

Tip Sheet for Managing Stress in Those First Few Days of School

To help ease the transition for your child's first days at school, here are some tips:

- Be patient and understanding
- Listen to and respect your child's feelings
- Talk about it. It's healthier for children to talk about their feelings. They don't benefit from "not thinking about it". Be empathetic but remind your child – gently – how well they adjusted to previous transitions
- Keep calm – stay cool. Your child will likely be calm if you are too.
- Leave without fanfare. Tell your child to have a good day, say "I love you", then go – don't stall.
- Your child's reaction will likely be influenced by your reaction. If you stay longer, look worried – get teary – this may be interpreted as cause for fear or avoidance and they may continue with this reaction in subsequent days to avoid coming to school.
- Try not to give in. Reassure your child that he or she will be fine – be confident and assuring (check yourself out in the mirror before speaking with your child: does your facial expression, body language/posture, tone of voice match your words?) All of you needs to project confidence.
- Praise your child's efforts related to school. Children generally repeat behaviour that gives them the most attention.
- Overprotectiveness: Sometimes the anxiety maybe a manifestation of parent's own anxiety – parents and children can feed one another's fears or anxieties
- Keep your own stress and anxiety in check leading up to the first days. Kids with anxious parents may be more prone to anxiety generally. To help manage your own stress and anxiety here are some tips: Talk about your feelings to others; exercise regularly – exercise is a great stress buster; eat properly and be mindful of your eating; practice relaxation (ex. Yoga, meditation, listen to relaxing

music and abdominal breathing); get enough sleep (when we suffer from sleep deprivation we don't know what we think or feel – we are just SO tired and our thinking becomes foggy); keep your sense of humour – laughter fights stress.

- Share stories of your fond memories of going to school. Speak of school in a positive and enthusiastic manner.
- Remember: This phase will pass!