

School is Coming Up

There has to be a better way to prepare my kids

By Dr. Harold Jules Hoyle Ph.D.

Imagine for a moment that I were given 3 months off from work. And then someone told you, "Time for work to start again." What if you also had a new boss and a whole new team at work? This is what we ask our children to do this every year and often times with little thought or preparation. This is not just a simple transition. We can call it a big transition. When working with people, it becomes clear very quickly that transitions are hard. Most teachers have problems with students during transitions between activities. Most parents have difficulties when transitioning kids from one behavior to another. How many times have you heard a parent counting down, "5-4-3. . .", when trying to get child to change activities or leave the park or turn off the TV? Leaving summer and returning to school is an important and significant transition time. This is a time when a little bit of planning will go a long way in reducing stress at the start of the school year.

Remind and revive some school habits.

Sort out your schedule early. The worst time to remind a child they have a get-up time or a bed time is the weekend before it happens. Start the conversation when they are in a good mood. Work through the bed time, homework time, TV and media controls with them. Come up with the schedule by reflecting on what worked

last year. Remember your child is a year older. Help them with their new year by providing them with a new privilege and responsibility. If they get to stay up an extra half-hour, then they can keep their room clean. Privileges generally come with new responsibilities.

Tap into their friends.

Changing behavior can be hard. Having a friend to share it with can help. Plan a carpool or have your kids team up with a friend for their trip to school. They might not want to get up for school, but they might for their friend. We often have our kids isolated except for play times. Set up a homework club that rotates houses. It will provide a fixed time and draw on teamwork. Have them reconnect with their school friends and use the playgrounds before they go back to school. There are a lot of fun activities that happen at school, and kids most often see and make new friends at school.

Plan for reality.

Maybe you and your kids are morning people. Maybe you all love school and homework. Even if that is the case, when school starts things will change. Whether it is the un-cool backpack or the wrong lock, something will bring on the drama. Plan extra time for the first week's drama. Set up a special breakfast, or pack a favorite lunch. Pick the next day's outfit,

and put it out the night before. Think about the possible areas of conflict and attempt to reduce the potential for problems. Picture that first week as if you were planning for a family barbeque or a business retreat. Have realistic expectations, plan for the common issues, and provide yourself the time you will need to adjust to the unknown. With a little bit of planning, you might just miss the drama.



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