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Homesickness**

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Welfare News

Providing hints, tips and strategies for a happy Jamboree!

SA Contingent Contact during Jamboree:

7534 6107



Who are we and what do we want?

By now, if you haven't figured out who we are, you've been living under a rock. You should have met us at the Leaders Weekend as well as the Shakedown Camp, and seen several of our newsletters come your way. We are the SA Contingent Welfare Team (affectionately known as the Fun Police) Our job is to ensure your Jamboree is

as happy and fun as it can be. We will provide support with health (including mental health and counselling), hygiene and conflict issues you might come across at camp, as well as equipping you with the tools to run a successful Jamboree Troop. On-site, we will visit your troops regularly and hopefully help to put smiles on dials! We know

that many of you are experienced Scout Leaders and have a wealth of knowledge and strategies. These newsletters will provide you with information you can add to your already growing bank of information, provide topical discussion points, and highlight some issues that are highly relevant to life at a Jamboree.

Homesickness: What is it really about?

Homesickness - or 'separation anxiety' as it is more correctly known - is something from which we can all suffer, from early childhood and right into adult life. Of course, depending on such things as age, maturity and culture, the way homesickness presents changes and we will develop coping mechanisms to

limit its impact. The process of handling homesickness is all part of our maturing and developing as a person. For young people, dealing with homesickness as they progress through life helps them develop their own self confidence resilience and independence.



Every adult on their first time away from home for more than a couple of days starts to 'miss home', perhaps getting a little anxious wondering what's happening, missing their own bed, familiar things, or any important association. 'Missing home' is simply our way of saying to ourselves "I need reassurance that everything and everyone is happy or OK".

In younger children this is more pronounced; away from home they no longer have the safety of the families and familiarity of their known environment.

So how can you help minimise homesickness and help the children in your care? In this newsletter we will explore this issue a little more.



Symptoms

Symptoms normally only last a day or two at the most. They range from:

- feeling that 'nobody here loves me and understands me',
- headaches
- nausea
- feeling sick
- having stomach aches
- feeling sad and deserted
- being 'off your food'
- sleeping difficulties.

All these symptoms are transient and quickly overcome if handled properly.

Remember, at the Jamboree we have an accredited Support Team and medical staff who can look after your child and provide care if genuine sickness develops.

What can we do about homesickness?

The **main cure** for homesickness is **reassurance and keeping the mind and body busy**, which is likely to be the same technique parents used when they left their child with someone else for the first time. After many years of taking Scouts to Jamboree, this is the best method of ensuring we manage homesickness to the best outcome for Scouts, Leaders, as well a parents / guardians and families.

It is in the child's best interests if we know a bit about what is going on at home too. If we know, for example, that Granny is in hospital we can more adequately support the child in times of need.

Strategies to try...

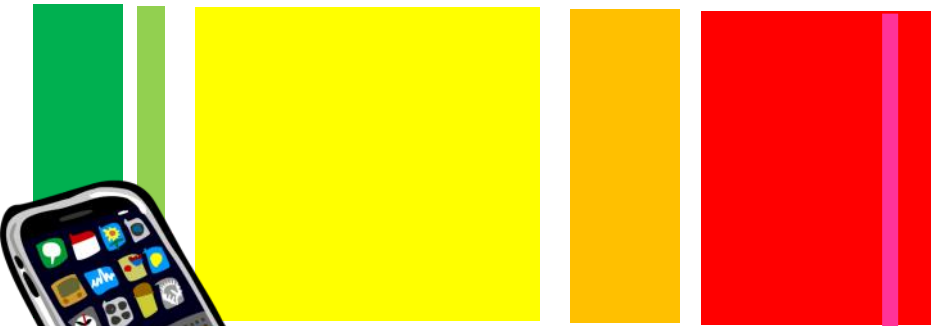
If it is known that a Scout may suffer from homesickness before the Jamboree, it may be prudent to discuss some strategies with the Scout and their parents prior to attending. Prevention is better than cure, as they say! Such strategies may include:

- Writing a diary
- Writing down one good thing that happened each day
- Taking photos
- Collecting badges
- Drawing sketches or diagrams
- Collecting a small token or souvenir from different activities (as long as they are things they are allowed to take)
- Writing letters or emails home
- Using a leaders phone to text home, rather than phone home
- Having set times to call home via a leaders phone
- Taking a small "security" item that reminds them of home (a teddy, photo, hat, clothing item etc)

These strategies assist with:

