

DR. BERTIE WAI'S PARENTING NEWSLETTER

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Each month I invite parents to submit a question or topic that they want to see featured in my free newsletter, and I will pick one of these to address. To ask a question, suggest a topic, or subscribe, write to askdrbertie@gmail.com. For other services, write to drbertiewai@gmail.com.

TRANSITION TO A NEW SCHOOL: WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

NEW SCHOOL transitions can be challenging to children because it involves change, and change means unpredictability. As some of you might remember from my parenting workshop, **consistency and predictability help kids feel safe**. So, help your child through their new experience by making it more predictable. Also, your positivity and ease will inspire confidence in her ability to cope with change successfully.

**** BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS**

i) BOOKS/MOVIES: For younger children, reading books about new school experience will help yours prepare for it. She will learn how other kids feel about a new school, what to expect, and how to respond. Talk about the pictures, characters, and story. Ask age-appropriate questions.

Younger kids: “What are they doing?” “Where are they?” “Who is this person?” “Are they having fun?”

Older kids: “What do you think this child is thinking/feeling?” “Why is she sad?” “What can she do about it?”

For **pre-teens**, have a movie night and invite their friends over. Provide snacks and listen in while they do the talking.

ii) TALK ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S EXPECTATIONS: Ask your child what he thinks school will be like. He might already know what to expect, or he might have misguided worries or fear. If your child is unwilling to talk, it's important to step back and try to understand why it is hard for him to talk. Avoid pressuring him repeatedly.

iii) TOUR: If possible, tour inside and around the school and the route to

school with your child. Familiarity breeds security.

**** AFTER SCHOOL STARTS**

Once school has started, talk to them about their school teachers, subjects, friends, and the new environment. **LISTEN. Resist the urge to fix, manage, and teach in the first 2 minutes.** Connect with their emotional experience first. For older children, if needed, guide/prompt them to think of solutions themselves. Encourage them to be creative.

**** Other Tips**

Keep daily schedule and habits the same as much as possible during transitions

Start the early-to-bed routine early

Keep an eye on any change to their appetite, mood, and sleep pattern

MODEL GOOD EQ! Keep track of your own anxiety. When stressed, parents tend to want to actively help their child by asking a lot of questions (Have you got bus money?), giving a lot of reminders (“Remember to bring your ID.”), or doing a lot (packing your child's bag). Children pick up on parents' anxiety and it breeds more anxiety. (Remember, **an anxious child is a child who can't learn effectively?**) So, being calm, collected and positive yourself is the best thing you can do to help. Take a moment to breath when you find yourself stressed out and talking a lot **AT** your child. (Remember the difference between **talking at (give instructions)** and **talking to (create connection)?**)

Anticipate problems; prepare your child for it. E.g., if she is shy, say “you might feel lonely as it might take you some time to make friends, but that's OK. You will get there.” If he writes slowly, say, “you might complete work slower than others, but it doesn't mean you are stupid.”