



Navigating Parenthood

Charting the course of parenthood can sometimes feel like an obstacle. Here, some tips to keep you feeling sane.

The Big Ease-y

Helping your kid make the transition from summer to school.

It seems just like yesterday that we focused on the complexities, challenges, magic and joy of summer days in the June edition of Playground. Oh, how time flies. The playful days of summer have flown by and beach parties, barbecues, summer camp and s'mores are a mere memory. The excitement and anxiety of preparing for the school year has arrived in the blink of an eye.

How can parents help to ease the transition from relaxed summer days to the structured days of school? The first step is recognizing that there is a transition in the first place! Read on for a list of what to expect as your child transitions from summer to school.

1. Increased anxiety...Transitions in general are the source of significant anxiety for children. You may observe changes in sleep patterns, sleep disturbances, oppositional (or acting-out) behaviors, increased need for discipline, hyper-

sensitivity, and a fluctuation between needs for dependency and autonomy.

2. Fear of separation...After a long summer which often included extended family time, children (particularly the younger ones) must adjust to the reality that their days will now be spent in school and separated from their family members. Separation anxiety is extremely common and can be managed by a parents' effort to assure their child that school is a safe place and that the family will reunite later that afternoon or evening. Parents do not disappear.

3. Behavioral and/or mood changes...Changes in conduct and mood are often caused by the child's need to adjust to the structure and routine of school after enjoying a less structured and flexible summer schedule. Your child may

appear "moody", nervous, agitated, excited, sad, a bit withdrawn, angry or surprisingly content, happy and relaxed. Many children actually welcome and need the structure and predictability of school. Emphasize that the anxious feelings are very normal and will dissipate over time.

4. Fears of fitting in or not...

The peer group is a major variable in your child's experience in school. As the summer ends, many children wonder if they will be accepted back into their peer group or need to branch out and make new friends. The fear of rejection is very powerful

and can affect your child's self-esteem. Encourage your child to be patient, as renewing and developing friendships all take time. Most importantly, help your child to be themselves, confident and proud of who they are. Help them to recognize that you get more with sugar than spice...mean kids never really win.

5. Fear of failure...Many children worry that they will not succeed as they face the increasing academic demands of school. Help your children to acknowledge that everyone learns differently and at their own pace. Effort is what matters most. Learning is a process, and all that is expected of your children is that they try their best!

During this sensitive period of transition from summer to school try to be patient, firm, understanding and supportive. It is always helpful to get into the habit of laying out the clothes for school the night before, to avoid some of the morning rush and tension. Many children enjoy packing their backpacks the night before. In addition, a good night's sleep and a healthy breakfast go a very long way to ensuring success in easing into the more regimented school days.

Embrace your child with love, and emphasize that they are in good company in regard to their worries and concerns. Everybody gets nervous about starting something new. Believe it or not, just acknowledging that does a lot to ease the worry.

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Coping during the Admissions Process

Let's face it. We all know someone who is about to begin the dreaded "admissions process" to get a coveted spot at one of New York City's premier schools. We have pity on our friends that are going through it and outright dread when it is our turn. As parents, everyone wants to give their children the best of everything. Isn't it part of the American Dream to give our children more than what we had?

In a matter of days, hundreds of families will begin the process of finding and getting into a school worthy of our children. There are over 100 private schools in New

York City. You have to find the school that is best for your child, but in some cases your child is a baby and how can you know what is right?

Everyone you speak to has a different piece of advice, it all sounds good, and you are being told everything from "relax" to "panic." Here are some tips to help you cope:

- Take a deep breath.
- Accept that you will do everything you can, and still may not get what you want.
- Remember there is no "best school"; you are on a mission to find "the best fit" for your child.
- Be honest with yourself about what your child needs

(NOT what YOU need).

- Focus on finding a place where your child will develop a love of learning and a strong sense of self-esteem. That is what will determine his/her future success.
- You have got to be in it to win it. Of course you should apply!
- Don't ask too many people for advice. You will get conflicting reports and feel even more over-whelmed (if that is possible).
- If you have a connection, use it.
- Find a school that matches your approach to learning and educational philosophy.
- Get help if you need it.

—Dana Haddad

—Dr. Betsy Schur Levy