



Georgia
Psychological
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Back-to-School Blues

Georgia psychologists offer tips to help parents and kids prepare

Atlanta, GA, August 4, 2015 – Parents have a lot on their plate: housing costs, healthcare, caring for elderly parents, raising kids, just to name a few. As the new school year approaches, they face additional stressors — paying for back-to-school supplies, clothes and possibly tuition. Many parents may also be worried about their children starting a new school, changing school districts, facing a more rigorous academic year or dealing with difficult social situations.

Often the fear of the unknown — classmates, teachers, the school building — is the most stressful for family members, whether it's the children hopping on the school bus or their parents who have to wave goodbye.

In Georgia, parents and children have begun the annual ritual of preparing to start the new school year. According to J. Kip Matthews, an Athens-based psychologist, "returning to school can present a number of challenges as families adapt to a new routine in an unfamiliar environment of a new school."

Fortunately, children are extremely capable of coping with change and parents can help them in the process by providing a setting that fosters resilience and encourages them to share and express their feelings about returning to school.

Before school starts, Georgia psychologists offer suggestions to help parents and kids prepare:

Practice the first day of school routine: Getting into a sleep routine before the first week of school will aide in easing the shock of waking up early. Organizing things at home — backpack, binder, lunchbox or cafeteria money — will help make the first morning go smoothly. Having healthy, yet kid-friendly lunches will help keep them energized throughout the day. Also, walking through the building and visiting your child's locker and classroom will help ease anxiety of the unknown.

Get to know your neighbors: If your child is starting a new school, walk around the block and get to know the neighborhood children. Try and set up a play date, or, for an older child, find out where neighborhood kids might go to safely hang out, like the community pool, recreation center or park.

Talk to your child: Asking children about their fears or worries about going back to school will help them share their burden. Inquire as to what they liked about their previous school or grade and see how those positives can be incorporated into their new experience.

Empathize with your children: Change can be difficult, but also exciting. Let your children know that you are aware of what they're going through and that you will be there to help them in the process. Nerves are normal, but highlight that not everything that is different is necessarily bad. It is important to encourage children to face their fears instead of falling in to the trap of encouraging avoidance.

Get involved and ask for help: Knowledge of the school and the community will better equip parents to understand their child's surroundings and the transition he or she is undergoing. Meeting members of the community and school will foster support for both parent and child. If parents feel the stress of the school year is too much to handle, seeking expert advice from a licensed psychologist, can help them better manage and cope.

Dr. Matthews notes that starting a new school year, while challenging, can offer parents and children new opportunities to learn and grow together. "This is a time when parents can help instill a sense of confidence and resilience in their children," he said.

To learn more visit the American Psychological Association at www.apa.org/helpcenter and follow @APAHelpCenter. To find out more about the Georgia Psychological Association visit www.gapsychology.org and follow @gapsychasn.

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The American Psychological Association, in Washington, D.C., is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States. APA's membership includes more than 122,500 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 54 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 60 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people's lives.