



Post Institute Child Care Tips:

- Tell your children that you will be leaving for however many days you will be gone.
- Mark it on the calendar when you are leaving and when you will be back. Reassure them that you will be back. Be aware that they will be afraid that you will not be back, so you will need to reassure them.
- Get out a map and show them where you will be going. Show them the materials you receive and let them know that you are going to meet with Dr. Post or whoever your trainer is, and that you are going so that you can learn to be a better mommy and/or daddy for them; so that you can help your family be happier and more peaceful. Let them know that sometimes you feel scared and overwhelmed and that you do things as a mommy and/or daddy that make you feel sad, and you are coming to the parenting camp to learn to be better mommies and daddies.
- For some children you may want to wait to tell them you are leaving a day or two before the trip, but not sooner as they will be very very anxious. You know your child best, so use your intuition to guide you on when to tell them. My child does best with separation when she takes Daddy to the airport and picks him up. Expect your child to be upset. Sometimes by understanding that this is a natural emotional response, helps us as parents to be more prepared and emotionally present to provide support. Your child is not mad at you for leaving, they are just scared. Think of their trauma history and what your leaving symbolizes for them and meet them at that place, give them the soothing, calm, reassurance that you would give an infant crying for their mother/father.
- Do not leave your child with a stranger, even if it is a professional child care provider. Invite the child care provider to your home a couple of days before you leave to talk with them and your child about your trip. As you choose the child care provider it is best if that person can come to your home, so that your child can stay in their familiar surroundings. As you think of all the triggers your child experiences and will experience with this separation, the comfort of home, and the surroundings of family smells, tastes and sights will help soothe their anxiety and fear. It is best if the care provider is someone who is very familiar with your children. Your children will already be anxious, instruct them to keep the weekend simple. This is not the best time for big outings. Often times for children with trauma histories, big outings that seem like a fun idea, are actually over stimulating, and create increased fear and anxiety and thereby challenging behaviors. Also, this is not the time to address challenging behaviors. My personal experience is that sometimes well-meaning loved ones use a visit as an opportunity to attempt to correct behaviors that they find troublesome, with the



- anxiety that your child will be experiencing this is not the best time for such well-meaning efforts. Inform the caregiver that your child is easily frightened and overwhelmed, and easily stressed out. They will be most comfortable at home with time spent coloring, playing toys, taking walks, listening to music etc. with them. Your child will be most calmed by the presence of a calm, attentive caregiver, who will sit and play with them. If activities outside of the home are scheduled, encourage the caregiver to be flexible with the length of the activity, and the type of activity. If the child demonstrates stress as communicated by their behavior, end the activity.
- Let the caregiver know that your child can call you anytime. Often a 2 or 3 minute conversation can ease a child's stress. Also, make it a point to call your child at least 3 times a day.
 - Help your caregiver; give them a list of the daily routine. Grocery shop before the trip so that the caregiver does not have the task of taking your child to the overwhelming grocery store. Purchase your child's favorite family foods, and even prepare some favorite meals and leave them in the fridge with love notes. In fact, write love notes and cards to your child and hide them in places that your child is bound to find them, or give them to the caregiver to share with your child each morning, afternoon and evening. Include lots of home made drawings, as children love to see your art work.
 - Night time for many children who have experienced trauma is particularly stressful. Inform the caregiver of this. Let them know of the established night time routine. Encourage the caregiver to follow the routine. This will be a time when flexibility will be key. Encourage the caregiver to lie in the bed with the child if needed or sit in the room to help the child feel safe. If the child is struggling they should call you immediately. The caregiver should avoid night time battles. Because often times this is viewed as typical age appropriate manipulation often times the night time trauma trigger is not attended to. Respect your child's feelings. Let them know that you understand it is scary to go to bed without mommy and/or daddy there. Encourage them to breathe; take several deep breaths with them to help soothe their stress. The caregiver may need to offer warm milk, a bath, a back rub, a book, and (maybe 10 books!) Remember it is only a short trip and if your child stays up all night watching TV, because they can not sleep without you there, it will be OK. A conflict in trying to make your child go to bed under the circumstance of your absence will only increase their anxiety and thereby make it more difficult for them to sleep.
 - If part of your trip includes you being away for a school day, be flexible. It is great if your child can attend school as it keeps them in their routine. Keep in mind for many kids with trauma histories, school is one of the most stressful environments. You might consider them missing the days of school where you



will be gone. Again it is only a day or two, children do not effectively learn when they are emotionally stressed out and overwhelmed, so their ability to learn under the circumstances is likely to be limited. Keeping them home will possibly prevent a very challenging stressed out day for them.

- If you have questions about these tips or questions about options for child care during the camp should you elect to bring your child, please email info@postinstitute.com

Post Institute for Family Centered Therapy
5700 SE 89th St
Oklahoma City, OK 73135
Office: (405) 737-3100
Toll Free: (866) 848-POST
Fax: (405) 737-3131
info@postinstitute.com