Communication & Screen Free Environments at Pemi

Sending a camper to overnight camp provides a unique opportunity for both campers and families to practice making adjustments to the way they connect and communicate, both in person and from afar. Read on for helpful tips in making the adjustment from connection at home to connection at camp.

Campers

Parents are often surprised by the fact that our campers are able to unplug from devices for 2, 3, 4 or 7 weeks. "Don't they struggle detaching from their technology?" We find the shift to screen free life is easier than people imagine, especially when 165 of your peers are doing the exact same thing. The power of an entire group of campers redirecting their focus from a device to camp activities and friendships is a rare and almost magical occurrence in today's age. And what about being at a distance from family? Don't campers miss their family? The answer is YES, AND. Yes, it is quite normal to go through an initial period of missing family when adjusting to a new place AND Pemi has decades of experience with supporting campers through the shift from home to camp (we will dig into supporting campers with homesickness in May's NCN!). Ultimately, with most campers we find two things can be true at once. We love and might miss our family AND we love Pemi.

1. Campers write home every week, but may write home more often as time allows. Depending on the needs of your camper, you might want to practice ahead of time how to address an envelope, or consider sending pre-addressed and stamped envelopes (Here is our address!) We will also provide some inspiring Pemi Letter Templates to support the passing of information from camp to home.

2. Think about whether it is a benefit for your camper to bring family photos, a stuffed animal, or a small sentimental item from home that makes them feel connected to family. Keep in mind these items may be exposed to the elements or other campers, so keep valuable or irreplaceable items at home.

3. If you currently use devices during wind down routines before bed, begin to talk to your camper about alternative activities that can help them settle their bodies and get ready for sleep. This is a change especially for older campers who may have more tech access at night. Perhaps they like listening to music, reading, playing a game of cards, or another quiet activity. You might also mention that at Pemi, the counselors read to their cabins each night (yes, even with some of the older campers) as a way to relax and bond after a fun and active day.

4. An essential component to your son's successful journey towards building confidence and independence, is allowing them safe opportunities to launch and practice small moments of self-reliance and decision making. We know Pemi can be a part of this area of growth for your camper. From learning how to make a bed to identifying who can help them problem solve a situation, campers acquire powerful, lifelong skills, which can be a great outcome of the camp experience.

Parents

Campers experience the shift from living at home to living at camp with the help of their friends, camp staff, and fun camp activities, but an often overlooked adjustment is the one that happens with parents. It is a rarity in today's world for parents to find exposures to what Pemi calls "the art of letting go," an experience where parents practice patience and trust in the absence of immediate and detailed news of their child. Where are parents able to take advantage of the benefits of healthy separation for not only their camper, but themselves? We at Pemi know what a big moment this giving over of trust and independence is for families, and we are right here to partner with you and your camper every step of the way.

1. Choose a few goals of your own while your camper is away. This can help redirect focus and allow you to branch out from routines you hold during the rest of the year. Maybe you are able to spend more one on one time with another child, or finish a house/work project, or get some exercise. Maybe you finish your book, or go out for dinner.
2. Rely on Pemi to help communicate and connect you to your camper's experience. While this isn't a direct nor immediate line to your camper, it can help fill in more details of those weekly letters that come in the mail.
    - For parents of new campers, a phone call from a senior staff member the first week of camp with a detailed assessment of your son's adjustment to camp.
    - Weekly newsletters and other articles posted on the Pemi Blog, Facebook and Instagram updates.
    - Photos, posted twice a week, accessed through your online CampInTouch account or mobile Campanion App.
    - Final Letters / Reports. Your son's counselor prepares a detailed review of your son's experience; Parents of Full Session boys receive a mid-season and final letter/report. Parents of Two-Week, First and Second Session boys receive a final letter/report within about 10 days after the session ends.

Trust Pemi will always reach out to you if there is a concern with your child. The safety and wellbeing of the whole camper is our first priority. We value the expertise families bring to the table regarding their camper, and find most challenges are overcome when we communicate and work as a team.