- Creating discussion points if the child does call home.
- Reminding Scouts they are collecting good things to show Mum or Dad when they get home
- Connects them with home without having to call home
- It keeps their minds focussed on positive aspects rather than negative aspects and thoughts.
- Showing the results of a task set when they get home instils confidence and independence to do it again





Mobile Phones

Mobile Phones can be the biggest hindrance to leaders being able to adequately care for Scouts. We also understand that parents can struggle with this too. If a child is homesick or injured then they have the tendency to ring home before telling the Scout Leader. This brings with it the problems of the parent at home being worried and anxious and the Scout Leader not even knowing there is an issue. There have been many times when a Scout has called the parent in the evening, in tears, because they are missing home and feeling tired and emotional. The parent at home is devastated, anxious and does not sleep. The child eventually settles down, sleeps, gets up in the morning and has another amazing day of activities at the Jamboree. Meanwhile the parent is at home stressing. There have also been instances of Scouts calling home saying they have broken their leg (or similar) but when the child is examined they have sprained it or bruised it. Meanwhile the parent is at

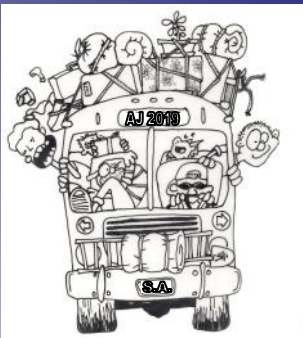
home worrying about something that did not eventuate.

Please be assured that we will contact parents if there is any incident that they need to know about. If there is an injury we will liaise with parents to provide the best possible outcome for their child.

Likewise if something happens at home and parents want their child to know about it then the information really needs to be known by the Leaders so that they can support the child. Imagine how alone the child would feel if parents ring them to tell them that the dog has been injured and the Leaders know nothing about this and cannot support the child. We will work with parents and leaders to make sure the best possible outcome for the child is achieved.

Please ensure that your Scouts leave their mobile phones at home.

Travelling to camp or the Jamboree with the group is an essential part of helping young people to cope. In the case of the 2019 Australian Jamboree, the bus trip will help them develop a bond with other Scouts, forming a support group for each other. They arrive as Scouts together and are kept busy assembling the tents and camp. That night they sleep well and start off refreshed the next day.



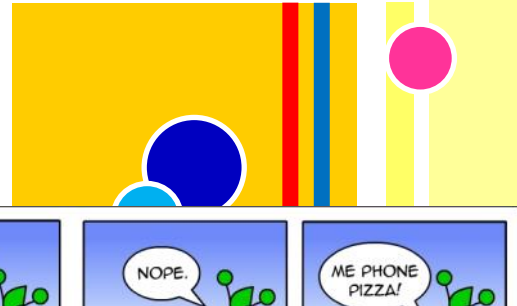
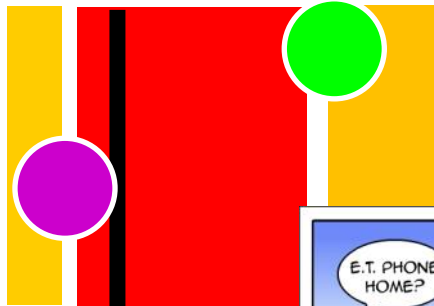
I DON'T GET HOMESICK AT CAMP.



I GET CAMPSICK AT HOME.

There is the added complication of the fact that we cannot charge the phones. Additionally, as scouts will be very active, the risk of loss or damage is very high from phones falling out of pockets or bags. We do not want scouts to miss activities by wasting time searching for or having to report lost phones. Also we would like to avoid the temptation of inappropriate use of phones around toilet and shower blocks.





What to say if a child is feeling homesick at camp

HAVING A PLAN

Parents and leaders should discuss with the child **strategies** for helping them if they become homesick. Many children know that the sound of their parents' voices will be enough to 'tip them over the edge' but some will be reassured by talking with their parent as long as the conversation follows the guidelines below. Discuss with the child whether or not they will ring home and ensure you include both the Scout Leader and the parents in the decisions. Some Scouts might prefer to email home rather than ring. Work out what is best for you and your child.

If we decide that phoning home is a good strategy we will always aim to do it when the child is **calm and rested**, not at the height of a bout of homesickness.

PHONING HOME

Phoning home is often a major contribution to homesickness as it is so easy for those at home to unintentionally make their child feel even more homesick by being brought back into 'contact' with all the people, situations and things they miss.

As unusual as it might seem, in a situation of homesickness, the very worst thing for Mum or Dad to say is "We miss you".

