

Little Otter's Back to School Anxiety Toolkit

It's okay for your child to want to be with their caregivers or parents. It's okay for kids to struggle with the transition back to school.

Let's humanize children's emotions and recognize that as is true for adults, it's hard to transition back to school, back to work after breaks, vacations, and summer holidays. Children are having the same major feelings that adults are having.

Signs Your Child is Struggling with Back to School Anxiety

- Tantrums at drop-off
- Clinginess to caregivers
- Avoiding or refusing typically enjoyed activities
- Increased anxiety or tantrums at bedtime
- Symptoms such as stomachaches and headaches, leading to school absences



4 Tips for Helping Your Child with the Transition

● Validate your child's worry.

Remind them their feelings are okay and acceptable. Let them know you're there to support them.

● Prepare a daily routine for your child as they transition back to school.

Engage your child in a conversation to understand the routine, and use a chart with words or pictures depending on your child's age. Once you establish a routine, stick to it! Your child will know what to expect and unknowns will decrease which may decrease anxiety.

● Arrange playdates, teacher meet and greets, and classroom visits.

Coordinating classmate playdates, teacher introductions, and classroom visits can help your child transition. The more familiar your child becomes with their new classroom environment, the more comfortable they will be.

● Reward your child for successful school transitions.

Depending on your child, school drop-offs may be the most difficult time of day. Provide rewards when your child is able to transition from home to school, and consistently provide the reward.

When to Worry

Despite your best efforts sometimes your child is still not able to transition smoothly and anxiety persists. As a parent or caregiver, you know your child best. If you do not see an improvement in your child's back to school anxiety or symptoms escalate, it may be time to consult a mental health expert. Little Otter is available for assessment and mental health services.

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/wellness-and-prevention/5-tips-to-ease-backtoschool-anxiety>