



Kindergarten transition

School Counsellor Elizabeth Stevanoni



To start now – emotion coaching/emotional regulation:

- Children need our help to develop skills to help them learn to regulate their emotions.
- Encourage your child to talk about their feelings, acknowledge and reassure them that it is normal to have big feelings and sometimes mixed feelings such as excitement and worry.
- Tune in, connect and give vocabulary to emotions – “it seems like you are [really annoyed, nervous, excited, upset] that this happened, am I right?”. “Are you having any other feelings?” Often!
- Validate – “I’d be upset if that happened”, “that must be frustrating”, “I feel like that too sometimes”.
- Ask for more/explore further “is there anything else?” Help them feel heard.
- Suggest practising some star breathing together and let them know they can do it on their own to help with any big feelings.
- If still elevated, could ask “what could help you feel a bit better?”, “would you like to get a drink or go for a walk?”
- Once they are calm – brainstorm what could we do.
- Teach emotions are normal and helpful, that things are okay even if they are not perfect, they can handle their feelings, model your own feelings and encourage their personal strengths.
- Reassure them with calm words and actions that going to school will be fun (and safe). Link school with their existing experience of preschool/day care.

Got It program (NBMLHD) – advice for helping students return to school after lockdown (August 2021), edited for starting school:

The week before:

- Return/initiate usual school day wake up, morning and bedtime routines.
- Ensure they are getting enough sleep.
- Practise having breakfast, lunch and snack times that coincide with typical school breaks.

- Create a calendar that counts down the days until their start.
- Practise getting ready to go to school e.g. finding their uniform and packing their bag.
- Encourage them to share their feelings and any concerns they have about school. Ask them what they have done before when they had a similar problem, for example, at daycare/preschool. Ask them what they think they could do if a problem arises at school. Reassure eg. teachers there to help.
- Let the teacher know if you anticipate you may need help.

The day before:

- Include your child in packing their school bag and getting their uniform ready.
- Talk with them about the plans for the next day including the morning routine, what to expect when they arrive at school and afternoon pick up plans.

The morning of:

- Allow extra time to get ready.
- Keep yourself calm to help your child remain calm.
- Repeat all the information you discussed with them the previous night about what their day will look like.

Planning ahead:

- Talk about whatever details you already know – who will be where to drop and pick them up. Reassure them the teachers will help them if any changes are made.
- Create a quick goodbye ‘ritual’ for each child e.g. a secret handshake, special wave or triple kiss just for this occasion.
- Organise for a buddy to walk into school with them or for them to keep a special item that helps them feel “brave”.

Practise, Practise, Practise!

- Practise small periods of separation prior to school starting e.g. hanging out the washing while your child stays inside or leaving them with a friend while you go to the shops.
- Practise your goodbye ritual so your child knows what to expect.

At the gate/classroom:

- Remain calm, confident and be consistent.
- Give your child your full attention.
- Say a proper goodbye (but keep it brief) and tell them when you’ll be back e.g. “I’ll be back later today after school”. Do not sneak away when your child is distracted and don’t linger.
- Perform your goodbye ritual once only.
- Reassure them that their teacher and school staff will be there to help.