

## Adjusting to Change

It's been said that change is really the only constant. But the resistance to change is pretty much universal and creates some tension in most everyone. Why is change so difficult? For one thing, it's the fear of the unknown. There is no guaranteed outcome. Change is uncertain and most of us prefer certainty. Change is challenging. It demands that we stretch out of our comfort zone. The first few weeks of school bring a lot of changes to both children and parents. They must adjust from their carefree summer time to new bedtime and homework routines. Children will experience a new classroom, a new teacher, new bus drivers, new classmates, new academic material, and this year at Seaman, even a new principal.

Some children more naturally embrace change, others are more cautious, yet others fear it tremendously. There are things you can do to help your child welcome the upcoming changes and turn the unexpected school year into a chance for growth and development. Here are some ways to help ease your child's adjustment:

- Change the routines slowly. Start talking about the change in their day and practice the routine before the first school day. Give children a chance to readjust their sleeping patterns.
- Be positive about the upcoming changes. Talk about all the things they have to look forward to in the upcoming year. Encourage discussions about new learning experiences and new friendships.
- Set small attainable goals while welcoming challenges. Make sure the goals are small enough so that children see progress quickly and don't give up.
- Be realistic about expectations. Acknowledge with your child that they won't like everything and that everything will not be easy. Expect that there will be some challenges, but that no problem signals the end of the world. As I always tell children, there are no big problems, only big solutions. Setting these realistic expectations will alleviate the sense that everything is supposed to be perfect, which sets children up for failure.
- Clear out and organize their space. Let your child assist you in cleaning and organizing their work areas. This will help them feel energized and renewed.
- Uncover specific concerns they may have for the upcoming year and make plans to address it. A good way to start is to ask a leading question, such as, "What do you think school is going to be like this year?" Go through some of the "what ifs" that may be lingering in their mind and assist them with strategies to address each one of them if they arise.
- Teach your child to be patient with change. Things don't stay new forever. Let them know that they may not feel comfortable at first because adjusting to change takes time. Point out past situations where they were apprehensive, but felt much more comfortable with time. Use the darkness analogy to explain adjustment to children. Explain that when you first turn off the lights at night, it's hard to see

anything. Gradually your eyes adjust to the darkness and things around you become more visible.

- Share a story of your own about going to school or another new situation. Children love to hear stories from your childhood. These stories will serve as a source of connection with your child. It will help to normalize their fear of change and help them feel like you can relate to their situation.
- As they tell you on an airplane, adults must “put the oxygen mask on first.” This means that you must prepare yourself so that you can assist your child. Make sure you get the proper sleep, exercise, and nutrition to adjust to the upcoming changes of a new school year. You might want to get up a little earlier to have that first cup of coffee before the kids wake up, or just take some time to organize yourself in the mornings so that you are well prepared for the days ahead.

The new school year is a time of excitement and anticipation, but these changes can also cause a certain amount of stress and anxiety for both children and parents. Remember that some amount of back to school anxiety is normal, as with any transition. Every change in life will require an adjustment period. We must remember that with change comes growth. This quote by Pauline Rezer explains it best: “Continuity gives us roots; change gives us branches, letting us stretch and grow and reach new heights.” Here’s to the wonderful new changes that lie ahead for everyone this school year! As always, if your child is experiencing any difficulty adjusting, feel free to contact me at any time.

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