

Your source for tips and advice to keep you Healthy, Balanced and Productive

Helping Your Children Transition to School

You can smell it in the air...the early signs of Fall and the beginning of the school year. These are clearly some signs of change. For some children, starting or returning to school is met with excitement and ease whereas for others, it is fraught with upset and anxiety. As we approach this significant time for children (and parents too), it's helpful to look at some of the more challenging yet typical children's reactions, and practical ways parents can ease their first timer or seasoned high school student.



Starting School: First Time Student

Some typical student reactions:

- Fear of being separated from parent
- Regressive behaviour such as becoming more clingy and whiney
- Feigning illness such as stomach aches, headaches and/or nausea

Tips for parents

- Visit your child's school before it's scheduled to begin to help him/her become familiar with the building and, if possible, with the new teacher.
- Read books together about starting school.
- Talk to your child about what he/she might do at school: story time, show-and-tell, learning letters and numbers, playing games.
- Have your child choose a favourite outfit of clothes to wear to the first day of school and perhaps a new pair of cool, big-kid shoes.
- Show excitement about this new milestone; don't whimper about how much you are going to miss your child.

Moving From Elementary to Middle/Junior High School

Some typical student reactions:

- Exhilaration and/or fear due to new people, places, freedoms and expectations
- Sleepless nights
- Heightened emotions
- Exaggerated concerns about appearance



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Tips for parents:

- Acknowledge the feelings, for example, “You seem really excited about some of the classes you’ll be taking at your new school”
- Express your understanding of your child’s feelings; for example, you might say “I see you’re worried about starting a brand new school where there are more kids than in your elementary school. I remember feeling the same thing.”
- Don’t trivialize concerns with remarks such as “it’s not a big deal / you’re such a worrywart”.

Moving Onto High School

Some typical student reactions:

- Stress due to unfamiliar settings and people, loss of some friendships
- Uncertainty about ability to cope with demands and expectations,
- worried that won’t fit into peer groups
- Exaggerated emotions- more reactive and/or withdrawn

Tips for parents:

- Provide reassurance on past ability to make friends
- Encourage and provide opportunities to stay in touch with old friends
- Help set up homework routine to balance homework and relaxation/friend time
- Listen without asking too many questions; share a snack and have a casual chat. Don’t give advice too quickly.
- Stay involved with your child. Drive him/ her to activities/events and, encourage friends to *hang out* at your home when you are there.

As parents, you play a significant role during these transitional events and years. By creating a nurturing, loving environment that is also orderly and predictable, you can provide your child with a sense of security that can go a long way to helping him/her more easily cope with school and other life transitions.





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Tips To Make Mornings Manageable

When the school year rolls around, mornings can become quite hectic. Here are some simple yet effective things to do to help make mornings more manageable

- Practise, a few weeks before school starts, waking up children at what will be the regular wake up time for school.
- Rehearse morning routines to work out the “bugs”
- Buy an alarm clock (clock radio/talking alarm); ultimately, waking up should be your child's responsibility, not yours.
- The *breakfast cook* parent should arise 45-60 minutes earlier than the rest of the family and get ready; this will allow for time with children before school, perhaps even for playing a game with younger ones, and also contributes to less stressful mornings.
- Simplify breakfast with easily prepared foods: cold cereal, milk and fruit; hot foods that can be prepared ahead of time and frozen, then reheated in the microwave or toaster oven.
- For the *hard-to-wake child* consider the following:
 - start an hour before he/she needs to get up and go into his/her room, tune in a radio **talk** show at low volume.
 - If still not awake after 15 minutes; return and increase the radio volume. Start touching and gently moving your child around.
 - If still not awake, go back a third time, increase the radio volume to normal and gently help your child sit up.
 - If you have to go in again, give the child a drink of juice and get him/her up to go to the bathroom. He/she should be awake by then.
 - The night before:
 - Lay out the clothes that are to be worn the next day.
 - Make sure books and homework are placed in book bags and are beside the door.
 - Have lunches ready.

Adapted from liveandworkwell.com/ United Behavioral Health



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Helping Your Child Succeed in School

Nothing is more important than your support for your child as they go through school. Clearly, the hours and days that a child is not in school are important for learning. Studies have shown that children whose parents are involved in their school work tend to be more successful. Here are some things that you can do to help your child to make the most of that time.

