

# TOOLS TO HELP WITH HOMESICKNESS

Prevention programs for homesickness involve a combination of environmental information, social support, explicit coping instruction, caregiver education, practice time away from home, and surrogate caregiver training. If your child tends to feel homesick during extended stays away from home, please consider implementing the following:

1. Involve children (to the extent possible) in the decision to spend time away from home. If a child feels forced to leave home without input into the decision, their homesickness often increases.
2. Educate children. Young people should be told, "Almost everyone misses something about home when they are away. Homesickness is normal. It means there are lots of things about home you love."
3. Provide explicit coping instruction (see the next section for details). Using some of these strategies during a practice time away from home will boost a child's confidence about the separation.
4. Arrange for practice time away from home, such as a weekend at a friend's or relative's house. Ideally, these 2 or 3 days do not include telephone calls but do include opportunities for writing a letter or postcard home. After the practice time away, parents can discuss how things went and which coping strategies worked best.
5. Practice basic correspondence. Ensuring that children know how to write letters increases the likelihood that they will maintain some contact with home. Better yet, parents can provide children with pre-stamped, preaddressed envelopes and notebook paper.
6. Work together with children to learn about the new environment. Web sites, orientation booklets, and current students, alumni, or staff members are excellent resources. They increase familiarity and, thereby, reduce anxiety.
7. Encourage children to make new friends and seek the support of trusted adults.
8. Maintain predictability and perspective about the time away. Use a wall calendar to show children the time between today and the day of the separation. Highlight which days of week the child will be away so they can have perspective on the duration.

We hope this resource will assist you in preparing your child for a wonderful adventure at OLQP Ranch.

