

# Tips for Success at KURIAKOS

Parents know that the benefits of a week at camp are numerous. Campers are given an opportunity to develop independence, decision making skills, social awareness skills, self-confidence and esteem, all within an emotionally, physically and spiritually safe environment. Preparing your camper for this experience will help them to make the most of their time at camp. There are several things you can do at home to make this week a successful one for your child.

## Talking it up!

- Talk about why you want your child to go to camp. If you were a camper at Kuriakos, or another camp, talk about your camp memories.
- Talk about how your camper will respond to camp staff. Campers are expected to respect staff and to follow instructions. Remind your camper that staff are fun, caring people, there to help them have a great week, but staff also need to enforce the rules of the camp.
- Talk about the daily tasks they will need to do for themselves at camp. Tasks such as getting ready for the day, or to go to bed, how often they should change their clothes, etc. Camp staff will work with campers and remind them to do these things, but this is a great opportunity to teach campers to take responsibility for their basic needs.
- Talk about the exciting activities to try at camp. Encourage your camper to keep an open mind and to be ready to try new games, crafts, and to make new friends. Assure your camper that being nervous is completely normal and a good thing. Come up with a strategy your camper can use when they feel nervous about trying something new.

## ACTIVITIES at KURIAKOS

- canoeing • kayaking • paddle boats • boogie boards • swimming
- sauna (and mud masks) • archery • low ropes challenge course
- bouldering wall • high ropes challenge course • climbing tower • canteen
- craft room with all kinds of projects • wood shop • theme meals • campfire
- horse wagon rides • basketball • volleyball • frisbee • soccer
- games of all kinds • skits • passion play • playground • tetherball • sandbox
- ping pong • gymnasium • daily worship, bible study and other theme activities

## What if I have trouble?

Many campers are nervous about going to camp, it is completely normal. However, there are many ways to help campers to calm their nerves so that they can enjoy a great week of camp!

- Have your child practice staying overnight at a friend or relative's house, so that camp is not their first time away from home without you. This helps to build confidence and a sense of security.
- Encourage your child to express exactly what it is that scares them (i.e. missing mom or dad). Voicing these concerns will help you to prepare your camper, and to communicate with camp staff any special concerns your child may have. Assure your camper that camp staff will be with them to help them through the week.
- Make a plan with your camper to address issues they may face at camp. For example, if someone is being unkind, campers should tell a staff member.

## **Leaving Electronics at Home**

Our electronic devices are great tools that make our everyday lives easier, but camp is not an everyday kind of experience. Camp is a special time: a time to focus on relationships, activities and being present to this experience without distractions.

Many campers cannot remember a time without computers, video games, television, ipods, cameras and cell phones. Leaving these devices behind doesn't seem like a healthy break, it can seem like a punishment. You can expect some resistance when your camper realizes that they will be leaving these comforts at home.

We recommend that parents talk about this reality with their camper prior to camp. This will give campers a chance to understand why we leave electronics at home, and what kind of activities they will be doing instead. Consider the following and how it might affect your camper:

- How much time does your camper spend using their phone or social media? Being out of the loop for a week may feel very scary for your camper if they are used to having instant connections with their friends.
- How much time does your camper spend watching TV, playing video games or surfing the web? Talk about what they will do **INSTEAD** of those activities at camp and how those electronics could get in the way of camp activities.
- Does your camper spend a lot of time alone? There is some alone time at camp, but life is lived almost always in community. Talk about how this may affect your camper and what they can do if they begin to feel stressed by a lack of alone time. If your camper is not often around new people, talk about how they should act in this new setting and strategies for making new friends.
- How does your camper handle stress or nervousness? Most of us will retreat or return to the familiar when we are faced with something new. This may not be an option at camp as the usual retreating activities (computer, phone, ipod, etc.) are not available. Talk about what your camper can do within the camp environment to handle these natural feelings.

### **Why do we avoid these devices at camp?**

The benefits of a week away from these devices, which are major elements of our daily lives, are numerous. It's probably one of the reasons you signed up your child for a week of camp.

Think about the benefits you have found in spending time with the tangible things of the world, having conversations with people who are beside you and not on a screen, and trying activities that are not the activities you do every day. Talk about why you like to do these things and your campers will likely be more cooperative.

#### **\* a note about Facebook (and other social media)**

Many campers will ask camp staff to be their friend on Facebook. The Camp does not have a blanket policy against this, as many camp staff have relationships with the families of campers that exist outside of the camp environment (family friends, church friends, etc).

We strongly recommend that staff do not befriend any camper unless they are also friends with that camper's parents/guardians, and have a relationship with that family outside of camp. We recommend that parents monitor their child's Facebook page. If you see any interaction between camp staff and your camper that concerns you, please report this to the Executive or Assistant Director immediately.

