

## Helping your child beat Back-to-School Anxiety

Going back to school or starting a new school after the Summer holidays can be a stressful and anxious transition for many children. Here we share our top tips on helping your child beat back-to-school anxiety and overcome their fears or worries about the change.

**1. Remember that children take their cue from their parents**

If you appear anxious about your child's school, your child will feel anxious too. Therefore, if you do feel anxious, do your best to hide this from your child and make sure that you portray yourself as optimistic and confident. Do not speak about your own worries about your child's school or your child's ability to cope within their earshot. Your child needs to hear from you that you believe that they "have got what it takes" – even if you don't believe it!

**2. Talk to your child and encourage them to share their fears and worries**

Sharing their thoughts and feelings with you may help your child feel less worried and reassure them that they do not have to deal with their problems alone.

**3. Discuss coping strategies or solutions for their perceived fears**

Instead of telling your child everything will be ok, help them to come up with solutions for their worries – What would you need to do if you got lost? Who would you speak to if you are being bullied or felt like you didn't understand the tasks set?

**4. Encourage them to buddy up with a friend to walk/take the bus with so they don't feel alone**

Walking into a new environment alone can be overwhelming. Encourage your child to find a friend to walk to school with or meet outside before going in together.

**5. Start your child's school routine approx. a week before the first day of school**

The Summer holidays can mean a break in routine – late nights, lie-ins, over indulging or less structured meal times to name a few. Accustom your child with their school routine approximately a week before the new school term so that new bedtimes, waking times and travel routines don't overload them on their first day.

**6. Involve your child in preparations for the new school term including picking out school supplies and uniform**

Helping your child to feel involved in the preparations can alleviate nerves or anxiety; allowing them to choose their own preferences when it comes to things like bookbags, pencil cases or school shoes for example can help them look forward to the new experience.

**7. Speak to your child's teacher beforehand to let them know he/she is feeling anxious and may need a little extra encouragement**

If you feel like your child is struggling with their anxiety and that they may need a little extra help when the new term starts, speak with their school and ask that their teacher keeps an eye on how your child is settling in.

**8. Make sure your child has everything they need in good time so that they feel prepared**

Help your child to feel able to cope with whatever situations arise by giving them enough time to prepare. Ensure that they have access to their textbooks, a map of the building if they are transitioning to a new school, stationery and uniform so that they know they won't need to rush at the last minute which can cause them to feel overwhelmed.

**9. Encourage your child to eat substantial healthy meals and snacks so that their brain is fuelled and they are in the best mind-set for learning**

After six weeks away from school, it may take your child a while to get back into the swing of things at school. Ensuring that your child has eaten breakfast each day and has a lunchbox full of healthy snacks will help their brains manage the adjustment back into active learning and help to prevent your child feeling like they can't grasp their new lessons.

**10. Help your child create small and manageable goals to break down any daunting tasks**

Fear and anxiety can often be caused by 'the unknown'. Breaking down large or daunting tasks into smaller, more manageable goals can help your child understand the process of approaching new experiences and apply this to later life, reducing anxiety in the long term.

*We believe that children and young people are our future and value their social and emotional development as highly as their academic achievements. We have developed a wide range of services, across health, education and care, to support and enable those of our young people who need additional help. Our objective is to enable children and young people to be healthy, confident and happy living in their community.*

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