

## ☆We're in your Corner☆

Back-to-school time can bring a mix of emotions—excitement, fear, worry, sadness—for kids and parents. Transitioning from easy-flowing summer days to the busy routine of school can be hard. The night before or morning of going back to school, many kids experience anxiety. This could look like: “Mom, I have a tummy ache.” to crying, whining, having trouble sleeping, being extra clingy, having tantrums, or even the dreaded, “I’m not going to school!”. If your mornings start this way, you are NOT alone.

Let’s reiterate that anxiety paired with transitions and new experiences IS normal. It is developmentally appropriate for young children to experience difficulty with starting something new while separating from their caregivers. So how do we help this sensitive time, while holding onto our sanity and not stewing in our guilt all day?

- **Instill some structure into your morning.** A morning routine can help calm feelings of insecurity and help your child feel some sense of control during the first hours of their day.
- **Lead the way with positive and encouraging statements.** When you talk about school and the changes ahead, show your child that you are excited. “I can’t wait to hear about all the things you learn!” “I’m excited to hear about your day when you get home from school.”
- **Validate feelings.** Nothing is more isolating than feeling invalidated with phrases like, “There’s nothing to worry about.” Let kids know they can trust their own feelings by reminding them they are valid. Acknowledge their feelings by letting them know that transitions are hard for everyone, including you.
- **Be their problem-solving partner.** Let your child lead the conversation, and then problem solve through their worries without giving them all the answers. Talking through anxiety-provoking scenarios and asking your child what they *could* do if that does happen, can make them feel more equipped to handle bumps in the road that undoubtedly may come their way.

It is important to note that once the parent is out of sight, children are usually able to acclimate to their new setting without a problem. A quick good-bye is usually best. It says to your kid, “I am confident you will be OK without me.” You may feel awful (this is also NORMAL), but you are giving them a chance to navigate their emotions, develop independence, and increase their confidence. Stay calm and consistent. If the icky feelings and morning struggles don’t subside after a few weeks or if they begin to interfere with your child’s learning, looking into some support for your student may be the next step!

*If you continue to have concerns, contact your school counselor to make a plan for a successful transition—they’re full of ideas, and are always in your corner!~*

### Looking for some ways to alleviate the home struggles?

- \*Make a key ring for their backpack with a family photo that you choose together.
- \*Pack a transitional item, something they pick that makes them feel safe.
- \*Listen to Daniel Tiger’s *Grown Ups Come Back* song (found on Youtube).
- \*Read *The Kissing Hand* (along with *Chester’s Song*) by Audrey Penn.
- \*Read *Llama, Llama Misses Mama* by Anne Dewdney.
- \*Read *The Pigeon Has To Go To School* by Mo Willems.
- \*Make up a secret handshake or special routine for your good-byes.
- \*Make up a rhyme for good-bye time, like: “I love you, you love me, have a great day and I’ll see you at 3!”
- \*Make a morning playlist for the house or car, choose songs that are energetic and fun to sing or dance to.