**Join the official Camp Kuriakos Facebook instead!** We recommend that campers and parents become friends through this page. This allows people to see pictures, videos, and keep in touch with camp in an appropriate manner.

## Homesickness

Homesickness is very common. Homesickness is most often experienced:

- By first time campers of any age
- By campers worried about something specific at home (ex. Parent or grandparent illness or a special family event)
- If campers speak with or see parents/guardians
- When campers become tired and/or grumpy

Staff are trained to help campers deal with feelings of homesickness. In almost all cases, staff are able to work with the individual camper and the homesickness is turned into a victory for the child, an obstacle they learn to manage and overcome. If a camper is extremely homesick and/or not responding to assistance, parents/guardians will be contacted by camp staff.

## Phoning Home

Campers will not be allowed to phone home, except with the permission of the Assistant or Executive Director. Phoning home seems like a solution to homesickness, however, in our experience it almost always makes the homesickness worse. If a phone call is needed, staff will contact parents/guardians.

If you would like to inquire about your camper please call the camp office. Staff will be happy to report back to you. Speaking with people from home can often bring on homesickness, even if it was not an issue before.

### *But what if I miss home...*

- Do **NOT** promise your camper that they can phone to be picked up anytime they want. Instead, encourage your camper to see this week as a challenge, and remind them that you will be very proud of them for making it through the week.
- **DO** encourage your camper to talk with their counsellor or other staff if they are feeling sad or having a problem. Encourage them to listen to staff and to try their best to follow instructions; staff are not being mean by redirecting or suggesting ways the camper can overcome homesickness. Feeling homesick is not wrong, but if campers give in to those feelings, they miss out on the best parts of camp life.

## Preparing Parents

We thank you for entrusting your children to us. We realize what a privilege this is, and we take your trust very seriously. We want to provide your child with the best week of their year!

### **OUR STAFF TEAM**

Kuriakos has an excellent staff at the both program and support levels. Each is chosen for their ability to serve as a Christian role model while caring for campers.

- All program staff are a minimum of 18 years old, and at least one year out of high school
- All staff must submit a Security Clearance Check and a Child Welfare Check
- Two weeks of staff training prior to the summer programs prepares all program staff for the summer
- All program staff are certified with Standard First Aid; all lifeguards are NLS certified; and all other activity leaders are trained to the appropriate industry standard
- Medical care is provided by a Camp Medic during kids and youth summer programs. The Camp Medic is usually a Registered Nurse, but may be an MD, paramedic, or student nurse.

**ACCREDITATION** – Kuriakos is an Accredited Camp member of the Alberta Camping Association. This means that we meet or exceed all industry standards, which are set by the ACA. Accreditation occurs every 3 years to ensure we are maintaining these standards. The most recent accreditation occurred the summer of 2010.

**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION** – Camp Kuriakos is a Christian organization, based in the Lutheran tradition. Our campers come from a variety of backgrounds, including all denominations of Christianity, as well as some other religions and many campers with no faith background. We teach Christian truths in a manner that is respectful of all denominations and other religions.

Our goal is not to have your camper memorize a list of statements about God and then tell us they think it's true. Our goal is to proclaim the Good News of God's love and to model that for everyone. Staff work tirelessly to create space and time for campers to ask questions about God, faith, life, church, community, service, and how it all goes together.

**WHEN YOU ARRIVE** – You will be directed to register your camper, and at that time you will be introduced to the staff who will be leading your camper's cabin group for the week. Please take the time to look around the camp, familiarize yourself with the surroundings, have a look at the posted daily schedule and ask any questions you may have. We hope you will feel extremely comfortable at Kuriakos before you leave.

**AND WHEN THEY RETURN - Expect lots of stories and excitement!**

Some campers will also go through a bit of a "down time" after all the activity at camp. This is common, and it will pass when the camper resumes their regular schedule of activities.

To get the most out this week of camp, we encourage you to consider watching to see if your camper behaves differently after camp. Much of their learning will depend on the camper's individual personality, the program activities they engaged in, the way staff interacted with your camper, what staff emphasized, and how your camper got along with their cabin group. No two campers will react exactly the same, and no two camp experiences are identical.

This is why we recommend that you take note of any changes you see, and talk about them with your camper. Talking about their experience and how you see it affecting them will help your camper to see their growth for themselves. Being able to reflect on their experience is an important step as they develop as sense of their identity as an individual, a member of your family, and a member of the community. Age, maturity, and personality will affect how a camper reflects on their time at camp. Some great starting reflections include:

- What part of camp did they like the best?
- What part did they find the most difficult?
- How do they interact with old friends? With new people?
- Do they seem interested in any new activities?
- How do they react to challenges or new situations?
- Do they ask questions about God and church?
- Are they helpful around the house? Do they seek to be helpful in the community?

**See you soon at Kuriakos!**