

PEOPLE POST

# Take the Stress Out of Going Back to School

by ALYSSA BRAY, LMFT on AUGUST 28 2017 14:26 in NEWS

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As summer vacation comes to an end, it's typical for children – and parents – to feel anxious about transitioning back into the school routine. Whether children are rejoining their friends at the same school they attended previously or are starting at a new school, the transition from their summer break represents a change, and change can be anxiety-producing.

Fortunately, there are actions parents can take to help reduce those negative feelings and empower your children. Some or all of these activities can help make going back to school a positive experience:

- **Take an actual or virtual tour of campus together before school starts.** Where will their class be located on campus? What will their walk to school look like? Find photos online of what each step will look like and create a storyboard to help your child visually see what their new routine will look like.
- **Plan out their new schedule together on a large calendar and hang it somewhere they can see it at home.** What time will you leave the house for school? What time will they be picked up and where? What will their afternoon activities be? Knowing in advance when each activity will occur will help your child move more easily through each transition of their day.
- **Involve them in planning for their school lunches, and offer choices.** What type of sandwich would they like to take? What types of fruits and veggies? Allowing them to choose between options can leave them feeling empowered. Their chosen lunch can also give them something to look forward to enjoying while at school.
- **Discuss fun things they like about school.** What was an activity they enjoyed doing at school last year? Can they describe some of the people they liked seeing every day? What activities do they look forward to doing this year? This helps them to frame their thoughts about the upcoming school year positively.
- **Role play possible conversations as they meet new teachers and new friends.** What are some things they'd like to share about themselves or their summer break? What might they want to learn about their peers? Think of some questions they might want to ask others. Preparing for these types of interactions will help your child to feel confident talking with new people they will encounter.
- **Talk about any parts of the school day that might be a little challenging for your child.** Create a plan for what they can do to get support and feel better at those times. Identify people they can talk to on campus, or have them write their feelings down at those times so that they can share later at home.

We all need time to adjust to changes, and the duration of that time is different for every child. Some children are able to adjust in a briefer period of time, but others may move more slowly through the process. If you notice your child is struggling for longer than usual, it may be time to meet with their school counselor. Many schools have great resources, like support groups, or can refer you to a school-based mental health provider, like The Guidance Center.

It's important to know that asking for help doesn't mean that your child is different or weak. Children respond differently to situational stressors, and that's okay. Sometimes a little extra support is all that's needed to enjoy the adventure of starting a new school year!

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