Tips to Ease Back to School Anxiety

What parents can do to alleviate back to school jitters

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It's common for kids to feel some degree of back to school anxiety after a long summer break. Back-to-school anxiety is normal and understandable. Many kids may feel anxious about going back to school after a long summer break. Others may feel nervous about starting school for the first time. Whichever the case may be, parents can help ease the transition to back to school with these simple strategies.

Organize your home for back to school. A great way to ease some of your child's anxiety about going back to school is by getting your home ready for the transition.

Strategies such as making school lunches the night before or establishing a comfortable homework area can help make kids feel more in control and relieve some of their anxious feelings.

Help your child feel more comfortable about his new school environment. One of the things that can cause back to school anxiety for kids is not knowing what to expect. Help your child become more acclimated to new routines and unfamiliar surroundings by doing the following:

- Take him for a visit to the school. If your child is starting kindergarten or first grade, he may be uneasy about going into a new building. Older grade-schoolers may be nervous about being in a new classroom or meeting a new teacher. To alleviate some of these concerns, ask your school about arranging a visit to school and meeting the teacher before school begins.
• **Make a couple of drives back and forth from home to school.** Whether your child will walk, take a school bus, or be driven to school by mom or dad, helping him become familiar with the route to and from school will make considerably ease back to school anxiety. Even if your child is already familiar with the route to school, making a pre first-day run will remind him where school is, and help him feel more connected to where he will go on the first day back to school.

• **Go over the basics.** Where will he hang his jacket? Where will he go to the bathroom? Where will he eat lunch? Knowing the answers to some of these questions will help make your child feel more comfortable in his new classroom.

**Highlight the things that make school great.** There are lots of attractive factors that can make school very appealing for kids. For starters, there's the swag -- fun new school supplies and clothes. There will also be friends she hasn't seen and things she may have missed about school - or can look forward to if she's starting school -- such as the playground or making arts and crafts projects.

**Arrange some playdates.** Help your child re-connect with old friends or make new ones before school starts. Try to get a class list if possible and set up some playdates with familiar pals as well as kids he may not be familiar with. If he is anxious about not being in the same class with old friends, reassure him by letting him know that he can have regular playdates with his friends after school so that they can stay connected.

**Remind her that she's not the only one who may be nervous.** Let your child know that the other students are likely to be just as anxious as she is about the first day of school. Reassure her by telling her that the teacher knows that the children are nervous, and will probably spend some time helping the students feel more comfortable as they settle into the classroom.

**Try to be home more during back to school time.** Right before school starts and during the first days back, try to make it a point to be present at home for your child and support him through this transition back to school. If you work away from home, try to arrange your hours so that you are able to drop your child off at school and are home in time for after school or an early dinner. If you stay at home, try to focus more on your child and put everything else on the back burner. Spend some time talking to your child about his day such as what he liked and what he might have questions about. By giving your child more attention, you will help him feel more secure about his connection to you and home, and help him navigate back to school time.

**Make sure she gets enough sleep and eats a balanced diet.** Getting adequate sleep and eating a healthy diet -- especially a protein-carbohydrate balanced breakfast -- is important for brain function, mood and the ability to focus and pay attention in school.

**Keep an eye on his school anxiety.** You know your child best. If you sense that his back to school anxiety may be rooted in something more serious, such as an anxiety disorder or a problem with a bully, talk with your child, your child's teacher, and the school counselor.
And remember to try to get yourself relaxed as much as possible. Back to school time can also be a hectic time for parents, so taking care of yourself by eating right and getting enough sleep and exercise is a good idea during this transitional phase back to school.

Try to remind yourself that any anxiety or stress you or your child may be feeling is only temporary. Before you know it, your family will be back in the back to school groove, and you'll be sailing smoothly into the fall semester.

http://childparenting.about.com/od/schoollearning/a/Tips-To-Ease-Back-To-School-Anxiety.htm