

How to help kids quell back-to-school jitters

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First, sixth and ninth grades provoke the most anxiety, expert says.

(HealthDay)—Some children feel anxious about going back to school, but parents can help ease their fears, experts say.

"Children going into first, sixth or ninth grades often have the most anxiety leading into the new [school](#) year because they likely are entering a new school," Larry Tyson, an associate professor in the department of human studies at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, said in a university news release.

"When you are the new kid on the block, not knowing many people can make you self-conscious about how you will fit in. These transition years are big for students figuring out how they will initially fit into this big-school setting," he explained.

Tyson suggest that parents form a partnership with the school counselor.

"Parents should see counselors as [child advocates](#), as their liaison in the school when something isn't working the way it should or they want," he said. "My advice is to not be a stranger; make an appointment once or twice a year, and let the people at the school see and hear from you. You don't have to have your child with you. This will help."

Entering a new school isn't the only cause of stress for [children](#), according to Josh Klapow, an associate professor in the university's School of Public Health.

"New situations that arise during the summer—changing to a different school system, hitting a [growth spurt](#) or experiencing a [parental divorce](#)—all can lead to extra anxiety for a child," he said in the news release.

He offered the following tips to help children adjust:

- Make [social connections](#) before going back to school. A familiar face can reduce stress.
- Parents of children 12 or younger should notify the school/teacher/counselor about any family changes.
- Preteens and teens can be reluctant to discuss what is bothering them. Ask open-ended questions and let them talk to you about what they think will help their situation.

"Change of any sort can be stressful, so watch your child and be a silent observer," Klapow said. "Give them time to adjust and transition. Recognize that there will be some tough times, but they can be worked through."

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has more about [preparing for a new school year](#).

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