



Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County
Summer Camp at the Suffolk County Farm



How to Help Your Child Mentally Prepare for Camp

It's not unusual for kids (and parents) to feel some "jitters" before a day-camp experience. Here are some strategies to help:

- **Communicate** with your child that camp will be a fun and interesting place to be. *Review* the activities that are planned and help him or her *visualize* what the experience will be like. *Share* information about all the wonderful opportunities at the farm ("wait 'til you see those pigs") and, if possible, *visit* the farm so your child can become familiar with the buildings, animal areas, and other facilities.
- If you are feeling anxious, your child will undoubtedly "pick up your vibes". **Learn** all you can about this carefully planned camp experience (i.e. medical care, program activities, and supervision) in order to feel positive and secure about your child's participation.
- **Get up a little earlier** than usual the first morning of camp in order to have a leisurely breakfast and "packing up for the day" time with your child. A "stress-less" exit from home will help you both feel less anxious about saying goodbye for the day at camp.
- A little note in a pocket, a picture of a pet in a backpack, a funny drawing in a lunch box, are a few ways to **assure your child** of your love when they are away for the day at the farm.
- **Clearly mark** all of your child's gear that is going to camp with their full name – have them help with this activity if possible. They will feel more secure knowing that they have everything they might need, and anything that is accidentally misplaced can be returned, thus avoiding upset feelings.
- **Express** your understanding and appreciation of how it feels to have distress about separation. Talk through these feelings without criticizing or belittling them ("oh don't be silly"). Reassure them that many kids feel the same way about new experiences.



If your child expresses concerns about their experience during camp:

- Really listen, *without reacting*, to what your child is saying. *Ask questions*, in a neutral tone, to try to get as much information as possible about what is happening, and how your child feels about it. If you feel that your child can take action to solve the problem, *discuss* strategies with them that might be useful in the situation. If you feel that adult intervention is called for, ask your child for any ideas that they have that you can share with the Camp Director when you speak with them.
- Our staff wants every child's camp experience to be a positive and enriching one. Please do not hesitate to bring your child's or your own concerns to our attention immediately. Every possible effort will be made to resolve situations to your and your child's satisfaction.