



## Transitioning back to school

As term 1 starts, so does the excitement and apprehension for many families as we transition back to school. Each year, many families call us for support and advice on the difficulty their children living with disability have sometimes, when transitioning back to school after the long Christmas/January break. This guide has evidence-based tips and advice to support primary and secondary school students at this time:

1. **Re-establishing routine** – make sure your child has daily, predictable routines, with snack and lunchtime breaks back in line with regular school routine. Regular sleep times are all important to having a rested body. Creating routines at home, with children knowing what to expect and when, helps with the transition back to school. Involve your child in the packing of their bag and preparing their uniform the day before. Allow more time than usual to get ready the first morning back to school.
2. **Start to reduce screen time** – promote physical activities, and perhaps try playing games that promote concentration, planning and the use of working memory. Young children often benefit from playing with building blocks and solving picture puzzles. For older children, jigsaw puzzles and crosswords are good memory and attention exercises, which are very important before they go back to school. Reducing screen time will also help with sleeping as we prepare to go back into school morning routines.
3. **Prepare for changes and new school procedures** – check the school website, Facebook and school newsletters to become familiar with any new procedures that may have been introduced, such as school drop off/pick up, makes sure to note important dates such as sporting events, excursions. Discuss these changes with your child to make sure they understand and feel comfortable. Contact the school or class teacher with any concerns.
4. **Extra transition support** – start having conversations with your child's school about putting supports in place that help them transition comfortably back into the classroom. Update the school about any concerns for your child and the transition back to school, as this will help in the planning of appropriate support required. Perhaps consider strategies that have helped in the past. Allow for extra rest breaks between activities, assistance and guidance around reconnecting and improving social skills with their peers. Perhaps discuss the elimination or reduction in homework until your child has settled back into a routine.
5. **Expanding your child's social circle** - Now is a good time to stop and reflect. How did your child go with pre-planned or spontaneous family outings, park visits, cinema or eating out? These are great ways to allow your child to observe others comfortably interacting. Term 1 is a great time to start to organise playdates with your

child's friends. If possible, during the playdates suggest activities such as board games that strengthen social skills such as sharing and cooperation.



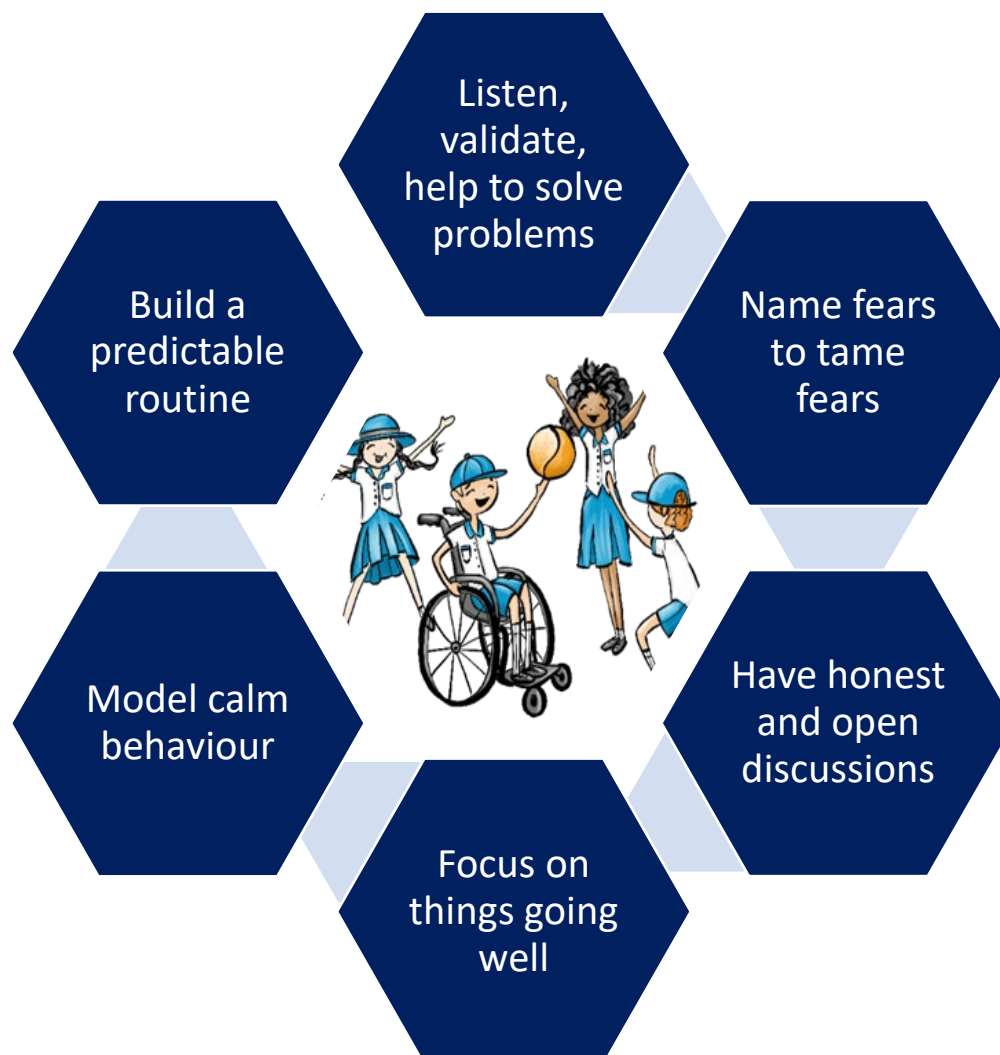
Adapted from:

