



## Parenting Tips from Parent Team LLC

### Back to School Hints

**Dear Ruth,**

Summertime can be crazy busy full of sports and other activities, but August is different. Most summer activities have wound down and we may have a few minutes to breath. If that is the case in your family, enjoy this time with your children. Make the most of it and create connections that will help make the coming transition times easier.

Transitioning back to school can be challenge for every age level. Change is difficult for all of us, however there are strategies you can use to help children of every level get ready emotionally for the social challenges that they face at the beginning of each school year.

### Pre-school Children Vary in their School Readiness

First time school experiences can be a very exciting time for 3-4 year old children. They may have conflicting feelings though about leaving the safety of their parents and the excitement of getting to experience school like a "big" kid. Here are some tips for making the transition a little smoother.

\*Be sure you child has had a recent well-child check up to assure they are in proper physical and mental health to be entering school.

\*Establish a school-like bed and morning routine at least one week ahead of the start of school. Quality sleep is key to children's being able to deal with the sometimes overwhelming emotions of separation.

\*Banish the television in the morning. Experts recommend encouraging the child to work on quite puzzles, read books or play quite games before school. This will help them get in the groove of what will be expected of them at school.

\*Visit the school with your child, meet the teacher, explore the classroom, find the bathrooms and the playground.

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\*Don't make a big deal about clothes shopping at this young of an age, it adds to the anxiety. Their comfortable summer clothes will do for at least a few weeks into the fall.

\*If your child is clingy those first few days it is important that you leave them at the door of the school and let the teachers deal with your child's upset. For you to go in and make a big fuss, just reaffirms to the child that there is something to be worried about.

\*Once school starts, reinforce your child's ability to cope with the stress by being calm and collected yourself. Even if you are worried about them, remain an emotional rock of positive energy, this will reassure them that all is well.

\*Volunteer in your child's classroom once school has been in session a few weeks. This gives you the opportunity to get a feel for the atmosphere of the classroom and helps your child to make the connection between home and school.

## Kindergarten Through Sixth Grade Return to School

The younger children may still show more outward signs of anxiety, but most children even sixth graders have some level of anxiety of returning to school. So even if they do not admit it allow for it as parents and be a little more patient with them through this couple of weeks. Make sure you and your child get enough rest leading up to the beginning of school so that you are both ready for the excitement and stress of it all. Many of the hints listed above overlap to the younger children in this group. Here are more hints for as the child grows older.

\* Complete school shopping early and have their back packs ready to go. Have your child help with this task, so they feel invested in the whole back to school experience.

\* Read all materials from the school completely and mark your calendars for any "meet your teacher" opportunities. This should be a priority in your life because it does help cut down on the first day of school anxieties.

\* Re-establish school routines as listed above, but also pro-actively designate a place where the backpack will be placed and homework done. This will help the child to get off to an organized start to their school year.

\*If busing review the spot and time for pick up and drop off as well as bus safety rules. If walking establish one specific route that they must always take to and from school. Establish the rule that they may not stop at friends homes unless they call and ask permission.

\*If your child had academic or social concerns from the previous year, discuss these early with their teacher and remain in contact with the teacher via e-mail or phone to assure a good start to this year.

\*Spending one on one time is never more important than during this critical transition period. Turn off you electronic devices and get down to their level for 10-15 minutes a day. Play with them, read to them or just snuggle, but be available to your child, they need this re-connect time after the separation.

## Teens-Helping Then Transition

Once again many of the above strategies can be applied to this age group. Teens are less likely to show outwards signs of stress, but truth be told peer pressure and high academic expectations increase the amount of stress your child may feel in transitioning from the easy going summer schedule to the demands of the upper grades. Here are some hints for helping your teen transition:

\*A week prior to school have teens begin to get up by the alarms again (even if it is set later than school time), at least get them used to when the alarm goes off they need to get up and moving

independently.

\*Read carefully over any communication that come home from teachers outlining their expectations of your child as a student.

\*Even though your child may fight it, attend the back to school nights available at your teens school. It will help them set up their locker, walk their schedule and get their bearings, especially if entering a new level of schooling.

\*The first days back can be overwhelming, however it is important that we as parents do not over-react. Calmly listen to your teen's concerns and empower them to solve any problems they may be encountering. If needed provide them with a few alternatives to solving any problems and encourage them to tell you if the problem persist.

\*Limit extracurricular activities to one at a time. With the higher level of academic expectation it is important to go for quality rather than quantity with their extra activities.

Transitioning back to school can be a challenge for the whole family. Prepare meals ahead of time, clear your work schedule as much as possible and remember to re-connect with your child through play daily.

I have eight children returning to school in grades sixth through twelve. It seems as though just yesterday I put my eldest son the bus for the first day of kindergarten. Now he is preparing to graduate. Through my years as a parent as well as a school counselor I have helped guide many children and families through this exciting yet sometimes challenging time of year. **As a parent coach I am passionate about helping empower parents, call or e-mail me to set up a free consultation to address your specific needs.**

When you need me, I am here.

Sincerely,

Ruth Fett

Parent Coach

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