



Homesickness

A resource for students, parents, and guardians of Outward Bound students.

Homesickness is distress caused by separation from the safety of home. This doesn't just have to mean missing loved ones. It can also mean missing the comforts and routines of home (beds, air conditioning, phones, a roof, etc.). It's okay for your child to feel homesick! In fact, mild homesickness is a common experience. However, it can get in the way of having a good time on course. It can also lead to missed educational opportunities and result in a student leaving course early. Discuss the possibility of homesickness openly with your student. Here are some tips:

How Homesickness Manifests:

- Strong feelings of anxiety, nervousness and sadness, anger or irritability
- Perceived lack of social support
- Feelings come in waves of intensity
- Occasional disruptive behavior (such as refusal to participate/follow directions)
- Missing normal routine
- Withdrawing from the group
- Loss of appetite
- Trouble sleeping

Prevention Tactics: Mitigating homesickness starts at home. Try these practices before course:

- Involve children early in the decision to go on course. A strong predictor of increased homesickness is students' lack of control over the decision and feeling "forced" or "tricked."
- Do not make "pick-up" deals (i.e. saying "If you don't like it, you can come home").
- Avoid talking about how much you will miss them/your concerns – express optimism and enthusiasm.
- Educate them that homesickness is normal for people of all ages.
- Practice being away from home (from both the people and comforts/routines). Try a weekend at a friend's or relative's house.
- Prepare questions for your course advisor.
- Encourage your child to engage with their instructors.
- Provide a tangible sense of time – make a calendar within which are the dates of the course.
- Show them materials about course.
- Avoid "medication holidays" – stick with the prescribed regimen for medications.

Ways to Manage Symptoms on Course: Here are some things you can coach your student to do while on course to alleviate homesickness:

- Tell your instructors if you are homesick. They often have ideas that will help.
- Make friends with the other students on course; ask about their lives, and share about yours.
- Plan to write a letter home or bring a letter from home.
- Bring a picture of home/family
- Focus on maintaining positive attitude and look for the fun in what you're doing.