[Three tips to help your child transition back into the classroom](#)

[Helpful tips for parents and carers to support children - Department of Education](#)

## Manage anxiety around returning to school

While it is natural that anxiety and stress levels may be high, parents and carers play an influential role to help children cope. We can encourage a positive back-to-school transition and help reduce children's anxiety and worries. Here's six quick tips:



## Help your primary student



Some children and families may find the back to school transition process much easier this year, than last year. However, being prepared for this transition is very important for our primary students. Your child needs reassurance about the transition back to school, and information about what changes to expect.

- Reassure your child about any safety issues or fears they may have about returning to school. Share age appropriate information about what their school is doing to keep them safe.
- Reinforce routines and habits. Make family schedules. Go through the schedule each day to give a sense of security for your child, so they'll know what to expect.
- Touch base with, and communicate any concerns or worries with their class teacher. Talk clearly about any changes or strategies you would like to share with the class teacher. Now could be a good time to put together/update their Student Profile of your child.

Please see [Conversations for Collaboration - Resources](#)



Remember your child is used to being home with you every day. Even though they may be excited about returning to school, this transition period will be a significant change for them. The return to long and structured days will need encouragement and support.

- Let your child unwind after school before asking too many questions
- Have special treats or their favourites ready for afternoon tea, or move dinner earlier while they are still transitioning back into the weekly school routine
- If your child is active, get them out and about in the park or structured activities, to help them blow off steam at the end of each day
- If your child likes quiet time, make sure they have a secluded, comfortable place in the house where they can retreat and rest

Most importantly – spend time re-connecting with them at the end of each day, where each child has your undivided attention.

Adapted from:

[Learning Links - Helping children transition back to school](#)

Read more:

[Tips for returning for school for autistic primary students](#)

[Returning to School - Raising Children.net.au](#) (relates to post-Covid but great resources and information)

## Support your teen



"Beyond Blue" reminds us to support our teenagers by remembering the importance of the 'big picture'. If your child is reluctant to return to school, be empathetic. But know that the challenges of adolescence – developing a strong moral compass, forming and sustaining healthy relationships, and understanding right from wrong – are all key parts for the shaping of our young person's future. So, while it is helpful to acknowledge your teen's worries, it is however important to remind them that school is the best place for them.

- Get back into good routine – encourage your teenager to get ready the night before, good sleep routines of waking up early, eat a healthy breakfast.
- Check their school timetable to know which lessons they have the following day and make sure they have all equipment ready. If unsure, ask their teacher.
- Pack school bags the night before, ensuring all the correct books and text books are ready for the next day.
- If your teen is feeling nervous about mixing with peers again, remind them of the social skills that they have already built up.
- Arrange for face-to-face catch -ups before school returns. This will remind them they are not alone.
- Assure them that feelings of being overwhelmed at this time are normal. Remind them that it is important to talk about how they are feeling, take some deep breaths, go for a walk or talk to their friends, family or teacher about how they are feeling.
- Tell them about apps like [Smiling Mind](#) and websites such as [Reach out](#) which have loads of useful tips and advice for managing feelings and stress.

Read more: (These links relate to post-Covid but have great information and resources to offer).

[Returning to school - Raising children.net.au](#)

[Helpful tips for secondary students returning to school - Department of Education](#)

[Reach out - Your teen, study stress and coronavirus](#)

[How to help your teenager transition back to on-site learning](#)

## Remember:

Congratulations, you did it!

We wish you all the best and please don't hesitate to contact us for further information or support on (02) 9869 0866 or 1800 620 588.

[www.family-advocacy.com](http://www.family-advocacy.com)

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