

Being nervous is natural!

There is no shame in being scared or nervous. In fact, it would be very surprising if you were NOT nervous! This is nature's way of making us careful in new situations, and keeping us safe. So if you feel nervous - that's good! It means you are a conscientious person who appreciates that this is a big trip with lots of new experiences, and you should take it seriously.

“But what if I am REALLY, REALLY nervous - like, I'm not sure I want to go?”

Also a really common feeling, and nothing to be ashamed or embarrassed about. And if you are feeling that way I guarantee there are at least 3 others who are too. It takes courage to admit this, so if you can tell your mom or dad, or another trusted adult who cares about you, you are already moving in the right direction. Talking honestly and openly about what concerns you is the best thing you can do to help you feel better. It means you are taking control of the problem, and getting the support you need. And if you start today there is more than enough time to get you feeling ready and excited about your trip.

Parents - be positive and honest.

We often talk about the importance of being positive so our children expect things to go well, and to not focus on their fears or potential problems. But sometimes that can make a child feel like their fear is wrong or shameful, and that they should hide it, when really, they should talk about it before they go, so they may process with you how to manage it.

Acknowledge with your child that any big adventure doesn't come without unexpected surprises, and often it is the unexpected that ends up being the best part of the adventure! Share examples of times in your life when things haven't gone as expected, and how you handled it.

Say it out loud!

It is important for you to tell your child you believe 100% that they are safe and in good hands. You may assume they know this, but saying these words out loud are reassuring and comforting. It is also important for you to say out loud that there may be things they are worried about. Help them think through what these things may be, so they can be prepared.

“This is going to be a fantastic trip. I feel really good about all the chaperones, and the trip directors, and I know you will be in good hands. It will also bring some first time experiences for you. What are some of the things that you are excited about? Nervous about? How do you feel about being in a homestay? Being away from home? I know if it were me I might wonder about...”

- Struggle with Japanese language
- Homesickness
- Car sickness/ motion sickness
- Not getting along with friends
- Not liking the food
- Personal hygiene
- What else??

Don't forget to pack their solutions!

After coming up with scenarios that may be challenging, brain storm very specific steps your child can take to mitigate their problems. Sometimes all that is needed to prevent a concern is knowing we have the tools required to address it if need be.

- *Homesick?* Get out your journal and write a letter to give to mom or dad when you return. Talk to your host mother. Stay busy and interact with your friends and family. Say “yes” to all invitations.
- *Don't like the food?* Stick with what you know - rice, eggs, fruit, vegetables - it doesn't take much to survive for 10 days!
- *Not getting along with friends?* Talk to your chaperones - that is what they are there for.
- *Motion sickness?* Check out preventative measures before you leave. Pack a motion sickness care kit in their backpack so they feel they have what they need - plastic bag, moist towelettes, breath mints.
- *Personal hygiene.* Another great care kit to provide, just in case the unexpected happens..

Communicate with chaperones BEFORE you leave.

Let your child's group chaperone know well before you leave, if you think there may be a challenge, so all of you can make a plan together to address it. Again, the better prepared in advance, the less likely a challenge will even come up, and if it does, everyone will know exactly what the plan is - even mom and dad.