

HOW TO PROCESS YOUR YOUNG PEOPLE'S CAMP EXPERIENCE WITH THEM

When your group of campers arrive home from camp, they may be experiencing lots of different thoughts and feelings. The process of going back to their normal routine is commonly known as re-entry. With re-entry may come stress. Re-entry stress affects each individual differently. Some may have no problem getting back into the swing of things, whereas others may struggle a bit more. Things like disorientation and restlessness are very common when getting readjusted. Below are some ideas on how to care for your young people after camp.

Soon after camp, plan a time to get your youth together to hear about their camp experience.

This is an exercise you can do with them. On paper or verbally, ask your campers to answer these questions:

1. How was your camp experience?
2. What was the best thing about it?
3. What was the hardest part for you?
4. What did God teach you?
5. Is there anything from camp that you would like to try to apply to your daily life?

One good way to encourage campers to take those next steps is to have them write themselves a letter reminding them what they experienced and what they intend to do about it. Provide some designated time to compose these letters. Then collect them, with a promise that you'll mail the letters back to them in six months.

Encouragement and ideas for integrating the camp experience into their daily lives:

"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 they can determine if they will continue the amazing journey of growing nearer to the Lord and of being a blessing to others. For this to happen, they must personally decide to take on that responsibility and be intentional about continuing their journey.
2. **Invest in your community:** Let your young people know that they can be a great encouragement to your family, friends, and fellow parishioners by simply living the life they want to live. Here are some ways to create the rhythm and flow of camp in your everyday life. Ask them for some examples and have them add to this list.
 1. Make a daily commitment to be quiet for 5-10 minutes
 2. Be part of the cycle of services and ministry life at your parish
 3. Look for opportunities at home to lift the burdens of your parents and siblings

4. Organize gatherings of local campers and counselors to stay connected and encouraged
 5. Develop a routine that works for you and your lifestyle. Be intentional and disciplined as much as you can. Here are some things to make part of a plan: Eat well, be active, be prayerful, seek spiritual guidance, and make time to serve your community.
3. **Take Risks:** Encourage your young people to keep stretching themselves in new and challenging directions. Help them see that they are not just at the end of an experience, but actually at the beginning of a new way of thinking and living. They can intentionally, with your support, plan to live in a way that will continue to stretch them beyond the level of determination they have now. Your continued love and support will be vital to them putting into practice all that they have learned.

How to nurture your young people after camp:

- Visit the camp website to see the subject matter that was discussed in morning program and throughout the day in discussions with staff. Find ways to keep those discussions going by allowing the campers to share what stood out to them and what they learned.
- Facilitate discussions where the young people can come up with activities that help put their excitement about camp to good use. This will be helpful in taking their camp experience to the next level and making it real in their everyday lives.
- Assist campers in arranging a gathering where everyone can bring camp pictures and souvenirs and make a photo album (in traditional or scrap book style).
- Encourage your campers to write letters to some of the people who made their camp experience so wonderful.
- Campers can make name cards for each of the people at camp who impacted their life and put them all on a board. Let them take time to tell a short story about that person and then the group can pray for them together.
- Be sure to tell your young people that they are appreciated and loved! Keep an ongoing dialogue about their experiences, thoughts, and feelings after camp. Slowly but surely, help them see that the true purpose of camp life is to experience a true and real community in Christ. Help them see that they can foster this in all the communities they are a part of.