

AFTER CAMP FOR PARENTS

When your child arrives home from camp, they will most likely be feeling several different emotions. Everyone reacts differently after being part of the camp community, so here are some things to watch out for and helpful ways to respond. Your child may be very excited to tell you about their experiences and share who they met and what they learned. They could also be upset that camp is over and they may have trouble readjusting to their daily life. These are all very normal and part of a process called re-entry. Below you can find some helpful hints on how to interact with your son/daughter after camp.

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOUR CHILD RETURNS HOME FROM CAMP

How will my child be feeling?

- Your child WILL be tired! They had a very full experience and were quite busy, so expect that they will need to rest.
- One of two moods is very common. They may be excited to share stories, or they might be quiet and closed off. Both of these reactions are typical and nothing to worry about.
- They will need time to process all that they did and experienced. It's important to give them time to sort through their experiences and the changes that are occurring within them.

How should I respond?

- Ask open questions and avoid "yes or no" questions. This will allow the conversation to continue to flow. Facilitate this process by keeping the conversation about camp. Take a part of their answer to one question and ask them to elaborate.
- Ask them about the people they met. They likely made new friends and got closer to old ones. It will give them so much joy to know you care about a person that was part of their camp journey. And hearing stories about the people they interacted with will open doors for them to share the bigger impact that camp had on them.
- Ask them about the camp theme and different discussions they had with counselors throughout the day. *Visit our website to see highlights of what the campers discussed in morning program and continue those discussions.*
- Ask them about the routine at camp and what they liked and didn't like about it. This will help you support them in what they hope to make part of their daily life after camp.
- Ask about the activities that they enjoyed the most. Dig deep into why and see if there is a way they want to continue making some of their key experiences part of their life.

How can I encourage their excitement about camp?

- Don't be surprised if your child has a list of things that they are now passionate about. They have been immersed in a supportive, loving, and God-centered community that has hopefully encouraged and empowered them. Help them, gently, to sort through these ideas. Don't reject the ideas, but offer them realistic options and support them in their newfound goals.

- Set up some easy ways to keep your child connected to camp life. This might be as simple as having local camp friends over your home once a month or encouraging your child to work with your parish priest to integrate something from camp life into parish life.
- Help your child to see how camp was a retreat for the sake of their everyday life. Their life at home should not begin to look like camp. Rather, they can consider how camp showed them the foundation of real Orthodox Christian community that can be fostered anywhere. Dig beyond the surface and discuss the deeper, core reasons why they loved being at camp so much.
- Help them to use their energy and excitement to bring others together in service to God and His Church, for the sake of their community and the world. The best way to witness to the love they experienced at camp is to go out and love both friend and stranger.
- Come up with a list of things that you can do together as a family throughout the school year, to demonstrate that the home is an image of true community in Christ for your children year round.

Encouragement and ideas that will nurture campers’ desire to apply their camp experience to their lives year round:

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

1. **Live Differently:** Only you can determine if you will continue the amazing journey of growing nearer to the Lord and of being a blessing to others. For this to happen, you must take on that responsibility and be intentional about your continuing journey.
2. **Keep investing in the camp community:** You can be a great encouragement to the people you met at camp by keeping in touch with them. Write letters, send birthday cards, pray for them, and visit.
3. **Take Risks—Stay Out of Your Comfort Zone:** Decide right now that you are not just at the end of your camping experience, but actually at the beginning of a new ministry. Plan to live in a way that will continue to stretch you beyond the level of determination you now have. Put your trust in God. Seek to hear his voice and to obey, and put into practice all that you have learned.