

August/September 2018

West Niagara Psychology Centre

www.westniagarapsychology.ca

“It’s the Most Wonderful Time of the Year!”

Although that may be true for some, **back-to-school stress** is felt by many children, adolescents, and even adults, and this stress can become quite overwhelming. For today’s children, there are many legitimate and significant worries about embarking on another school year. Some of the most common worries include:

Bullying Grade pressures Social pressures
Sports/extracurricular pressures Appearance

These worries, and so many more, create a heightened level of stress in our youth. Subsequently, high levels of stress are linked to mental illness in children, such as anxiety, depression, and self-harming behaviours. Learning to cope with stress is key to promoting good mental health. Some of the ways we can help children cope with stress include understanding, validating, and support from parents and other adults, predictability of environment and expectations, and sleep and time management. Creating a back-to-school plan in the summer months can help decrease this stress. Plan when and where you will get school supplies, visit the school, including their new classroom, and have your children help plan schedules for extracurricular activities, meals, media use, homework, chores, and bedtime. Practicing this new routine *before* school starts is key. It is also helpful to incorporate “PDF”: playtime, downtime, and family time.

If your child brings up worries about the coming school year, listen in a supportive way and validate their emotions so they feel you are interested and understanding of the challenges kids face today. One way to encourage your child to express their worries at home is by creating a “worry wall”. Give your child a stack of sticky notes and have them write one worry per note, sticking it up on the worry wall (e.g., white board). Remind them that once their worries have been put up on the wall, they no longer have to worry about it. Then create an “optimism wall”, writing one positive note for each worry note.

If back-to-school stress is a significant concern, enrolling your child in our Worry Warriors Group may be helpful. In this group, we teach your child about anxiety and how to fight back against it by challenging negative thoughts, using problem solving strategies, developing social skills and assertiveness, and using relaxation techniques.

Quote of the Month

“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.”
Aristotle

BOOKS

“First Day Jitters” by Julie Danneberg

“Will I Have a Friend?” By Miriam Cohen

“The New Bear at School” by Carrie Weston

“Little Cliff’s First Day of School” by Clifton Taulbert

www.mother.ly/how-to-ease-back-to-school-stress

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/school-rush.aspx>

WHAT’S NEW IN GROUP?

Master Your Stress group for adults starts September 17th, 2018; Circle of Security Parenting group starts September 26th, 2018; Worry Warriors to be announced. Visit www.westniagarapsychology.ca to learn more. Call now to express your interest or to reserve your spot. Space is limited.