

Call vs. Don't Call Activity

Teacher-Led Activity

Preparing students for the family stay experience can be challenging! Use this activity to help students better understand their expectations of the group leader during the family stay. It is important that students have someone to contact in case of an emergency while also being empowered to understand and respond to their own emotions. This activity was developed by a Spanish teacher from Washington. She suggests using this activity right before arriving in the family stay community. Incorporating humor can help drive home some of the absurd situations that students have called leaders about in the past! Have fun with this and remind your students that you are there to support them and encourage them to have a great family stay.

Step 1: Frame the size and scope of the students' family stay experience (how many days?).

Remind them that they have successfully endured short periods of stress and discomfort in their lives, and that regardless of what happens they WILL be able to handle it. Examples: 5 days of "roughing it" while camping, stress during finals, having the flu, staying at an annoying relative's home, etc.

Step 2: Tell the students to think of this experience as a great leap into their soon-to-be adult freedom. Ask them to prove that they can be strong individuals...to their teachers, parents and themselves!

Step 3: The most important part of this speech is to set boundaries and expectations for teacher-contact during the family stay. Remind them that a leader will be nearby and regularly checking messages, and in the event of an emergency, will get to them as soon as possible. It's important that everyone is on the same page as to the definition of a "crisis" or "emergency."

- If your family only serves cookies and coffee for breakfast... DON'T CALL!
- If you are frightened because you've seen a big spider in the bathroom... DON'T CALL!
- If a small child from your family keeps sneaking into bed with you at night...CALL!
- If you hate tomatoes and your family serves them at every meal... DON'T CALL!
- If you miss me (and you will miss me!)... DON'T CALL!
- If you are in your bedroom and your host parents are having a loud argument and you are concerned for your safety... CALL!
- If you vomit once or twice... DON'T CALL!
- If you vomit all day... CALL!

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- If you are bleeding and a Band-Aid takes care of it... DON'T CALL!
- If you are bleeding and there is no way it will stop with a bandage or two... CALL!
- If you are left home alone all day... CALL!
- If you miss Facebook, TV, your cell phone, or your boyfriend/girlfriend... DON'T CALL!
- If you are bored... DON'T CALL!
- If you wake up and someone in your family is wearing your clothes... CALL!
- If your host dad is walking around the house in boxers and it makes you uncomfortable... CALL!
- A little stomach ache or diarrhea... DON'T CALL!
- You see blood in your stool or vomit... CALL!
- If there is only cold water in the shower... DON'T CALL!
- If you don't "like" your family... DON'T CALL!

Step 4: Have students honestly ask themselves: Is this something I can handle by expressing my concern with my family without my teacher's help? Can I tell them that I don't like avocado or that I would love to watch soccer, or I'm really interested in going for a walk in the town center? Can I ask them to pick up some Sprite for my upset stomach at the store? Remind them that when they pick up the phone to call a leader, it is because the situation is emergent, severe and requires immediate action. And that is EXACTLY what leaders will do. If a student calls a leader, the leaders will mobilize—so students should be sure that they are calling with a legitimate concern