

HOMESICKNESS

INCLUSIVENESS

“ Heart thoughts are profound, hindsight aches and hope is obscure. I’m craving a great adventure — one that leads me back home.”

(Donna Lynn Hope)

The Aim of Scouting is to promote the development of individuals, enabling them to grow and take their place in society as active citizens. As we move forward with the Canadian Path we are much more aware of each individual’s personal progression, inclusive of their varying abilities. This inclusiveness within Scouting uniquely positions us to play an important role in modifying community attitudes and behaviour towards individuals with identified needs; it starts with Scouts.

Please use this guide for a better understanding of youth with Homesickness; how as Scouts, we can make a difference through simple interventions, program modifications and knowing where to get help when needed.

DESCRIPTION

Homesickness is the distress or impairment caused by an actual or anticipated separation from home. Its cognitive hallmark is preoccupying thoughts of home and attachment objects.

CHARACTERISTICS/BEHAVIOURS

Youth miss:

- Their parents
- Their sibling (s)
- All the everyday routine at home
- Their pet (s)
- Their own bed
- The feeling of being safe in their own home environment

Further:

- Youth resists all efforts at willingly participating in the fun filled program with their peers
- Might report feelings of being scared and sad
- Youth might cry when they are homesick
- Youth may also complain of having a headache or stomach ache; being upset can sometimes make the body feel bad
- Homesickness usually occurs when program slows down for first time, usually around 4:00 P.M. on the Saturday afternoon or as early as Friday evening at bedtime of a weekend camp

IN A SCOUTING SITUATION

Take steps to prevent Homesickness

- In advance of a week camp, prepare letters from mom and dad and mail them to the camp ahead of the start up date
- Have parents avoid making reference in the letters to missing the youth and to wishing they were home
- Parents should keep the content brief and upbeat with encouraging remarks; e.g. “I know you’re having lots of fun with your buddies/friends”
- Make sure the youth’s back pack contains a family photo and picture of his/her pet(s)
- Insure youth brings along a stuffed animal - ‘bed buddy’ to the camp
- Include the youth in the packing of his/her back pack for camp
- Include youth in trips to the stores to purchase needed items for the upcoming camp
- Often there will be a Professional Care Corps Counselor or trained Scouter at larger camps so that youth can receive counselling/support for bouts of homesickness, when requested.



PROGRAM MODIFICATION SUGGESTIONS

- Redirect the youth's preoccupation with homesickness
- Interact with youth one on one asking specific questions: Parents' work? Brothers and sisters? Pets? Description of youth's bedroom?
- If they have a 'bed buddy' (stuffed animal) with them, playfully interact with bed buddy
- Share an upbeat bedtime story with the entire tent/cabin group while remaining in close physical proximity to the youth feeling homesick
- Avoid asking the youth repeatedly if they are "O.K.," as this could cause a relapse
- Typically the youth will have completely forgotten about home life when the next day's activities resume in full swing
- At a week camp, contract with youth; he/she can call home on last day prior to end of camp if he/she actively participates in the entire week's activities

FURTHER ASSISTANCE

This Info Sheet is a resource guide only and is not intended to be therapeutic, diagnostic, medical, or legal advice. Our best source of assistance for youth with identified needs is the youth's parents or caregivers; the information provided is designed to support the relationship that exists between a youth and his/her parents or healthcare providers and the Scouters involved with the youth.

SOURCES

kidshealth.org/kid/feeling/home_family/homesickness.html, and material adapted and used by permission of The Scout Association (UK), Scouts Australia, and Scouting Ireland

