

MEDIA RELEASE

Coping with new school stress

Starting at a new school is always a challenging time for children, whether leaving mum and dad for the first time or moving from primary school to high school it will be one of the most exciting, scary and frustrating times of their young lives.

According to Kids Help Line it is crucial that children be provided with love, acceptance, encouragement and support during this time.

General Manager Counselling Services Wendy Protheroe says while transitions are exciting opportunities for children to learn and grow, parents should keep in mind that this can be a stressful time for some children.

"Parents have an important role in helping children feel safe and secure as they move to their new educational setting," she said.

"They need to recognise that some children can feel worried, stressed and tired. It is important to give children some extra care for a couple of months to help them deal with this situation."

The first day of kindergarten or school is a momentous occasion. It is often the first time that young children are away from home for many hours, confronted with a large number of children, most of whom are older, and dealing with unfamiliar peers and teachers without a parent or familiar figure.

"For very young children, negotiating these new relationships on their own can be a huge deal," Ms Protheroe said. "Making friends and getting to know the teacher are really important steps for children to feel safe and cared for in a new environment."

For students making the transition from primary school to high school there are whole different set of concerns.

"They will be dealing with being split up from friends who attend different high schools, moving around different teachers and classrooms throughout the day, choosing subjects and bullying is often a major concern," Ms Protheroe said.

Kids Help Line's suggestions for getting through this stressful time include:

more.../2



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Media contact:

Jessica Tatzenko - 07 38671248 or 0434077478
Kristy Porter - 07 38671223 or 0434077439

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Coping with new school stress cont....

1. Be enthusiastic about the upcoming change. If you are excited and confident, your child will be, too.
2. Prepare yourself. Take note of how your child reacts to separation. If possible, visit the new setting with your child before their first day
3. Start daily routines before the transition occurs.
4. Continue other daily routines to create a sense of safety.
5. Continue to show affection, children are never too old for hugs.
6. Put aside extra time, particularly on the first day, for chatting and commuting together.
7. At the end of the work day, put aside your concerns and focus on being a parent.
8. Take an active interest in what happened during their day.
9. Keep taking time out to have fun as a family.

"Really the most important thing that a parent can do during this time is to be patient and supportive – if you listen, without interrupting, your children will share what they are feeling and experiencing," Ms Protheroe said.

"It is through truly hearing the messages from your children that you can be a real help to them.

"These transitions are very important stages of children's lives, they help develop coping strategies, problem solving skills, resiliency and ways of seeing and understanding the world outside of their family."

Kids Help Line, Australia's only national children's counselling service, provides 24 hour counselling services to young people aged 5 to 25 years – free call **1800 55 1800** or online at www.kidshelp.com.au

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