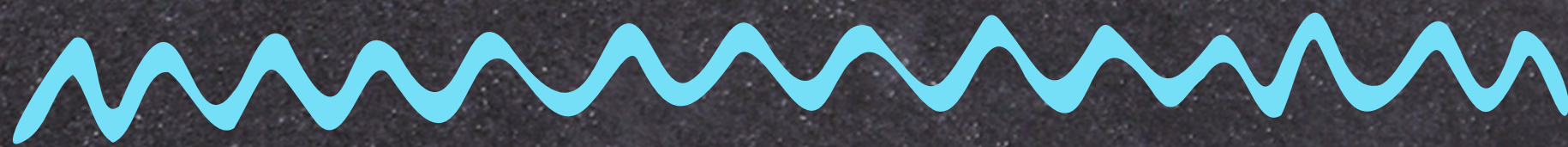


BACK TO SCHOOL

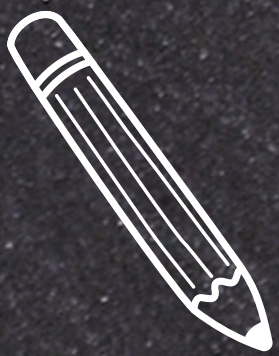


TRANSITIONS AND CHANGE IDEAS



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TRANSITIONS AND CHANGE



We know that school holidays can be both a blessing and a curse. In fact, transitioning in and out of everyday life for some more than others can be tricky. By the time little ones are in a routine, the holiday comes round again. Transitions and change, even the tiniest, can leave children and young people feeling overwhelmed, anxious and confused, which can result in behaviours that show us exactly how they feel.

You may notice that as you draw closer to the new term, their need to control may increase, parenting feels more challenging. You may notice they are seeking to connect with you more. Separating from you is difficult.

You may notice that their sleeping and eating pattern has changed. You may notice they are worrying much more, asking or repeating the same questions, they are more irritable and unable to settle. You may notice that they may be isolating themselves more.

It may feel just too much with pressing anxiety and wondering about it all. You may notice they are internalising their feelings.

Change for children can feel unpredictable and scary, not dissimilar for us adults. Sometimes, even when we have been somewhere before, we may need to check where we are going and so on. If it is a new place, we may worry about how we might get there.

We like predictability, change can feel uncomfortable. Children with developmental difficulties may struggle to adjust and need extra guidance and support. Change is even more uncomfortable when children have had so many. We know that heightened control comes from a place of fear, the unknown. Children's brains are very clever at doing what they need to do.

So what might help? Listed on the subsequent pages are some ideas and suggestions.



OPEN AND EMPATHETIC COMMUNICATION



Encourage your child to share their feelings about the upcoming changes. Create a safe space for them to express their worries, excitement, or uncertainties.

Listen actively and validate their emotions. Acknowledge that it's okay to feel a mix of emotions during transitions and to minimise discomfort.



PROVIDE INFORMATION AND PREPARATION

Offer age appropriate information about what to expect during the transition or school return. This can ease anxieties related to the unknown.

Share details about the new routine, school environment, and any changes they might encounter.

Some schools are great at having a walk through video or pictures that can be viewed and printed, a reminder of their new teacher.

RE-ESTABLISH PREDICTABLE ROUTINES



Consistent routines provide stability during transitions.

Maintain regular meal times, sleep schedules, and other familiar routines.

Create a visual schedule for younger children, outlining daily activities and transitions.

Embrace the change gradually and if possible, introduce small changes gradually to help them acclimatise to new situations.



VISIT THE NEW ENVIRONMENT

If possible, visit the new school or environment before the transition. Familiarity can reduce anxiety.

Explore classrooms, playgrounds, and meet teachers or staff to ease the fear of the unknown.

THINK ABOUT WAYS OF ENCOURAGING AN OUTLET FOR FEELINGS



Offer creative outlets for your child to explore their sense of self, journelling, arts and crafts, worry monsters, therapeutic stories are some useful tools.

Share your own experiences with your child.



CELEBRATE THOSE VICTORIES

Acknowledge each step of the transition process with a small celebration, reflecting on how brave they are. Offer praise for their resilience.

SELF-CARE FOR PARENT



Give yourself a break, always try and stay calm and regulate yourself. Make time for yourself when needed, you need to recharge and parenting is not easy at times.



SELF-CARE FOR YOUR CHILD

Teach your little person ways of managing stress such as mindfulness, engage them in movement.

Give your child space to decompress after school. Have a snack and drink such as a thick milkshake, smoothie, comfy blanket and low level noise. Give them the space they need to allow their bodies to relax.

PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT



If you feel that your little person is struggling and finding school far too overwhelming. You're noticing that they just aren't coping at anytime of the day or at particular times of the day, then seek advice and support from school.

MORE IDEAS AND SUGGESTIONS

Check in with the teacher and let them know your worries.

Create a communication booklet with the teacher and exchange each evening and morning.

Don't forget their favourite toy.

Create a social story that replicates the experience.

Ask the school if your child can have a buddy.

Give them a transitional object, spray of perfume, a handkerchief, a picture. Draw a heart using a non-toxic pen on their hand and yours and remind them that everytime you touch the heart you are thinking of them.

Play their favourite music in the car.

Create a transition book , pictures of school, friends that may be attending, peg, desk, chair, teacher, door, lunch room, car park, the journey.

Bundles of reassurance and praise.

Organise play dates with familiar friends who are also transitioning.

Give them space to allow movement such as a walk to the park.

Have snuggle blankets ready in the car.

Try and make the walk to the car/ school playful , silliest walk, the floor is lava, big step-little step/i-spy.

Children with developmental difficulties often struggle with how they process the world around them.

Pick your battles, focus on what is going well.

Speak with school and suggest that your child would benefit from sensory breaks.

Do they have ear defenders to minimise the noise around them.

If your child becomes overwhelmed- pause, breathe, stay calm.

Remember when your child is overwhelmed, their thinking brain has gone offline, they can't hear or respond to you in the way that you may like.

Reach out for support from a family member or trusted friend.

Stay with or as close as you can, keeping safety for yourself and child in mind.

Give time for this to pass- your child may be feeling a host of feelings such as shame and guilt.

Reconnect, snuggles, drink, low noise, reassurance and let them know that regardless you still love them.

Wait for the right time to talk about the big feelings and emotions, your child needs to be regulated as do you. It doesn't have to be discussed that day.

Most importantly connect and breathe, it will pass.