"You can always come home" is **never** something to suggest to your child; phrases like "If you don't like it you can always come home" causes problems and distress, and there are much better ways of supporting your child. At SA Contingent and Jamboree Headquarters, we have a medical team

and other professionals with years of experience in adolescent problems. If they feel it is in your child's best interest to return home, you will be contacted and this will be discussed.

Direct the conversation around to what the child has been doing and what they have planned for the rest of the day or next day. If they ask parents if they miss them, the best type of answer would be along the lines of "Oh yes, but we are really looking forward to hearing all about the Jamboree and seeing your photographs."

TALK TO SOMEONE ON-SITE

If they feel like they want to talk to someone, **suggest they talk about how they feel to their Patrol Leaders and Line Leaders.**

If these people feel they need more support, they can contact the **SA Contingent Welfare team**, all who are there to support your child.

GET INVOLVED

Encourage the child to become involved, to go and meet other Scouts from other places, and to make new friends and develop contacts outside of their own Troop.

BE POSITIVE!

Be very positive! This event will be long remembered and is a great part of your child's development. Discuss things they have enjoyed or will most likely enjoy. Encourage them and tell them what an

amazing achievement they will have made by staying at the Jamboree for 10 days. **Celebrate their successes.** Congratulate them when they make it to the next morning if they have had a rough night of homesickness the day before.

SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE

If Leader's don't feel they can most adequately and empathetically help the child, they can ask for help from a member of the Contingent Welfare team. If needed, those Leaders in turn can call on the accredited personnel who are part of the Contingent Headquarters team. On a daily basis, the Contingent Welfare Team will work with each Line Leader team to see what's happening in each of the Troops and to see if help is needed with any matters of homesickness or welfare of any SA Scout or Leader.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

It's true - there's no place like home. Being away and feeling homesick is not much fun for a child or an adult. In our experience, if it happens at all it normally lasts for only a couple of days. It's a great help to the child's development by learning ways of overcoming homesickness. As parents or leaders, you should always do what you can to support your child but in a way that they don't miss out on all the fun and adventure that will be a great memory and enriching part of their life.

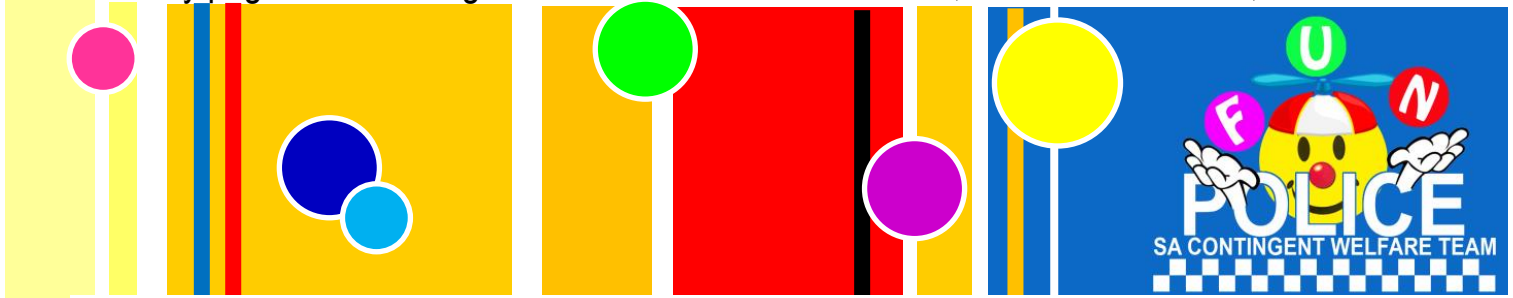
Information adapted from David Marston (BVocED&Train CSturt)

If you require any more information on homesickness, or other matters regarding the welfare of Scouts on Jamboree, please contact:

Andrea Banks,
SA Contingent Welfare Director
Phone: 0413 336 957
Email: sa.specialdiets@aj2019.com.au



Some of your feedback from the surveys you completed at Leader Weekend was to supply a quick summary page that can be given to Scouts and Parents. Well, we took it on board, and here it is!



Jamboree Homesickness: The main points...

Everyone gets homesick. This is perfectly normal. A majority of scouts will experience some sort of down-time or feeling of missing home during the Jamboree. It's only when this feeling gets bigger and stops the scout from participating to the best of their ability that it becomes a problem.

Generally, the symptoms of homesickness will only last a day or two. It can result in negative feelings, vomiting, nausea, headaches, stomach aches, eating or sleeping difficulties.

