



## 4- How To Relieve Back To School Stress and Anxiety

### *Back To School Time? No Sweat!*



Many kids and **parents** are feeling growing anxiety over getting back to school -- the morning rush, the homework, the quicker pace of life. While this doesn't mean we don't like school, the advent of the busier lifestyle, along with the new changes that 'back to school' time



brings (new teachers, new classmates, new material) can all lead to increased stress. Here's what you can do to relieve back to school stress in your kids, and in yourself, after all you are not only a teacher: you may also be a parent!:

### Start Early

Let's face it -- over the summer, most families take their cues from the sun and stay up later. While it may be tempting to keep the late-night fun going up until the end, starting your school routine a few weeks early can help ease the transition back to school. Starting two to three weeks before the advent of school, begin going to bed and getting up close to when you need to for school, and try to eat on a more regular schedule as well. This advice isn't just for little kids -- teens and adults **need quality sleep** for proper functioning as well, and getting your schedule straight now will help ensure that you all start the school year off more prepared and don't feel as much anxiety over the advent of that first day.

### Do A Walk-Through

While we're on the topic of starting early, it's a good idea to visit the school before the first day. For kids who are going to be first-timers for kindergarten, first grade, middle school, or even high school, this can help them feel more comfortable with the new place and get a better idea of where to go once they're there. Even for returning students, it doesn't hurt to know where the classroom is, say hello to whatever staff is there getting ready, and start getting excited about going back.

### Stack The Deck

If you have any input in your child's class assignment, it's a good idea to ensure that there's at least one friend in the class or classes a child will be attending. If classes are assigned without parents' input, parents may talk to other parents and try to find out who their child will be sharing a class with ahead of time, and let them know.

Knowing who is in their class will give them something else to look forward to, and remind them of what they enjoy about school. If a child is entering kindergarten or first grade, it might be a good idea to have a play date with one of the children who will be in their class a week before school starts to help them feel more comfortable and get more excited about seeing their friends again in school.

## **Get Ready**

As most moms will tell you, nothing alleviates stress like a good shopping trip. There's some real truth in the idea that back to school shopping can help kids get more excited about school starting, at least for most kids. If children really couldn't care less about shopping, you can make it quick and painless, but for kids who relish the annual decisions of which clothes, backpacks, and other supplies will be theirs this year, the back to school shopping trip is to be savored.

## **Talk Amongst members of families**

One of the best ways to relieve back to school anxiety and prepare for the coming year is to simply talk to children about what he or she may be feeling. When the subject of school comes up, let your child tell you what's exciting about school as well as what may be a little anxiety-provoking. If your child expresses some negativity about school, don't discount immediately his or her concerns; instead focus on validating feelings. Then you can help find solutions or shift the focus to a more positive one like seeing friends, covering exciting new material, and growing up. This can be an excellent time to discuss important topics like how to handle bullies, peer pressure, and other important topics. This can help your child feel more comfortable, and can help you clarify expectations and troubleshoot. Creating open lines of communication is always important, and letting your child know that you'll be available for support and open discussions can be a crucial part of your relationship, as well as your child's success in school.

## **Bottom Line**

The main thing to remember in dealing with back to school jitters is to be prepared (mentally, logistically, and in all other ways as much as possible), and to play up the fun stuff (friends, new supplies, great teachers and growing up). If you show your enthusiasm for what the new school year brings, your kids are sure to pick up on it, and the nervous energy will turn into excitement. Have fun!