

How to Help Your Child Cope with the Cancellation of Summer Camp

By Dr. Audra Kaplan

Take a Pause

We know you are juggling a million things right now and we are all used to multi-tasking but at this moment your child needs you to focus on them. A few minutes of undivided attention can have an immense impact.

Pause what you are doing, turn off your phone, television and screens, find a quiet space and truly be with them.

Allow the Feelings

Allow your child to have their feelings, let them cry, be angry, be quiet, and then let them cry some more.

Allowing our children to express with feelings can be hard for parents, we tend to want to reassure and fix. However, affirming that this is an appropriate reaction will help them begin to process and heal.

Give Space

Give them space and time to express their thoughts and feelings and to grieve this loss.

Children and teenagers process and react in many different ways and at different rates. Reacting to grief is not linear, a child who is happy one moment can be crying the next.

Let Them Lead

Ask your child what they need from you, let them take the lead. This will help them feel a sense of control and also know that you are there for support.

Resist the Urge

Resist the urge to take away their feelings and just be with them.

Resist the urge to compare the loss of Camp to greater losses, this will only serve to invalidate their feelings. We know that there are greater losses and struggles but being reminded of this will not help your child at this time.

Resist the urge to tell them they have so much to be grateful for. Although living in gratitude is one of the core pillars of Camp Ramah Darom and a great mindful living tool, it important to allow your child to be in this moment for a bit.

Just Listen

While we as parents may also be experiencing many feelings about Camp being canceled, it is important that we allow our children to express what is on their minds and in their hearts.

If we move to solutions too soon, they will miss the opportunity to share what is needed. Given the time and chance, children can develop resiliency in the face of disappointment and loss with the support of those around them.

Encourage Connection

Encourage your child to connect with their Camp friends, to reach out to others and not wait for others to call. Supporting, and feeling supported by another person, can help them feel a sense of control over a situation in which they have little control.

When ready, encourage your child to think about ways in which they can support others in the community, this is a great time to display compassion.

Be Patient

Give them time to process. Some kids may need more time to understand. Some might be angry with Camp, allow them to feel mad, this is part of the grieving process. Be careful not to add your own feelings to theirs.

Be understanding if they temporarily lack motivation for school or other responsibilities.

Some children might show behaviors that they had already mastered, such as tantrums, disrespect or night wetting. Be patient, they will gain their equilibrium soon.

Remember

Remember that children are resilient. With time and love they will find a way to cope with this loss.

Reach Out

If you are concerned about the duration, intensity or frequency of your child's response, please reach out to a mental health professional in your area or one of our Camp mental health support staff, listed below.

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