

Tips for Easing the Transition Back to School

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NEW CANAAN, CT, USA, September 16, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The new school year is upon us, and understandably, for some it can be an exciting but anxious time. [New Canaan Country School](#) psychologists Rebecca Comizio and Jackie Britt-Friedman offer the following tips to help reduce stress around the transition.



New Canaan Country School

1. Open up space for dialogue

Children benefit from knowing the adults close to them are there to listen. There will be a myriad of feelings as the first day of school approaches: excitement, apprehension, anticipation, worry. All are to be expected at the outset of a new experience. Reflecting back how a child is feeling is incredibly powerful and allows for them to be heard. For example, it may be enough to say, “It

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Kent Findlay

sounds like you are feeling nervous about not knowing what school this year is going to be like.” Oftentimes children are not looking for you to solve their problems; they just want to be heard and understood. Since many older children and teens tend to assert their independence, they may not approach an adult to seek support with their feelings as younger children do, and some do it more than others. Nevertheless, they all need

to know the trusted people in their lives will hear them out and validate their experiences.

Stories are a powerful way to talk about feelings and to offer children different strategies to work through a challenge. Here are some picture books we recommend for younger students:

- The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn (Early Childhood)
- Llama Llama Misses Mama by Anna Dewdney (Early Childhood)
- First Day Jitters by Julie Danneberg (Early Childhood)
- You Go Away by Dorothy Corey (Early Childhood)

- Owl Babies by Martin Waddell (Early Childhood)
- The Invisible String by Patrice Karst (Early Childhood)
- Wherever You Are, My Love Will Find You by Nancy Tillman (Early Childhood)

2. Reinforce that your child is capable

If your child is feeling nervous or worried, let them know that those feelings can be uncomfortable but that you know that they can handle them. When we allow children to avoid hard things, we inadvertently give them the message that they cannot deal with them. Encouraging your child to find ways to cope and helping them follow through are important. Some ways to handle uncomfortable feelings may be to breathe deeply, think of other times they dealt with hard things, and identify the positive aspects that arise from meeting the challenge. You can also empower your child with mantras such as, "I have done hard things before," "I've got this," and "there are many people at school who are there for me." You can remind your child that there will be lots of friendly teachers and staff members who will be eagerly awaiting their arrival and ready to greet them with a warm hello as they exit the car or get off the bus.

3. Offer a transitional object

For some children a physical object is helpful. You may want to give your child a special smooth stone that they can carry in their pocket or make family bracelets that you can all wear to remind one another that even though you are not together, you are thinking of one another. For older children, transitional objects may come in the form of special school supplies, a key chain on their backpack or even clothing that makes them feel comfortable and that they are excited to wear. It's normal to feel nervous when things are new, but when we stick with the plan, we will be making room for so many other nice and comfortable feelings to take over.

4. Promote flexibility

We have all had to adjust course many times in navigating the waters over the last year and a half. The ability to remain flexible and shift under various circumstances can be tremendously valuable in life. If your child has more difficulty with this, you can reflect back to them the challenging nature of the demand, "I know it's hard to deal with this change." Take notice when your child successfully manages a change and point it out, "That was tough, and you dealt with it by [strategy]...!"

5. Preview and institute routines

As Fred Rogers once said, "When children know ahead of time what's going to happen - and not happen - they can prepare themselves for what's coming. They can think about it and get used to their feelings about it." Taking time to discuss expected plans for the transition back to school allows children to have a sense of what their experience may be like. Similarly, following daily routines such as earlier bedtimes and predictable schedules can be helpful.

6. Be aware of emotions

Awareness of our children's emotions as well as our own can help guide how we can best

provide support. The ways we approach our children greatly impacts them. If we probe for pain (Ex. did that student bother you again today?), our children will follow our lead. While being a listening ear for a child when it comes to difficult experiences, try to help them focus on helpful aspects of the day. Thinking about high points of the day or what they are grateful for can promote wellbeing.

The following are additional resources that may be helpful:

Child Mind Institute - Back-to-School Anxiety During COVID

Understood.org - The Best Ways to Ease the Back-to-School Transition

HeathyChildren.org - Building Resilience in Children

New Canaan Country School is a co-ed, [independent day school](#) for students in Pre-K (ages 3 & 4) through Grade 9 living in Westchester and Fairfield counties. Graduates excel at top day, boarding and public secondary schools and go on to lead lives of impact and purpose. For more information, please visit countryschool.net.

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