



SIMI PSYCHOLOGICAL GROUP


Create Real Change



**7 TIPS TO HELP YOUR CHILD ADJUST
BACK TO IN-PERSON LEARNING**

Create a Routine – Start Early!

Predictability can help ease a child's anxiety over time. Once school starts, mornings are likely to look a lot different than they have been. **Help your child create a routine for the mornings.** Don't wait until the week of school to start this routine! Instead, you can start a week before and help your child feel confident with the routine going into the first week of school. For younger kids, it can be helpful to create this routine with pictures to help your child stay on track in the morning.

Here is a sample. 



Validate Your Child's Feelings



If your child seems anxious about going back to school, this makes total sense! After a year of fear, staying home, and limited interactions, it can feel daunting for kids to imagine such a big change. As parents, it can be tempting to try and talk children out of how they are feeling. Instead, try to **pause and let your child know you understand.** If your child is complaining, crying, or being rude, take a deep breath and check in with yourself. Remind yourself where this is coming from (ex. They are worried about this big change). Try and mirror how your child is feeling with phrases such as, *"I know it feels scary to think about going back to school."* Give space for how they are feeling rather than jumping to the reasons why it will be ok.

For example, you can ask what they are worried about and what they are not looking forward to. As they respond, validate that feeling with phrases such as *"Yes, that might be hard to get used to,"* or *"I can see why you aren't looking forward to that."* Giving your child the message that their feeling is ok can be very helpful in allowing them to communicate and slowly feel better about their worries.

Set Boundaries and Give Choices

Along with validating feelings, it is important to set boundaries with your child about what is not a choice, such as the fact they'll be going to school. It's important to do this along with validating your child's feelings. For example, it might sound like *"I know you are not wanting to go back in-person, but going to school is something we need to do. I'm here to help you."* If this seems to just lead to further pushback or argumentativeness from your child, **try to redirect them to where they do have more choices**. Even though certain things are not a choice for your child, there is still plenty of room for them to make choices. For example, what they want to eat for breakfast on the first day of school, what should go first in their morning routine, what backpack they want this year, what activity they would like to do when they get home, etc. **The more choices your child feels a part of, the more empowered and motivated they can start to feel**, which will then help ease anxiety they may be feeling.



Consider a Transitional Object in Your Child's Backpack

Some kids benefit from bringing **an object that comforts them** in their backpack. This can be a small toy/stuffed animal or even a picture of you. This can help ease anxiety and remind your child of home. You can bring it up to your child by explaining how it is their comfort object, and to hold it or look at it when they feel nervous as a reminder that they are safe.

Talk to Your Child About What Will Be The Same

For a child anxious about a change, it can be comforting to know what will be the same. **Have a conversation with your child about what they can expect to be different, but also what will stay the same**. For example, we will still have special family time, get to go to fun places on the weekend, etc. When it comes to school itself, examples of things that will be the same include having someone there to help you if you need, getting to learn lots of new things, and getting to take fun breaks. Exploring what will be the same can help your child feel more prepared for upcoming changes.

TIP

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Explore What Changes Might Be Exciting

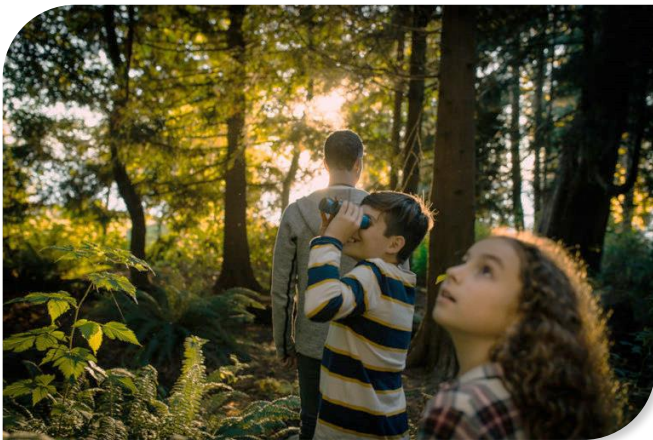
Much of the time, a child's anxiety is coupled with potential excitement too. **Encourage your child to explore these parts.** Try not to list them for your child, but encourage them to come up with some examples on their own. Some of these examples may include getting to see friends, going on the playground, meeting the teacher, and not having to sit in front of the computer the whole time! You can write these examples down for your child and help them notice the parts they may be looking forward to as well.



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Trust That You and Your Child Are Capable of Adjustment!



Oftentimes, kids need time to adjust. Remind yourself that both you and your child are capable of adjustment. Likely, this past year has plenty of evidence for that! Also likely, this past year may have shown that adjustment is not always smooth. It's ok if there are bumps and difficulties especially at the beginning. Being patient and consistent can help your child get comfortable. As you are able to remain calm in the face of your child's struggles, **you are giving them the message that you know they are capable as well.**

You are not alone. We are here to help.



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Let's Create Real Change.

Contact us for a free consultation
at (805) 422-3336.