

Reynella Scout Group

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Homesickness on Camp

Homesickness is a common experience for Scouts of all ages, particularly on their first overnight camps. We can manage homesickness through pre-camp preparation, a program of fun activities to keep Scouts engaged, and communication between leaders and parents.

Pre-Camp Strategies for Families

Involve the Youth Member in Planning: Support them to choose their gear and pack their bag for an overnight camp so they feel a sense of ownership over the experience.

Practice Sleepovers: Arrange overnight stays at a relative's or friend's house to build confidence in being away from home.

Pack Comfort Items: Encourage them to bring a familiar item, such as a favourite pillow, stuffed animal, or family photo.

Frame it Positively: Focus on the exciting activities they will try rather than how much they will be missed at home.


Avoid "Rescue Deals": Do not promise to pick them up if they are feeling unhappy at camp. This "out-clause" often prevents them from fully committing to the camp experience.

How Leaders Support Youth on Camp

Keep Them Busy: Distraction is the most effective tool. We fill every camp program schedule with engaging activities that keep young minds focused on the present. Camp programs involve plenty of physical activity and intellectual/creative challenges. We allow short rest periods to recharge ready for the next activity.

Normalise the Feeling: We will reassure the Youth Member that missing home is normal and that many other youth (and even leaders) feel the same way.

Establish Routines: Consistent mealtimes and bedtime routines, and a structured program, help the camp environment feel more predictable and secure.



Patrol System and Camp Buddies: Youth Members will spend much of the Camp with the same small group of peers (their Patrol) which creates a sense of safety and team spirit. We plan sleeping arrangements carefully to make sure new campers are paired with an experienced "camp buddy" who can offer peer encouragement.

One-on-One Check-ins: A short, caring conversation can make a Youth Member feel important and supported without over-focusing on their anxiety. We have many trained leaders who will provide this support, including a designated Wellbeing Leader for the duration of the camp.

Meet their Physical Needs: We ensure Youth Members are hydrated, frequently well-fed, and rested in between activities, as fatigue and hunger can often manifest as or exacerbate homesickness.

Camp Journal: In some sections we will encourage all Youth Members to write a daily camp journal to express their feelings and thoughts about camp (good and bad).

Delay and Reassess: If a Youth Member wants to go home at night, we will suggest waiting until the morning to see how they feel after breakfast and the first activity.

No Phones: Phones are left at home so Youth Members can focus on friendships, shared experiences, and belonging – which helps reduce loneliness and homesickness.

No Visits: We have a no-visits policy during camp to help Youth Members settle into the group. Visits can unintentionally increase homesickness. No visits during camp helps Scouts stay settled, immersed in camp life, connected with their patrol, and confident in the camp environment.

Communication

Frequent phone calls can often make homesickness worse by reconnecting the child too deeply with home. We prefer to keep phone calls for emergencies only.

If your child is worried about the camp, contact a leader and make a time for a short meeting pre-camp. This will give them an opportunity to express their concern, ask questions and have reassurance from the leader that they will be well cared for during the camp.

Camps are very busy, and supporting and engaging with youth is our main priority at all times during the camp. Leaders will not have time to communicate via SMS/social media throughout the camp. Leaders will be happy to 'debrief' with families after the camp.

Leaders will communicate with families if a Youth Member is unwell.