

Adjusting to a New School Environment

1. Fostering Independence

- Give choices (even small ones)
 - Examples: what cup to drink from at dinner, picking out clothing, etc.
- Encourage kids to help with chores
- Create a chore chart for older children
- Use words like "You should be proud of yourself" vs. "I am proud of you"
 - The first sentence helps increase self-esteem in children by letting children be proud of themselves
 - The second sentence implies looking for approval from others
 - If my parent is not proud of my work, then I can't be proud of my work
- Higher self-esteem builds better coping skills
- Encourage kids to try to do things on their own (tying shoes, picking up toys, etc.)

2. Adjusting to a new school environment

Includes classroom, school, new friends, new teacher, teacher style differences

- Tour the school building before the first day of school
- Be Proactive – come into the school with your child on the first day to drop them off
- Meet early on with the teacher about any issues (behavior, academics, etc.)
 - Address specific concerns with the teacher and don't be afraid/anxious about repercussions
- When moving to a new school or area, have a positive outlook
 - View the move as an exciting opportunity and model this to your child
- A student will develop coping skills for adjusting to a new environment
 - Having to make new friends
 - Learning new way around location/school
 - Coping with difficult feelings (sadness/anger)
- Having a "Solve-the-Problem" approach rather than an "Avoid/Escape" approach is best
 - Teach your child to solve problems rather than avoid or escape them
- Extra-curricular activities/hobbies outside of school will help a child develop new friendships and build higher self-esteem

3. Separation between child and parent

- Separation anxiety can occur at any age/grade level
- Start at home by increasing the amount of time away between child and parent (small amounts that increase over time)
- Present neutral feelings - if the parent seems worried/sad/crying, then the child believes there is something to be worried about
- Repeat clear, short verbal statements like "It is important to go to school"
- Transition time is pretty short for most kids
 - Once the child is in the classroom and is situated, the separation anxiety usually disappears/decreases
- It is very important to be consistent
- Arrive at school at the same time every day
- Don't give in on certain days (keeping your child home on more difficult days)
- Continue the same routine every morning
- Separation anxiety is worse after long breaks/weekends/summer