

## **Homesick Scouts Best Practices.**

1. Prepare a sick or medical area away from scouts' patrol sites and adult areas. This should have a camp cot and an easy up or an BSA canvas tent with all sides and flaps rolled. Keep this close enough to be in full view of the adult fly/area so you can maintain 2 deep leadership.
2. When a sick Scout arrives, take them to the sick area. Don't reward them with adult attention.
3. The first round of questions should focus on possible illness. Questions should be open and not leading i.e. "What is wrong or what hurts. Not "Does your head hurt, does your tummy hurt?"
4. Ask enough questions to rule out fever, dehydration, and constipation. "How much water have you drank today, and when was the last time you went to the bathroom and what color" will be the key questions.
5. Ask how they slept last night? Agree it was hard to sleep for you too. Tonight will be easier for you because you will be a lot more tired.
6. Also, ask about their patrol to make sure they are not getting bullied. They might be forgotten and feel alone.
7. If all questions and answers point to homesickness or they ask to go home or to call their parents, move to the next phase of the process.
8. Give the Scout an excuse and a diversion as to why they don't feel great. Have them start sipping water because you think they are a bit "dehydrated". These will give you both something to focus on as you continue to talk. Letting them sip the water for a few minutes alone is normally a good choice. After a few minutes return and see if things have improved. Sometimes they do and Scout can return to camp.
9. If they still don't feel good and want to go home or call their parents, the "listening them back to camp" plan is started.

## **Listening them back to camp questions.**

Your tone is 1 octave quieter than normal and 1 beat slower. We are trying to create an atmosphere of calm and understanding. We want the Scout to talk, open up and share their feelings. Articulating their fears will help them calm down and get back to camp. Your job is to maintain eye contact and LISTEN. You will never talk them back to camp but you will LISTEN them back to camp.

1. Why did you want to come to camp? Normally they say their parents are making them be here.
2. Did someone tell you it was going to be easy? Sometimes they said they thought it was going to be fun. Well, it's fun but not easy.
3. Did someone tell you it was going to be hard? Normally the answer is no. A great answer here would be well someone should have because this is hard. There is a reason most youth don't do this; the reason is it's really, really, really hard. Most youth can't handle it. But we know you can and yeah, it's worth it.

4. What do you miss from home? Look them in the eye and let them talk. The talk can go from parents, siblings' pets, their room, sports, TV, video games whatever. Keep them talking. Let the feelings come out. Let the conversation go as slow as possible, don't rush to ask more questions, give them time to finish and think every thought. Normally I tell them that they will be there Saturday when you return home but this week at camp is only here this week. Keep sipping that water how are you feeling?
5. Ask about food, school, classes they like, teachers, or if they play a sport tell me about your team. LET.THEM.TALK! You maintain eye contact and listen with a smile.
6. Finally, ask who loves you the most at home? They always say, mom. Always.
7. You miss her the most? Normally the answer is yes. Be quick to agree. And tell the truth you miss your mom too. When things get hard and uncomfortable for you....yeah you miss your mom too. Everyone does and that never changes because moms are the best.
8. Let the Scout know you talked to their mom, and do you know why she wanted you to come? They normally say no. She wanted you to come because she knows this camp will make you the best version of yourself. She wanted you to come here because she knows what this week will do for you and how it will change you. So that's why you're here. She knows you better than I do but your mom is smart and I agree with her. Drink some water. I think you're just dehydrated and most likely really tired so rest a bit. Depart again for a few minutes they might fall asleep if they are tired so let them sleep for 20-30 minutes. If they stay awake, they can let the mom chat soak in.
9. Come back in 5-10 minutes and see how they are doing. They might need a small snack off the trailer and make sure they finish the water. Ask a direct question. Are you ready to go back to camp if you are looking better? Have them try camp again and you will be around to check on the dehydration.

Bring the SPLs and patrol leader into the conversation. Make sure they are extra kind and talk with him a bit. Visibly keep an eye on them to make sure they are doing ok.

Phone calls home make things worse. Letters from home make things worse. Keep the Scout mentally at camp and connected to camp and their fellow Scouts. Don't let them reconnect with their family.

The worst times for homesickness are the first and second nights of camp. The morning and afternoon of day 3 can be a tough time as well. If you can get to day 4 things will roll till the end!

#### **In Summary:**

- **Agree when the Scout says things are hard, but reaffirm the effort is worth it.**
- **Talk less and listen more.**
- **If you help them stay you will change their life!**