

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

NATIONAL BACK TO SCHOOL MONTH

The first day of school can be stressful for kids of any age, whether they're just starting kindergarten or heading off to college. It's an adjustment and often a bittersweet time for parents too, especially for those whose small children are just starting school, or for those whose teens are leaving home for the first time. A little planning and preparation can calm back-to-school jitters and help everyone get back into a routine.

Here are tips to make the transition easier:

- **Visit the school ahead of time.** If your child is just starting or changing schools, plan a visit to become familiar with the layout of the school and your child's schedule. Some schools, such as middle schools and high schools, hold orientations or open houses for freshmen.
- **Talk with your child about his/her concerns.** Do you remember what it was like to start a new grade or worry about making friends? Encourage your child to pinpoint the things that make them feel anxious and talk through their concerns. Let your child know you're always there to listen.
- **Be prepared.** Make a list with your child of what they'll need and buy school supplies and clothing a few weeks before the start of the school year. Many stores start back-to-school sales in July. Start a routine of planning outfits, allowing time for breakfast, and having lunches packed and ready the night before to avoid early-morning scrambling and stress.
- **Stay positive.** Parents set the tone, and while it's natural to feel some anxiety too, being a calm role model will reassure your child. Focus on the positives and the excitement of starting a new grade and meeting new students and teachers.
- **Make back-up plans.** If your child is nervous about missing the bus or worries about other things going wrong, discuss "what if" scenarios and how you'll both handle them.

