

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

CALMING BACK-TO-SCHOOL JITTERS

Whether it's starting kindergarten or going off to college, the first day of school can be stressful for kids of any age. It can be a bittersweet time for parents too, especially for those whose little ones are just starting school, or for those whose teens are leaving the nest. Changes in routine can be disruptive for everyone at first, but a little planning and preparation can smooth the way.

TRY THESE TIPS TO CALM YOUR CHILD'S BACK-TO-SCHOOL JITTERS:

Be prepared.

Make a list with your child of what he'll need and buy school supplies and clothing a few weeks before the start of the school year. Many stores start back-to-school sales in late July. Plan outfits and breakfast, and have lunches packed and ready the night before to avoid early-morning scrambling.

Visit the school ahead of time.

If your youngster is just starting or changing schools, plan a visit to become familiar with the layout of the school and your child's schedule. Some schools, such as middle schools and high schools, hold orientations or open houses.

Talk with your child about his/her concerns.

Remember what it was like to start a new grade or worry about making friends? Help your child identify the things that make your child nervous and talk it through. Encourage open communication with you and with your child's teachers as well.

Keep calm.

Parents set the tone. While it's natural for parents to feel anxiety too, being a calm role model will reassure your child. Emphasize the positives and the excitement of starting a new grade.

Make back-up plans.

If your child is nervous about missing the bus or worries about other things going wrong, talk about "what if" scenarios and how you'll both handle them.



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