

## After Camp for the Camper

Transition back to your daily life is an important part of your camp experience. You have spent a significant amount of time in a community with a particular rhythm and routine, so leaving it may be difficult. When you go home, you may feel a bit out of place. Going back to school and being around peers and family members who didn't share this experience with you may be both exciting and confusing. You could experience what is called Re-entry stress in a few different ways. Re-entry stress is like culture stress, or culture shock, only in reverse. Entering a new place has its challenges and re-entering back into what is familiar has its challenges as well.

When you get home from camp, you may feel frustrated, bored, and left out. You may feel very excited to share what you have learned and experienced and be eager to apply what you've learned to your everyday life, even though you have to get back into your regular routine. Don't be discouraged or give up on your desire to carry healthy and beneficial aspects of camp into your home life. It'll take time and patience with yourself and others. Experiencing any of the following things is very normal.

### **What do to IF you feel...**

- **Disorientated**– Keep in mind how the initial “culture shock” of beginning at camp faded; your re-entry shock will too! Allow yourself to recognize changes within yourself from the camp experience when you notice them. Write them down and share them with someone you trust.
- **Lonely**– Reach out to others who understand what you are going through and stay in touch with your camp friends and counselors. Don't isolate yourself or dwell on the past. Physical proximity does not define closeness.
- **Restlessness**– Get involved in your community! Look for new ways and opportunities to serve God in your home, school, and parish.
- **Misunderstood**– Don't be upset if people seem indifferent to your experience. You don't want to become self-righteous or indignant over another's response or lack of response.
- **Tired**– Take your time to readjust and allow for rest, reflection, and rejoicing in what you have seen God do at camp.
- **Frustrated**– Try to avoid slipping into resentment, anger, or other responses that appear. Lovingly try to inform those around you about the benefits that retreating to camp can have on your daily life.
- **Loss of identity**– Focus on how you are now better off from the experiences you have had. Also focus on skills, self-knowledge, and knowledge of God that you gained.

- **Defensive**– Take it as fact that others are usually not able to relate to your experiences as you would wish. People may ask superficial questions. Be prepared to face these questions. Develop ways to make transitions into what you really want to communicate.
- **Sensitive**- Peers back home can seem insensitive to the things that you are sensitive to. Remember that your perspective has changed — not theirs.

### **How to remember and reflect on what you learned and experienced**

Keep your memories alive – don’t store them away in a shoe box. It wasn’t a dream. It was a very real experience. You could make a memory book, write a blog, or journal. The most important thing to remember is that it was an experience that was meant to impact your everyday life. Camp should not be a place we always long to live, but a place that shows us how we can live wherever we are.

Ask yourself some questions:

1. What about your experience made it so special?
2. How did this experience change you?
3. What habits would you like to change or add to your everyday life?

Talk to a friend or family member:

1. Tell a story about a particularly momentous day or experience.
2. Describe how your time has altered your goals and perceptions.

Be intentional about staying in touch with fellow campers and counselors:

1. Take time to strengthen your friendships. Seek out people that inspire you.
2. Avoid depending on camp friends in a way that doesn’t help you transition home.
3. Have an accountability buddy. Share your plans with someone who will support you and help you make camp life real in your community.

### **Encouragement and ideas for continuing to live in Christian community with others**

“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 you can determine if you will continue the amazing journey of growing nearer to the Lord and of being a blessing to others. For this to happen, you must take on that responsibility and be intentional about your continuing journey.
2. **Invest in your community:** You can be a great encouragement to your family, friends, and fellow parishioners by simply living the life you want to live. Think of ways to create the rhythm and flow of camp in your everyday life.

- Make a daily commitment to be quiet for 5-10 minutes
  - Be part of the cycle of services and ministry life at your parish
  - Look for opportunities at home to lift the burdens of your parents and siblings
  - Organize gatherings of local campers and counselors to stay connected and encouraged
  - 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—Stay Out of Your Comfort Zone: Make a decision the day you get home from camp that you are not just at the end of an experience, but actually at the beginning of a new way of life. Plan to live in a way that will continue to stretch you beyond the level of faith you now have. Put your trust in God. Seek to hear his voice and to obey and put into practice all that you have learned. Be patient with yourself and know you're not alone. Engage people you trust in your plans and ask them to help you fulfill them. Be assured that the camp community is always here for you!