Encourage Your Child to Read

Supporting your child to become a reader is the single most important thing that you can do to help the child to succeed in school - and in life. Reading helps children in all school subjects. More important, it is the key to lifelong learning. Here are some tips:

- Start early. As you read, talk with your child. Encourage them to ask questions and to talk about the story. When your child begins to read, ask them to read to you.
- Set aside quiet time for family reading. Some families even enjoy reading aloud to each other.
- Introduce your child to the library as early as possible.
- Get help for your child if they have a reading problem. Ask their teacher about after-school reading programs or a tutor.

Talk with Your Child

Talking and listening play major roles in children's school success. Children who don't hear a lot of talk and who aren't encouraged to talk themselves often have problems learning to read, which can lead to other school problems. Children who haven't learned to listen often have trouble following directions and paying attention in class. Think of talking with your child as being like a tennis game with words - instead of a ball -bouncing back and forth.

- Talk with your child about what they are doing at school.
- As you shop in a store, talk with your child about prices, differences in brands and how to pick out good vegetables and fruit. Give your child directions about where to find certain items, and then have them go and get them.
- As you fix a sink ask your child to hand you the tools that you name. Talk with them about each step you take to complete the repair.
- Show your child that you're interested in what they have to say. Demonstrate how to be a good listener: When your child talks to you, stop what you're doing and pay attention. Look at them and ask questions to let them know that you've heard what was said: "So when are you going to help your Granddad work on his car?"





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Monitor TV Viewing and Video Game Playing

Children on average spend far more time watching TV or playing video games than they do completing homework.

- Limit the time that you let your child watch TV. Remember that children often imitate their parents' behaviour.
- Watch TV with your child. Talk with them about what they see.
- Limit the amount of time your child spends playing video games. Be aware of the games they like to play.

Help Your Child Learn to Use the Internet Properly and Effectively

The Internet has become an important part of how we learn and of how we interact with others. Here are some suggestions for helping your child learn effectively:

- Spend time online with your child. If your child knows about computers, let them teach you.
- Help your child to locate appropriate Internet Web sites. At the same time, make sure that they understand what you think are appropriate Web sites to visit.

Monitor Homework

Let your child know the importance of education and homework. Here are some ways to help your child with homework:

- Have a special place for your child to study. The kitchen table or a corner of the living room works just fine. The area should have good lighting and it should be fairly quiet.
- Set a regular time for homework. Having a regular time to do homework helps children to finish assignments.
- Remove distractions. Turn off the TV and discourage your child from making and receiving social telephone calls during homework time.
- Don't expect or demand perfection. Praise your child when they have done something well.

By showing interest and becoming involved in your children's education, parents can teach children that learning can be enjoyable as well as rewarding.

Adapted from liveandworkwell.com/ United Behavioral Health

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When Your Child Leaves Home to Attend College/University: How to Stay Connected



The bags are packed, the laptop has been upgraded, tears have been shed; your child is heading off to college/university and you are wondering how you will maintain your relationship with him/her when you live under separate roofs if not in different cities or countries. Despite the distance that separates you, it is possible to nourish and even deepen your bond with your child.

There are many ways to stay connected with your kids. Be creative. And remember, what works for one of them may not for another. There is no set formula for how to stay connected

but here are some tips on how you might do that.

- Be the first to initiate contact- your child may think that a call home might be seen as a lack of independence and inability to handle new situations.
- Send e-mails/text messages- they are an easy and immediate way of saying “I’m thinking of you. I love you.” Don’t expect responses to all of your messages and don’t criticize their brevity!
- Write a letter - it might be long or short; newsy or factual. You might include an article about your child’s area of interest with a brief note from you. This can be a novel treat especially in our electronic and technological world.
- Send a *care package*- nothing beats a special treat that’s home-prepared or can only be found in one’s home city.
- Call- family voices, the pet bird’s chirp or the dog’s yelp helps to reduce the distance. It is an easy way to pick up on your child’s emotional state. This is especially important if you know that your child is struggling with homesickness.
- Visit when time and finances permit- arrange a visit with your child either by going to him/her or arranging a visit at home.

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Transitioning to college/university, and possibly moving away from home as well, can be a very stressful time for many students. Students are eligible for services through your PPC Canada Employee and Family Assistance Program. We recommend that you send students away with our contact information so they are able to contact us when the need arises.