



By Kim Tetley

Whatever their age, many kids are apprehensive about starting school or going back to school. The good news is there's a lot you can do to ease their minds and help them get ready for a new school year.

#### 1. EARLY TO BED, EARLY TO RISE

Getting back into a school sleep schedule won't happen overnight. Get your child into the habit of going to bed earlier. Gentle winding-down activities such as bath time and reading before bed can help your child relax.

#### 2. RE-ESTABLISH A ROUTINE

Establishing a consistent routine is important for kids. Write out the steps in the routine and rehearse them with your child.

#### 3. ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENCE

Children who play an active role in preparing for back to school – such as choosing and organizing school supplies and new clothes – are more likely to get excited about going back to school, which in turn eases their jitters. Daily, age-appropriate tasks will help your child gain independence and confidence.

#### 4. CHOOSE THE RIGHT BACKPACK

Try to choose a backpack made of sturdy, lightweight fabric with wide, padded straps that will support your child's shoulders. Backpacks that are too heavy or worn improperly could result in muscle strain, headaches, and neck pain.

#### 5. TALK ABOUT SAFETY

Review outdoor safety rules – things like looking both ways before crossing the street, taking the same route every day if they are walking, familiarizing themselves with crosswalk rules.

#### 6. ESTABLISH HEALTHY HABITS

Involve your children in choosing and preparing healthy lunches and snacks. Help them find physical activities they enjoy.

#### 7. LIMIT SCREEN TIME

Back to school is the perfect opportunity to re-establish screen time limits. Why not have the whole family “unplug” in the evenings before bedtime?

#### 8. MAP IT OUT

If your kids are starting at a new school, practice walking or driving to the bus stop or to the school building a week or two before school starts.

#### 9. TALK ABOUT FIRST-WEEK JITTERS

Reassure your child that being nervous is natural – even for teachers. You can help your child cope with these feelings when you:

Let them express their fears. Perhaps you can offer stories of your own first-day jitters when you were a child.

Teach them to breathe deeply and slowly to calm their nerves.

#### 10. CELEBRATE THE START OF A NEW SCHOOL YEAR

If you celebrate the first day of school, your kids will see back-to-school as a transition they can really enjoy. Don't forget to take a picture on the front step in their first day-of-school outfits. It's going to be a great year!

