



***Homesick and Happy:
How Time Away from Parents Can Help a Child Grow***
Michael Thompson, Ph.D.

Every child has to practice being independent and every parent has to practice letting his or her child be independent.

Most kids feel some apprehension before going on their first adventure away from home without parents. Many parents are also nervous about the separation from their child, especially if your camper is expressing anxiety about going away to camp.

The biggest source of parental concern is often how your child will handle the separation from you and if they will experience negative emotions, often referred to as “homesickness,” while at camp. While most kids do not feel extreme symptoms of homesickness at camp, many experience emotional challenges during their first (and subsequent) experiences at summer camp and other away-from-parent experiences. These feelings are normal and are something that we have helped many campers work through. Campers feel a great sense of accomplishment when they successfully overcome the challenge of homesickness, and we encourage you to view this experience through the lens of the long-term positive outcomes for your child.

The enclosed book, *Homesick and Happy*, by Michael Thompson, Ph.D., is an excellent resource, not only as you prepare to send your child to GAC this summer, but also as you think about and prepare your child for other future adventures away from you (like college!).

“Homesick and Happy” Podcast Episode:
bit.ly/homesickhappy

No time to read? No worries! You can listen to Sunshine's 20-minute interview with Michael for her podcast at this link: bit.ly/homesickhappy

Book Highlights

The following selected passages will help you understand and communicate with your child about why this experience – even if they feel some (or a lot of) homesickness – is important for their development and growth into a thriving adolescent and adult.

Why parents need to “step aside”: p. 8-9 starting at “I believe...”

Eight things parents can't give children: p.11

Why kids try more things with a camp counselor than they will with you: p. 19

Why kids need to master homesickness: p. 68-70

What parents can do to prevent or lessen homesickness: p. 89-92

Ten elements of a camp experience that create emotionally powerful experiences for children: p.202-233

“Childsick” and Happy (info for parents missing their kids at camp):
p. 238-251

Quotes from *Homesick & Happy*

Children want to be independent, and they realize that they cannot be truly independent until they beat homesickness, even when they have a painful case of it.

At sleepaway camp, campers send an average of zero texts per day. Into the space created flows a bunch of old-fashioned human behaviors: eye-to-eye contact, physical affection, spontaneous running and jumping, or simple wandering.