

Thursday, January 21, 2016

Tips for getting back to school stress-free

With attention turned to back to school preparations, children and parents can find this time both exciting and daunting. Parentline is offering its top tips for parents to ensure a stress free transition, helping parents to enjoy their children's important milestones.

Parentline Manager, Tony FitzGerald says the first days of school are often filled with excitement, fear and uncertainty, not only for children but their parents too.

"This time of year can be overwhelming for parents with children who are starting school for the very first time or transitioning from primary school to high school or starting at a new school entirely. It's natural for parents and children alike to have concerns or to feel anxious or emotional at this time of year.

"For parents it's good to focus on encouraging and supporting their kids during these times of transition and change, which will assist them to feel happy and confident."

Parentline's top tips for parents during this time include:

1. Be excited about the new change. If you are enthusiastic and confident, your children will be too
2. Plan outfits and lunches the night before to avoid the early morning rush and any unnecessary stress
3. If possible, visit the new school with your child before the first day to familiarise and explore areas of interest
4. Make sure the teacher and school are aware of any special needs your child has before the first day e.g. health and dietary requirements
5. Start and maintain daily routines that will add structure and make your child more at ease e.g. dropping your child off at school at the same time each morning
6. For children catching public transport, do some practice runs so they are confident about what train or bus they need to catch. Develop a strategy on what to do if they miss a bus or train.
7. Don't forget a healthy and nutritious breakfast. Students are more alert and perform better at school if they eat a good breakfast
8. Make sure your child gets plenty of sleep each night during the school week
9. Take 15 minutes out at the end of the school day to listen to your child's stories about their day.
10. It can also be an emotional time for parents, particularly when little ones are going to school for the first time. That first drop off is always a teary one – and not necessarily for the kids! It always helps to talk with someone about how you're feeling. Reach out to another parent for a cup of coffee and a chat.

Mr FitzGerald says during the back to school period, Parents call Parentline about a range of issues.

"Anxiety about their child achieving at school, making friends, balancing homework, changes in routine and fatigue are some of the most common concerns faced by parents when preparing their child to go back to school," Mr FitzGerald said.

“Really, the most important thing a parent can do during this time is to be positive, patient and supportive – if you listen your child will share what they are facing and experiencing.”

Parentline is a confidential telephone service providing professional counselling and support for parents and carers of children in Queensland and the Northern Territory – free call 1300 30 1300 or online at www.parentline.com.au

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INTERVIEW/PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

- Tony FitzGerald – Via phone
 - Children dressed in uniform ready for first day of school – Photo opportunity
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