

A Glen Brook Guide to Homesickness

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Camp Director, Katy Gibney—known as Nurse Katy, even in the off-season!—shares her experience with a common camp concern below in [A Glen Brook Guide to Homesickness](#).

Most of us have experienced homesickness at some point in our lives. Maybe it was during a sleepover at a friend's house as a child, or maybe it was later in life at college or on a trip with friends. No matter when, homesickness can really have an impact on our experiences and how we approach future adventures. At Camp Glen Brook we support people through all degrees of homesickness for the best outcome possible by understanding the subtleties of this universal experience.

Homesickness is usually, as the name implies, a combination of feelings resulting from being in a situation that is different than what someone is used to (home). Feelings of apprehension can arise before even arriving. Sometimes homesickness manifests itself in physical symptoms such as a stomach ache, headache, rapid heartbeat, even a low grade fever. The feelings can be overwhelming and seem insurmountable, especially if they've never come on before. But don't worry! There are ways to prepare for these feelings. Consider talking about these ideas with your children when planning your packing list:

Writing Letters:

As old-fashioned as this sounds, we find that letters do *wonders* when it comes to homesickness.

- At Camp Glen Brook, campers are required to write a letter home once a week, which can help offset homesickness by expressing feelings in a safe way.
- Plan on writing letters to your camper, and ask friends to do so as well.
- Hearing from home in this way lets campers know they are in your thoughts, but doesn't pull them out of the present experience of being at camp
- If you just can't get yourself to put pen to paper, send us an email for your camper and we'll print it and give it to them.
- Before you leave, take time to choose writing paper, stamps, and pens—have fun with it! It will mean something special to your child to use the materials you picked out together.

Comfort Items:

- Pack comfort items such as pictures, favorite stuffed toys, or an item you have imbued with your love and given for the journey. Items like these can be comforting during quiet times like rest period and bedtime when activities take a pause and feelings and thoughts rise up.

Participation:

Sometimes you've got to jump right back in!

Feelings of homesickness sometimes make us want to be by ourselves. The best remedy for this is jumping in to the activities going on around camp.

- Homesick campers are encouraged to participate fully in everything at camp.
- This can help by distracting campers from feelings of loneliness or discomfort
- More importantly, campers develop bonds with the people they are with—companionship is an important step towards feeling at home.

What About...

Talking About It?

Talking about homesickness can help, but it's important to not dwell on it.

- Mentioning feelings, getting a hug, and returning to an activity reminds the camper that this feeling will pass and things will get better.
- We urge homesick people to acknowledge the feelings they have but see them as temporary. It's up to us to get to them to that place.
- Sometimes campers who are very homesick are invited to write a message down for their families and we email that message for them. This can get them a quick response from their families.

Calling Home?

Some people believe with all their hearts that calling home will make them feel better. After more than 70 years, that is not our experience.

- Trying to cure homesickness with a phone conversation pulls the camper away from the present, from forming bonds and companionship where they are, and may unintentionally *validate* their homesick experience.
- Hearing a loved one's voice *rarely* satisfies the desire to be together again; instead it results in greater longing.
- Parents are welcome to call the camp office and ask us about their child. We pride ourselves on knowing each camper at Glen Brook, and will be honest about how their camper is doing—even if they are struggling at that time.

We have worked with many homesick people, and are almost always able to help them draw on their own resources to find a way through the experience until they are no longer homesick. They might still miss home, but it's no longer an overwhelming feeling or sensation.

Learning how to get past homesickness is an extremely valuable skill, and will result in increased confidence, feelings of having mastered something and pride in learning how to call on both external support and internal resources. One of the hardest things a parent has to do is watch their child struggle through this kind of experience or to trust another adult with their child in their stead. It's a careful balance of protectiveness from things that are actually dangerous and trust that our young ones can find the inner strength to weather the storm until the clouds part and the sun shines in again.

Katy Gibney has been our Camp Nurse since 2005. Her long history with Glen Brook began when she was a student at the Waldorf School of Garden City –when she herself felt homesickness keenly.