The way we deal with the feeling of homesickness can directly influence whether the scout experiences a heightened state of anxiety, or overcomes this to develop independence and growth as a young person, which is what scouting is all about!

PREVENTING AND DEALING WITH HOMESICKNESS

The best thing for preventing and dealing with homesickness are focussing on positives, reassurance and keeping the mind and body busy.

For Scouts experiencing homesickness

If you have felt homesickness before and know you might be homesick on the Jamboree, let people around you know. They can help you come up with strategies to prevent it becoming a major issue, give you someone to chat to if you need it and keep an eye on you.

You might like to bring something from home that helps you feel better— no one is too old for a teddy!! (You could also bring a favourite hat, photo or other item)

Focus on the positive experiences of the Jamboree, not the things making you feel sad or unwell. Some things you might like to try are taking photos of fun times, writing down one good thing that happens everyday, or a list of funny stories to tell people at home when you next hear from them.

Sometimes, calling home can only make you feel worse. Think about if you think it will really help or not. Try to call home when you are in a good mood so Mum and Dad don't worry too much about you, or write an email, postcard or letter instead.

If you start feeling homesick, find something to do! Tidy the kitchen or your tent, find a group of scouts to play a game with, go swap some badges, visit the Frat Tent, check out the mall, take a photo, write a diary. If you are in bed, try to think of all the good things you have done and will do at the Jamboree. Concentrate on how what an awesome achievement it will be if you manage to spend 10 days away from home. Reassure yourself, and say "YOU CAN DO IT!"

For Patrol Leaders or other Scouts

Do your best to make sure everyone in your patrol is involved in activities and decisions

Make sure everyone has a job if you are on duty

Make time to chat with each of your patrol members everyday to make sure they are feeling OK and valued

If you know you have someone in your patrol who might feel homesick, talk to your leader about strategies you can use to help them.

Remember there is lots of support available to you and other scouts. If you are worried about someone or something, talk to your Scout Leader or your Fun Police.

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For Parents and Carers at Home

If you know your child experiences homesickness, discuss this with your Scout Leaders prior to the Jamboree. They can provide you with some strategies to help your child. This may include appropriate times and ways to contact you that won't exacerbate the anxiety, writing journals, taking photos or bringing a token from home.

If something happens at home whilst they are away that may cause your child anxiety, please let the Jamboree Welfare Team know on 7534 6107, (not the Scout Leader, who is busy looking after 40 Scouts!). They will then contact your child's Scout Leader. The child will then have support to deal with the situation at camp.

PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT YOUR SCOUT DIRECTLY OR ATTEMPT TO COME ON SITE without informing a Scout Leader. Apart from the security issues you will cause Jamboree staff, you'll also likely cause your Scout more anxiety, rather than less. Let the scout contact you, not visa versa. **If you take your child off-site without permission, they WILL NOT BE ALLOWED BACK ON SITE.** If there are extenuating circumstances that you feel your child has to leave the site for, please contact SA Contingent on 7534 6107.

VISITOR DAY: if you are coming on site, be aware that some children may experience emotional reactions when seeing mum or dad for the first time after over a week at camp. This is perfectly normal and does not mean they have had a terrible time. They will be tired and hot and full of amazing experiences, and emotions after ten days at

camp may be difficult to regulate. Reassure your child and talk about good things they have done.

LEAVE MOBILE PHONES HOME. They can get damaged, lost or stolen. They also cause your scout to withdrawal from what is going on and forget to experience the Jamboree, which actually makes homesickness worse. Having the ability to contact you very easily does not help them to grow independence. There will be no mobile phone charging ability either. Scouts will have access to public phones, emails and letter writing facilities if they wish to contact you.

DON'T PANIC!! We have qualified and experienced medical and mental health staff at the Jamboree, as well as a working medical centre. If something is really wrong, we will let you know. If you haven't heard anything, your Scout is most likely having too much fun to contact you. If you are worried, contact the Jamboree SA Welfare team, rather than your Scout, as they will feed off of your anxiety. Remember when you let them go to day care or kindy for the first time when they were little? It's that same feeling of worry, but they were fine, right?

If your Scout calls home, feeling homesick, as hard as it may be, **don't tell them you miss them or they can come home if they wish.** Try to focus on the positive experiences and activities they are having and tell them how proud of them you will feel for completing the full ten days, even though it is tough. Encourage them to talk to a leader about how they are feeling and get some help if they need it.