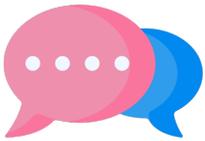




Preparing our Children for the New School Year

Preparing our children for this upcoming school year has brand new challenges. The more effort we make at preparing our children for the upcoming changes (even if they are likely to change again) will only help them feel more confident and comfortable.



Talk About It.

Have you asked your child, one on one, without sharing your bias, how they feel about the upcoming start of the new school year? Get some time with your child to sit down, ask, and listen. If you need some help getting your child to open up, fill out the 'How I Feel About School' worksheet with your child (<https://shandy.clinic/nsy>). Also, be on guard for how you are discussing the upcoming transition with others. This is a frequent topic of conversation these days which can invite complaining and exaggerating. Be honest and matter of fact with the challenges and concerns, while allowing your child to hear hopefulness for the best.

Try It Out.

Consider what the upcoming school year is going to look like. Will they be in a class where they will be expected to keep a mask on, maintain social distancing, and use hand sanitizer appropriately? If so, consider taking a dry run with a field trip to a public location where they will need to use all these skills appropriately, with your guidance. If your child will be returning to online learning, ask to have an opportunity to see the website, know how the class format will be held, how to ask questions, and turn in assignments before the school year begins.



Routine.

Establishing routines can be extremely helpful in times of transition. Give some thought to an ideal bedtime and a wake-up time and begin working towards that now. Practice the morning routine so that the first day of school feels more like a familiar habit rather than a rush out the door. Consider some new aspects of their routine that may be uncomfortable and think of ways to make it a little more fun. Is your child dreading wearing a mask to school? Consider getting ones to decorate, that match their outfits or have their favorite characters.

Countdown.

If your child is waking up each morning either eager or anxious to know if it's the first day of school yet, calm their mind by giving them a way to grasp *when* school is starting. For example, removing links from a paper chain, crossing dates off the calendar, or make a 'back to school advent calendar'. Or if your child is dreading the first day of school; make a realistic end of summer bucket list: An outing, park, or hike you'd like to take before starting back to school. This allows your child to mentally prepare, saying goodbye to one season and hello to the next.

