

School Counsellor Newsletter



Creating a positive start to the year

Edition Fourteen

Starting the school year can be an exciting time for many reasons; catching up with friends, meeting a new teacher, being in a different area of the school and looking forward to new opportunities and adventures. Yet, for some students a new school year can present challenges as there unknown possibilities, new routines to learn and after the holiday break worries and unhelpful thoughts can return. If your son is feeling worried about getting back to school there are a number of things you can do to support him.

1. Listen to your son and validate his feelings. Even if you do not share his worries, for example, he might be saying that none of the other boys in his class will like him, his thoughts are important to him and it will help him to know that you are hearing him.
2. Talk to your son about what will be different this coming year and how he might cope with these changes. Ask him if he needs any help and talk about who he can approach at school if he feels he needs support. This could be a good chance to talk about previous changes and how he coped with these successfully, such as starting school the previous year, even if it felt difficult at the time.
3. Take the time to establish helpful routines. For example set a suitable bed time and a time for when technology

will be removed at night. Talk about getting up at the same time each day and when uniform, lunch and homework will be organised and packed. It is important to keep these routines regular so that they become familiar and effective.

4. Help your son to face his worries. Talk to him about expecting his worries to be there and that he can cope, even if he is finding it hard. For example, you could say to your son "I know you are not feeling positive about going to school right now but that is your worry brain playing a trick on you. You can get to school and I am here to help you get there." Help your son to understand that some things in life are difficult and that he can cope with this.
5. Make a step-by-step plan and celebrate all successes! Set up some goals or a to-do-list for getting to school and have small rewards in place as an incentive. Avoid focusing on the negatives and celebrate any improvement, no matter how small it may be. For example, if your son is able to get dressed into his uniform by himself, without you having to ask him to, you could put a sticker on his reward chart or give him the choice of something he would like in his lunchbox that day.

It is also important to look out for changes:

- Is your son too tired? Do they need to cut back on some activities?
- Is your son getting quality sleep? Are they sneaking technology into their bed?
- Is your son having friendship challenges in class or the playground?

And remember that getting back into routine after the holidays is hard for us all so it may take some time to settle into the new school year.

There are many resources online to support you as you help your son with any worries he might have. The following **link** may be useful if you would like further information about how to support a child with anxiety and what to notice.



Jenelle Hooson

Jenelle is a Registered Provisional Member with NZAC (New Zealand Association of Counsellors).

If you wish to discuss the services the school counsellor can provide please see your son's homeroom teacher or Amos Pilgrim
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