

Back-To-School
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It's that time of year again....

Back-To-School

Maybe your child is going 'back-to-school' for the first time, maybe they are going back for the 11th time. Either way, there are likely some thoughts and emotions that are mixed in for the parent and for the child. Each child responds to going back to school differently. Some are excited and ready to jump back into the learning environment and some are dismayed that they have to go through this yet again. Most reactions are probably somewhere in the middle.

Generally, there is a certain level of anxiety behind going back due to the unknowns that go along with it. *"What will my classes be like? How will the other kids be? Is my teacher going to be nice?"* The greater the apprehension, the greater the stress, and the greater the possibility of emotionally driven behavior. We as parents can help by trying to create as much certainty as possible. This is done through routines and giving certainty where you can and emotional support where certainty is not quite possible.

How to Respond

Have a solid bed time routine and start to shift bedtime and rising hours to resemble school day hours before school even starts. Encourage your child to talk about their anxieties and use reality testing to help ease their worries. Compare this time of starting something new to another time when they were apprehensive to start something new. How did that experience turn out? Was there something that helped that situation turn out well that could be repeated in this circumstance? If a child is concerned about being bullied again this school year because they were bullied last school year, form a plan with your child and your child's teacher ahead of time to formulate how they will react. Will they be able to leave the class for a brief time? What will they say in response to the bully? Help your child problem solve before the problem occurs so they feel prepared and the anxiety can be lessened.

The biggest reassurance you can give your child as they go back to school is that they will not be alone in this. God is right there with them.

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9

Our Father in Heaven is the only one who can heal us of our anxieties and going back to school can evoke a number of anxieties in our children. We do our best as parents to reassure them and give emotional support, but helping your child strengthen their personal relationship with Christ will be their ultimate help.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

May this be a blessed school year for all.