

4 POWERFUL ways to MANAGE BACK-TO-SCHOOL ANXIETY

Big Life Journal

1 PREPARE

- Establish and maintain a **connection to school** by attending fun events together.
- **Initiate early discussions** about the upcoming school year with books like "Nani is Nervous" by Heather Hartt-Sussman and "Mae's First Day of School" by Kate Berube
- **Let them know it is normal to worry.** Simply knowing to expect some jitters early on, and even hearing about yours, can be very reassuring.
- **Help them build resilient mindsets.** Tune in to a few episodes of the Big Life Kids podcast together to learn more about facing challenges.



2 IDENTIFY SPECIFIC FEARS



- When delving into specific fears, be sure to **phrase questions positively** ("Do you know who you might play with at recess?" versus "Are you worried no one will play with you?").
- Consider some of the most **commonly-reported school fears**. Your child may worry about academics, social interaction, having the "right stuff" for school, or separating from you.

3 FOCUS ON POSITIVES

- Encourage your child to write about their school fears.
- Start by grabbing a piece of construction paper, and label one side "**Worry Thoughts**" and the other "**Happy Thoughts**." Draw a line down the center of the page. Then, have them either write or draw in each column.
- Have your child name all the **fun things that happen at school** that can't happen anywhere else.
- Remind your child that all the thinking they've done means they're **ready for the year**.



4 STAY CONNECTED



Consider adding one of the following acts to your **morning routine** to maintain the connection with your child all day and soothe worries:

- Draw reminders on **hands** (a heart or kiss)
- Give them a **worry stone** or bead to keep in pocket and rub when feeling nervous
- **Apply fragrances** like your perfume or lotion to hands/arms that can be sniffed during the day. The more the scent wears off, the closer they are to seeing you again!
- Put your **photo in their backpack**
- Place **encouraging notes** or messages in lunch box.

Early Intervention Family Worker Tips and Ideas

Mental Health Awareness Week

Keep Your Head: This website provides links to many self-help, counselling and on line services both locally and nationally to help support children, young people and families.

<https://www.keep-your-head.com/>

Kooth is a web based confidential support service available to young people aged 11-18 (up to 19th birthday). Kooth provides a safe and secure means of accessing mental health and wellbeing support designed specifically for young people.

<https://www.kooth.com/>

Friendship Challenges:

Children need to understand that others may think and feel differently than they do, and that's OK. *Perspective-taking* is a new skill for young children, and it's one that you can help your child develop. Simple ways to practise empathy include pointing out the emotions of others (e.g., "See his face? He's sad because he was hoping to have a turn with the Lego"), discussing the emotions of characters in stories, and talking about your own feelings.

It's okay to walk away and take a few deep breaths to collect yourself. When you're ready, share your point of view using respectful language, such as, "I felt hurt when you laughed at me."

Make sure you listen to the other person's point of view without interrupting.

For more support, please don't hesitate to contact me.

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