

HELPING YOUR CHILD WITH SCHOOL JITTERS

It's a very common issue – kids get nervous and anxious about starting or returning to school. It can be challenging for kids (and parents!) of young ones, who are just entering school for the first time, as well as those transitioning to middle or high school. Below are a few tips to help increase the chance that your child will have a smooth transition this year.

Develop A Routine: Set an early bedtime at least a week in advance, so that your child will feel refreshed and ready for his/her first day. Elementary-aged children need about ten hours of sleep, while teenagers require between eight and nine hours a night.

Project Excitement: You, as the parent, can set the tone for your child's ideas about school. Take time to talk with your child about the fun activities and aspects of being in school.

Be Attentive to Nerves: If you see that your child is nervous or anxious, take this opportunity to talk with them about their fears. Normalizing their feelings and reminding them that all kids have "butterflies" may help them feel less anxious.

Build Confidence: If your child has specific fears, help your child identify what they are. Many children, for example, worry about making friends. For younger children, you can role-play or use puppets to "act out" ways to start a conversation with a new friend. For older children, it might be helpful to remind him/her of how they made friends in the past.

Make Connections: Some schools have an open house before the first day of school, where parents and kids can meet the teacher. This is often helpful for young children, so that they will have a familiar face to connect with on their first day. Older kids, entering middle or high school, might feel more at ease if they have met a fellow classmate or get the chance to learn layout of the school, so he/she can transition easily between classes.

Get Kids Involved: Have younger children be part of the process of picking out his/her school supplies or backpack. Some kids also enjoy helping mom or dad pack their lunch for the first day of school. Older kids might be interested in shopping for clothes to wear on their first day or they may gain excitement around choosing extracurricular activities.

Saying Goodbye: With young children, it can be helpful to plan how you will say good-bye on the first day. Remember that your child will be okay; teachers are sensitive to your child's first-day jitters, and they often have activities planned to help your child adjust to his/her new classroom. Try not to prolong saying good-bye, as this can be more difficult for your child.

If your child continues to have difficulties adjusting to school, ACGC may be able to help you. You can contact us at 451-2242 for information about on-going counseling, groups, and workshops for parents.

Parenting Workshops (One session):

Protecting Your Children from Bullying	TUE	9/13	6-7:30 PM
Managing Meltdowns: Strategies for Tempering Tantrums	TUE	10/11	6-7:30 PM
Communicating with Your Difficult Child or Teen	TUE	11/8	6-7:30 PM

Groups (8 week sessions):

Social Skills Building for 6-9 year olds	THUR	9/22-11/10	6-7:30 PM
Anger Management Skills for 9-12 year olds	WED	9/21-11/9	6-7:30 PM
ADHD Parenting Group	WED	9/21-11/9	6-7:30 PM

*Childcare is provided on-site for both workshops and groups. For more information on cost of workshops/groups, please contact ACGC at 451-2242 or visit www.austinchildguidance.org

Here are a few additional resources to help children entering school:

The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn

The Night before First Grade by Natasha Wing

I Don't Want to Go to School: Helping Children Cope with Separation Anxiety (Let's Talk) by Nancy Pando LICSW and Kathy Voerg

Help! I'm in Middle School...How will I Survive? by Merry Gumm