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TERM Parents Newsletter TOPIC

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STARTING STRONG HELP YOUR CHILD NAVIGATE THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR WITH CONFIDENCE!



Some children love school and spend most of the summer holidays wishing to be back. Some also love school but are a bit more reserved when it comes to going back, while others really struggle with the school environment and wish summer holidays last forever. For this reason, at the new school year begins, your household might be filled with a mix of excitement and worry. Whatever child you are blessed with, whether they're starting school for the first time or returning after the summer break, whether they are neurodivergent or neurotypical, likelihood is that some of them will struggle to adjust (back) to school life. Some children react to this change straight away, while others take a little bit of time to show their discomfort. Often this is reflected in their behaviour.

COMMON CHALLENGES;



(Separation) Anxiety

1

Although separation anxiety is commonly associated with younger children, all children may struggle with anxiety around starting school, especially after a long summer break. We are our children's emotional safety net whereas, school means they have to go several hours without those regular emotional check-ins with us. For children for whom the school environment is a source of anxiety, having to go back there can be extremely hard.

New Routines

2

Adjusting to early mornings, structured days, and classroom expectations can be overwhelming. Most of us can relate to this and have experienced how transitions can be tricky- whether it's a change of workplace, change of hours or even just a week or two on holiday, away from the usual day to day. This can be particularly true for children with SEND who tend to be even more sensitive to changes in routine and structure.

Friendship Worries

3

Children may feel nervous about making new friends or reconnecting with old ones. The summer is long and much happens in this time from one academic year to another. Children grow and change both physically and mentally. Their interests change too. All of this might make them a little bit concerned about how they fit in with their peers.

Academic Pressure

4

Some children worry about keeping up with schoolwork or understanding new topics that they know are planned for the term or year ahead. This might particularly be the case for children with learning difficulties and disabilities who find academic aspects of school challenging anyway.

Sensory Overload

5

Busy classrooms, noisy playgrounds, new environments, new people, and demands can be overstimulating. Some children thrive in those environments, but some (and especially neurodivergent children) seriously struggle. This can cause them to feel overwhelmed and result in changes in behaviour either at home or at school. After-school meltdowns are not uncommon as a result of this.

FAMILY SERVICES

**MOVE
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EVERY CHILD THRIVES

HOW YOU CAN HELP...

Allow feelings to come out: encourage children to share how they feel about school. Validate their feelings by describing what you see and hear. For example, "I can see that you are finding going (back) to school hard. You are crying more than usual, you are struggling to settle at night, and you'd like to spend a lot more time with me. It is okay to feel that way." However, be careful not to overwhelm your child with questions about their day and what they have been doing immediately after school. It is likely they will need some time to decompress from the overwhelm of the day, before they are ready to share experiences and emotions. **DO** hold a space that allows for this sharing a little later in the day, getting things off our chests can support quality sleep and provide opportunity for connection whilst you validate their emotions and reassure them that it's okay to feel as they do.

Make necessary adjustments: accept that your child might struggle with adjusting to school and make some changes in your daily life to allow for the potential regression in behaviour to happen. For example, rethink how many afterschool clubs they go to and consider (if possible) taking them to a park and just playing with them instead. Having something to look forward to after school can be a great way to help 'get them or you through the day.' It can be anything, a game you will play, an activity you will do, a book you will read together, a favourite meal at dinnertime, a play date, a playground visit on the way home. Be as creative as you like and consider your individual child's needs at the end of the school day so you choose something together that will meet those needs but also excite them so they have that something to look forward to.

Preserve regular "you and them" time: spending time with you is one of the best ways for children to refuel their emotional energy. This is especially true if you spend that time playing with them as play is one of the best ways for children to work things through, particularly stressful events and change. Have regular "you and them" play time, preferably without screens. Meet them at their level, don't evaluate or judge how they play, just be there, listen, observe, follow their lead, and enjoy.

Create connection rituals to ease transitions: A special goodbye handshake or a note in their lunchbox can ease separation anxiety. This can provide that mini check in with you during their day despite you not being present. At the end of their day, no matter how the day has panned out, make it a habit of greeting them with a big smile and a hug. Likewise, address their basic needs straight away – that happy greeting alongside a drink and a snack can do wonders! Enjoy engaging in some physical activity together on the way back home. This can not only help reset children and meet that need for movement at the end of their school day but also allow them to reconnect with us.

Stick to routines: make sure that your child has a daily, predictable routine, with regular times for meals, down time, and bedtime. Having a rested body and knowing what to expect at home helps children cope and gives them a sense of security. For example, a morning routine with time for breakfast, a feel-good activity, and a relaxed journey to school might just be what they need to transition better. Discussing and negotiating how this will look and work best for you and your child ahead of time is a great way to work together. Creating a visual for routines also provides a helpful guide to get you all through the mornings.

Keep your own worries in check: children are incredibly good at tuning into our feelings. Feeding off those feelings can sometimes make things worse. This is why we need to model the behaviour that we want to see in our children. Make sure that you practice self-care and stick to suggestions from above if you'd like your children to follow suit.

Finally... accept that some children take longer to adjust and that life might be a bit trickier until your child adjusts to the big change of going (back) to school. Give yourself and your child some grace, be consistent, loving and encouraging but don't forget to look after yourself. Then give it some time. However, if things don't improve after a while, reach out to your child's school and share any concerns. Equally, remember that you don't have to suffer alone; please reach out to us. We are more than happy to talk to you.

WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO



Hi! We are Jen and Marijana - the Move-More family support team. Our job is to help families with issues that might not necessarily be seen as educational but can have a significant impact on children and their learning. The aim is to support you so that you can help your children achieve their potential and enjoy school.



We are available to chat over any issues or concerns regarding your child's behaviour, social and emotional development, general and mental wellbeing.

These may include:

- Your children's reactions to significant life changes such as starting school, moving home or school, arrival of a sibling, parental separation and similar.
- Managing your child's worries, anxiety, anger, tantrums and meltdowns, low self-esteem, relationship difficulties, issues with siblings, jealousy, withdrawal, morning, and evening routines as well as advising you on fussy eating, better sleeping habits, and using physical activity to improve general well-being.

Our team has a sensory needs practitioner and expertise in trauma enhanced practice. This includes being able to create sensory profiles and trauma recovery plans for children (and adults).

As parents ourselves, we've had our fair share of ups and downs of parenting, so we do understand how important it is to occasionally be able just to chat things through with somebody. This is why, whatever the issue, no matter how "big" or "small" it seems – we are ready to listen and talk in a friendly and supportive manner. If we don't have an answer, we will support you to find it elsewhere.

Watch out for newsletters, family programmes, and webinars shared through your Child's school, where we share some tips and strategies for managing the most common parenting problems.

If you have any questions, would like to book a chat or even to just see if this support is the right for you, you can contact us directly on marijana@move-more.org.

We look forward to hearing from you!

**CHECK OUT OUR FREE
PARENT RESOURCES IN OUR
FAMILY ZONE FOR SOME
DOWNLOADABLE ACTIVITIES,
USEFUL LINKS & RESOURCES**

CLICK HERE



As always, if you need any help with making this work for your family, please do reach out on marijana@move-more.org or jen@move-more.org. We are more than happy to help you.

#EveryChildThrives