal with homesickness.
- Homesickness builds confidence. Overcoming a bout of homesickness and enjoying time away from home nurtures children's independence and prepares them for the future. The fact that second-year campers are usually less homesick than first-year campers is evidence of this powerful growth.
- Homesickness has a silver lining. If there's something about home children miss, that means there's something about home they love, and that's a wonderful thing. Sometimes just knowing that what they feel is a reflection of love makes campers feel better.

So if nearly everyone feels some homesickness, what can be done to prevent a really strong case of homesickness? Here's a recipe for positive camp preparation:

- Make camp decisions together. Where to go, what type of camp to attend, and how long to stay are all decisions your child can make with you. Also, shop and pack for camp together. Involving children gives them a sense of ownership.
- Arrange lots of practice time away from home. Overnights at friends' houses, weekends with grandparents, and other time away from home teach children to cope effectively with separation. It also gives them a chance to practice the primary way they'll stay in touch with you at camp: letter writing.
- Speaking of letter writing...If you want to get any mail yourself, be sure to pack pre-stamped, pre-addressed envelopes in your child's trunk.
- Share your optimism, not your anxiety. Talk about all the positive aspects of camp and share your concerns only with another adult, such as your spouse or the camp director. Avoid giving your son or daughter a mixed message by saying something like, "Have a great time at camp. I hope I remember to feed your dog." Giving your child something to worry about while she's away will only increase homesickness.
- Never ever make a pick-up deal. Saying, "If you feel homesick, we'll come to get you" undermines children's confidence and ensures they'll be preoccupied with home from the moment they arrive at camp. Instead of making a pick-up deal, say, "I'm sure that if you miss home, you and your cabin leader will be able to work together to help you feel better. Camp will be a blast!"

OK, then, what are the most effective ways of coping with homesickness at camp? What advice can you write in a letter or e-mail to your son or daughter if you get a homesick letter?

- Stay busy. Doing a fun, physical activity nearly always reduces homesickness intensity.
- Stay positive. Remembering all the cool stuff you can do at camp keeps the focus on fun, not on home.
- Stay in touch. Writing letters, looking at a photo from home, or holding a memento from home can be very comforting.
- Stay social. Making new friends is a perfect antidote to bothersome homesickness. Talking to the staff at camp is also reassuring.
- Stay focused. Remember that you're not at camp forever, just a few weeks. Bringing a calendar to camp helps you be clear about the length of your stay.
- Stay confident. Anti-homesickness strategies take some time to work. Kids who stick with their strategies for five or six days almost always feel better.

Mom and Dad, your help preparing your child for this amazing growth experience will pay huge dividends. After a session of camp, you'll see an increase in your child's confidence, social skills, and leadership. And while your son or daughter is at camp, you can enjoy a well-deserved break from full-time parenthood. Remember: Homesickness is part of normal development. Our job should be to coach children through the experience, not to avoid the topic altogether.

Dr. Christopher Thurber is a board-certified clinical psychologist with more than 25 years of camping experience. He is the co-author of numerous scholarly articles on homesickness, as well as the critically acclaimed [The Summer Camp Handbook](#), the premier preparatory resource for campers and their families

This article originally appeared on MySummerCamps.com at the following link:

http://www.mysummercamps.com/forum/For_Campers/Parents_C1/Camp_Scholar_F16/The_Great_News_About_Homesickness_P74/

ALSO SEE THESE OTHER HELPFUL ARTICLES:

[Healthy Competition - It's Not an Oxymoron!](#) As a psychologist who works with summer camps across the country, I am often asked whether competition is good or bad...By Dr. Thurber

[Girl Cliques at Summer Camp:](#) By Joanne Kates

[Regarding Your Child and their Online Activity:](#) Children today spend a lot of time each week online. While this can be healthy and positive, as an advocate for children and their safety, *we recommend that you as parents be knowledgeable about their online activities.* Here's some advice from summer camp psychologist, Bob Ditter.