

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. Kids Helpline is offering tips for parents to ensure a successful start to the new school year.

Kids Helpline Counselling Centre Manager, Tony FitzGerald says the first days of school are often filled with excitement, fear and frustration for children and their families.

“This time of year can be overwhelming for children who might be starting school for the very first time or transitioning from primary school to high school or starting at a new school entirely. Each year brings with it new challenges and perhaps some uncertainties about what is happening around them.

“School transitions are not just an important milestone but also a crucial time in a child’s development. Often these times set the standard in terms of how they develop coping strategies, problem solving skills and ways of seeing and understanding the world outside of their family,” Mr FitzGerald said.

“It is important that parents provide acceptance, encouragement and support during times of such transition and change.”

Kids Helpline top tips for parents to 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
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, children call Kids Helpline about a range of issues.



“Anxiety about making new friends or changes in friendships due to the long break is possibly the most common concern faced by children when preparing 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.”

Kids Helpline, Australia’s only national children’s counselling service, provides 24 hour counselling services to young people aged 5 to 25 years – free call 1800 55 1800 or online at www.kidshelpline.com.au

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INTERVIEW/PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES

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

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