

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR CAMPER ABOUT CAMP DARK WATERS THIS SUMMER



Here are some tips on how to help your camper get through the news about Camp Dark Waters.

GIVE YOURSELF A MINUTE.

You're probably figuring out a lot right now. Allow yourself time to process with a helpful family member or friend. Children notice if we are stressed and upset, so it can help to work through our own emotions when they are not present.

For younger children, their questions may persist longer than their siblings. They may require more time and support than your other children. Consider using language that is more concrete or share visuals to assist with comprehension. You may have to repeat yourself calmly and in a reassuring manner.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE DISAPPOINTMENT

By listening well, you are better able to hear your child's concerns and they will feel more understood, increasing their sense of security. Let your child know it is okay to feel whatever they are feeling.

Be sure to allow your child to have their natural emotional experience. Try using words that join them in their feelings (e.g., "I'm so sorry this is happening. I'm disappointed that you can't go to camp too").

Don't rush to "fix" the problem or to make them feel better. Learning to sit in discomfort is one of the gifts we give children.

MOVING FORWARD

After your child has expressed their struggle, work to help them find their own coping strategies. Talking about balance is important: there are things that are frustrating/disappointing and some things that are exciting.

You may want to remind your child this is temporary and that camp still exists, even if they can't be on-site, and will be here next summer.

By being more active and engaged during the day, there is less time to continue to think about the disappointments.

REMEMBER YOUR CAMP COMMUNITY

Help your camper remember that the CDW community still exists and is here for them. Campers are often connected to other camp friends through technology and social media. Talking to other people who are going through the same experience as them can be helpful.

Encourage your camper to share their feelings with their friends, reflect on their favorite camp memories and start to look forward to when they can next be at camp together.

PRACTICE RELAXATION TECHNIQUES AS A FAMILY.

By building relaxation rituals into every day, you are modeling for your child the importance of relaxation and the power within each of us to improve how our body feels.

When feeling anxious, our breathing becomes more shallow and provides less oxygen to the brain, making it more difficult to catch our breath or feel a sense of calm.

Search online for "progressive relaxation scripts" and find the ones that feel most natural to you. The more routines are built into the family schedule, the more secure and supported your child will feel.

TOUCH, HUG AND SNUGGLE WITH YOUR CHILD AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, REGARDLESS OF AGE.

Children who previously didn't seem affected may show signs of clinginess or irritability, or start complaining of headaches and stomachaches as a result of the stress they are feeling.

Teens are at increased risk of using alcohol or other substances to help cope with their strong feelings from this pandemic, including personal loss and subsequent grief.

Teens may want to be around family more often. Or, they may become irritable and withdraw from their traditional social supports. If your teen or tween initially pushes you away, try asking, "Can I have a hug right now?".

THESE TIPS WERE ADAPTED FROM:

Nationwide Children's Hospital

(nationwidechildrens.org)

AND

A BGCSF Blog
(kidsclub.org/storeis)

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