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Combat new school stress

Starting at a new school is always a challenging time for children, whether they are 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.

Kids Helpline General Manager Wendy Protheroe said it is crucial children are provided with love, acceptance, encouragement and support during this time of transition and change.

“These transitions are exciting opportunities for children to learn and grow, but we need to remember that such milestones can also cause anxiety,” she said.

“Parents have a major role in helping children feel safe and secure as they move to their new educational settings.

“Children will be confronted with new challenges and uncertainties, it is important that parents listen to their children’s concerns and praise them for facing fears and trying new activities.”

Kids Help Line’s suggestions for parents to support their children during this time include:

1. Be enthusiastic about the upcoming change. If you are excited and confident, your child will be too.
2. Prepare yourself and your child ahead of time - talk with your child about starting school.
3. Plan the first day the night before to avoid the early morning rush and any unnecessary stress, ensuring a calm and confident start to school.
4. If possible, visit the new the school with your child and on the first day walk the little ones all the way into the classroom.
5. Start daily routines that will add continuity to make sure your child feels comfortable – eg be familiar with the school uniform, rehearse the school day, and pack their favourite foods for lunch.
6. If you child has any special needs discuss this in advance with the teacher eg dietary or health requirements.
7. Put aside extra time, particularly on the first day, for chatting and commuting together.
8. After school, greet your child and spend time with them.

“Really the most important thing 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.

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

Kids Helpline, Australia’s only national children’s counselling service, provides 24 hour counselling services to young people aged 5 to 18 years – free call 1800 55 1800 or online at www.kidshelp.com.au

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