

## **-1HOMESICKNESS AT CAMP**

### **What we can do**

This summer many young girls are going to be going to camp for the first time. Surrounded by unfamiliar sites, sounds and people, leaving home for the first time is an awkward experience. Much of what we do prior to taking them to camp can help make their experience a happy one.

Relieving camp fears is the best way to create a positive camp. This can be done in conjunction with the girls' parents.

Start small and practice for the camp. Sleepovers at your meeting place or at your home create independence and practice for summer camp. If you plan to sleep in tents at camp, erect the tents in the hall or in your basement. The next step could be a sleepover in tents in your backyard.

Many children will feel happier at camp bedtime if they are allowed to pack a favourite stuffed animal, blanket or picture. This enables the girl to add a piece of home life to their camp surroundings.

Discuss calling home with your girls and their parents prior to camp. If you wish you can designate a special day when your campers may call home. Or you can quietly let the girl call home if she really needs it. Remember homesickness can be very "catching" so use common sense with home phone calls.

Before allowing the girl to call home, encourage her to calm down, take a deep breathe and chat about the problem before making the call.

If your girl insists on going home you must decide on the severity of the problem—sometimes it takes a few days to adjust to an unfamiliar environment. Reassure the girl, try to involve her in some other activity or allow her to call home if you decide this is the right procedure. However, if she still needs to go home be sure that no stigma is associated with this. Not all girls mature at the same speed and not all girls are as comfortable being away from home as others. Encourage her to stay but make going home okay. Let her know she is always welcome back and having her at camp for the time she was there was a really nice thing.