



8 Ways to Help Kids Through New School Year Transitions

What can parents do to help a child's back-to-school transition smoother? Below are a few suggestions to support you and your family in the school year ahead.

Starting a **new school year** can be filled with anxiety for kids and parents. Kids who are moving from middle school to high school, or to a new neighborhood, have the biggest adjustment. But even those just moving to a new grade have adjustments to make.

1. **Get to know your child's teacher.** No one is more important to your child's success in school than their teacher. If your child is in grade school, introduce yourself early in the school year. If your child will have multiple teachers, try to attend a back-to-school night. If your child has a learning disability or other special need, don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher(s) to voice any concerns.
2. **Talk to your child about their goals for the school year.** For younger kids, it might be something as simple as "I want to learn to read this year." For older kids, it might include helping them to choose appropriate after-school and extracurricular activities.
3. **Encourage social relationships.** If your child is young, arrange play dates with new or old friends. For older kids, plan activities with classmates on the weekends to help them form bonds. Social relationships don't just apply to your child – it's a good idea for you to form relationships with other parents, as it's a great way to get to know your child's peers.
4. **Be involved.** If possible, volunteer at your child's school. This can be hard for working parents, but you could consider ways to volunteer outside of work hours. For example, helping with a one-time event like back-to-school night or a class Halloween party.
5. **Cut down on stress.** Start by helping your child to enough sleep, a necessary component to a happy, well-adjusted kid. Make sure they aren't overcommitted so that they *have time* to sleep. And don't overlook the importance of a good breakfast and healthy snacks and lunch. Then, *empathize* with your child. Learning to cope in new situations is an ever-changing part of life. Empathizing that change is hard makes it easier to move beyond the stress, and naming fears makes it possible to conquer them.
6. **Focus on the positive.** If your child tends to dwell on negative aspects of a school-year transition, help them to see the positive. Point out the benefits of their teacher or classroom, or one of their classes. If you're finding there isn't much to be positive *about*, act while it's still early in the year.
7. **Take note of significant signs of stress.** While it's normal to feel anxious, it's not normal for anxiety to continue beyond the first few weeks. If your child is having trouble sleeping, has a change in their eating habits, seems sad much of the time, is constantly anxious, and has lost pleasure in things they used to enjoy, seek help. Start by talking to your child's teacher and/or school psychologist or guidance counselor.
8. **Stick to a routine.** Kids do better when they know what to expect. If you have a routine that worked last year, continue with it. If something needs to change, like afterschool care or school transportation, give them as much advance warning as possible, and make it part of the routine as soon as you can. A homework routine is also important. Figure out a time and place to do homework, such as before dinner and in the dining room, and stick to it.

Thanks for all you do to support a young person in your life. It really makes a difference.

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