

WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD COPE WITH BACK TO SCHOOL ANXIETY

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP
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Going back to school can be a stressful time for children and their families. Starting a new school year can make children nervous, especially if there will be changes from the previous year, like a new school, teachers or classmates. It's important to find a time to talk to your child/children about their feelings. Below are some things you can say:

1. ***“Let’s think of some ways I can help make going back to school easier for you.”***
Start by suggesting a few simple things like packing a special snack or walking your child to their classroom for a few days. Make it clear that staying home from school isn't an option.
2. ***“What do you like about school?”*** Talk about good memories from previous years, reminding them that school can be rewarding and fun. .
3. ***“Is there anything in particular about this school year that’s worrying you?”*** Is your child anxious about making friends? Keeping up? Getting along with teachers? Talking about your child's specific concerns can help you find specific solutions.

Below are some specific steps that can help both of you feel less anxious:

1. ***Project a sense of confidence and understanding.*** When your children know that *you* know what they're going through, it can make a big difference. You can say, “I see that you're anxious about the new school year. But I believe in you and will help you get through it.”
2. ***Practice morning and evening routines.*** Start to transition to the school year routines by practicing the school schedule of wake-up times, bedtimes and mealtimes.
3. ***Plan extra time to get out the door in the morning.*** This is especially important the first few days of school. It give you extra time to deal with tantrums or other avoidance tactics without you or your child being late. Having extra time also helps reduce *your* stress, which makes you better able to help your child.
4. ***Get everything ready ahead of time.*** Gather school supplies well before the first day of school and work on organizing your child's backpack. Place things in their spots for the morning the night before.
5. ***Give your child choices.*** Letting children choose what clothes to wear or breakfast to have can provide a sense of control and excitement about school. You can pick out a few options, then let your child choose a favorite.
6. ***Reach out to others for support.*** Try to set up a time for your child and a classmate to get together before school starts. It's good for you too. Talking to other families about their own back-to-school struggles and successes is a good reminder that you're not alone.

Excerpted from:

<https://www.understood.org/en/friends-feelings/managing-feelings/stress-anxiety/how-can-i-help-my-child-cope-with-anxiety-about-going-back-to-school>