



Back to School Again!

After shifting into the glorious groove of summer, it is time to line up the uniforms, repack the backpack, dig out the lunch box and begin the daily routine of school. Are you feeling the stress yet? Your children probably are, and as with any transition, misbehavior may increase. Here are some tips for making a smooth switch from summer to school.

Find the Benefit. Our time may be more our own during the summer (or not!) and the change to a more rigid schedule may feel almost painful. (That could definitely be a projection!) Look to the opportunities that school provides to help regain perspective. There will be learning and growth. New friendships will be made and old ones recharged. Our children will experience fresh challenges and learn to meet them. Frame the return to school in terms of an adventure, of opportunities and excitement.

Tie Summer Activities into School Life. When talking about school, mention summer events that your child might want to share with his teacher and friends. A trip to a museum or a visit to another state may tie into a project or paper. Have him put together a few photographs to bring to school to share. Finding the connections between summer fun and school activities will help integrate the experiences.

Let Your Child Know that the Fun Will Continue. Even though summer vacation is officially over, you will continue to go to the beach, to movies, and on trips. Are there things that your family had hoped to do over the summer and did not have the opportunity to do? Put them on the calendar to do during the school year. Ask your child for one thing he had wanted to do over the summer but did not, and put that on the calendar, too.

Contact Friends Before School Begins. Have your child call a few school friends in advance of the first day. They can reconnect so they feel more comfortable when they meet up at school. Knowing they have spoken will add familiarity to the many unknowns of the new school year.

Involve Your Child in Back-to-School Preparations. Have him list the things he needs and allow him to help you with the shopping. Create a check list on the computer. Does he need a new lunch box, backpack, or more uniforms? Do her school shoes still fit? Does he need a haircut, school supplies, or lunch items? Have him prepare daily menus if he takes his lunch so everything will be on hand. Make shopping for what you need an adventure.

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Create Space to Discuss Feelings. Provide opportunities for your child to express his feelings about returning to school. Be supportive and encouraging. If he expresses fears, help him discover what he can do to feel more comfortable.

Routines Make Things Smooth. Routines are calming and soothing. Begin to roll back the bedtime to an hour acceptable for the school year. If your child wakes up to an alarm clock have him set it earlier each day until he is waking up at the appropriate time for school. Discuss the schedule in advance. Be clear on the time he will get out of bed and the time you will leave for school. Will she choose her school clothes the night before or in the morning? Do you want to include new things this year, such as your child waking to an alarm clock or preparing his own lunch or breakfast? Will he take a bath before bed or before school? Create clarity prior to the first day of school, particularly if there are changes from last year such as a new school, different departure times, or added responsibilities.

Robert Frost said, "I go to school the youth to learn the future." As we prepare our children to return to school, we are preparing them for their future. Frost also said, "Always fall in with what you're asked to accept. Take what is given, and make it over your way. My aim in life has always been to hold my own with whatever's going. Not against: with." Aim to work with this shift from summer to school, making it over your way. Take lots of deep breaths, and have a terrific year!

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