

# Coping with children's anxiety

Heading back to school can be an exciting time, but it can also be pretty stressful—for both children and parents. Here are some ideas on how to counter those first-day butterflies with your child.

## Practice being apart

If this is the first time your child will be away from you during the day, ease him or her into it. Start by setting up a partial day spent at a close relative or friend's house.

## Read about it

Your child may get some reassurance from reading one of the many age-appropriate books that show children overcoming their worries about starting school.

## Recount your own experiences

Describe for your child how you once felt scared when starting a new grade, school or activity. Explain how everything turned out fine, and that he or she will be okay too.

## Preview coming attractions

Remind your child about some of the fun new activities that he or she might participate in this year—clubs, sports, music, drama, student government, etc.

## Pack up early

A bit of planning can help cut down on morning chaos. Have your child set out his or her clothes and load the backpack on the night before school days.

## Establish a goodbye ritual

Pick a fun phrase or gesture you can share with your child when parting each morning. Repeated use of a familiar phrase can give the child comfort.

## Be calm and exude confidence

Even though the back-to-school jitters may be getting under your skin just a bit, strive to be calm, confident and positive.

## When to get help

It's quite normal for a child to have some back-to-school worries. However, if your child exhibits symptoms such as **headaches, stomachaches, sleeping problems, persistent depression or other unusual behavior changes**, you may want to consult with a healthcare professional.

Speak with your child's pediatrician or a licensed behavioral health professional through your EAP. If there are challenges with certain situational triggers at school, discuss the issues with your child's teacher(s) or a school counselor as appropriate.

Your consistent involvement in addressing school problems will give your child the best chance to move beyond them, and will support the continuing healthy development of your child.

**Call your EAP today to speak with a licensed professional.**

**Call 1-866-EAP-4SOC (1-866-327-4762) or visit our new website at [www.eap.calhr.ca.gov](http://www.eap.calhr.ca.gov).**

