



BACK TO SCHOOL AFTER LOCKDOWN

Tips and Tricks for Transitioning Back to School

Lockdown 6 has been difficult for parents and children, and it is no surprise that you and your children may feel drained and tired. The news of the going back to school can bring on feelings of happiness and relief, but it can also lead to feelings of uncertainty, stress, and anxiety.

Even though we have been yearning to come out of lockdown it's important to remember that transitions can use up a lot of energy and effort as we adjust to new routines. Even though returning to school might be a familiar routine, this transition can cause a lot of strain and stress for kids. Here are some tips to support you and your family:

Before Returning to School

- **Re-establish Routines:** Begin to re-introduce school routines such as bedtimes and morning routines or limits on screen time as early as you can.
- **Use emotion coaching:** Returning to school can be a very difficult time, through using emotion coaching and checking in with how your child is feeling it can help to validate and normalize their feelings. Let them know it is ok to have mixed feelings about returning to school. To find out more, watch our video <https://www.thesparkts.com.au/education>
- **Use our social stories:** Read through our back-to-school social stories to help them talk through what returning to school might look like. Find them here: <https://www.thesparkts.com.au/ot-social-stories>
- **Talk to your school about a transition plan:** If your child has experienced difficulties engaging in school, talk to your child's education team about a specific transition plan to help them re-engage.
- **Reassure them they are safe:** Children have been told they must stay home from school to stay safe. Some children may worry about their safety when returning to school. Have a conversation with your children to let them know they will be safe.
- **Visit the school:** Take your child to visit the school before returning. This could be an opportunity to walk them past their new classroom or play on the playground together.
- **Re-connect with their teacher:** Encourage your child to write a letter or complete a drawing for their teacher. If beneficial for your child, you could request a brief 1:1 video or phone call.
- **Talk through the timetable:** If known, print off and talk through the timetable for the school week.





Back to School

- **Keep the first weeks simple:** Simplify your home and weekend timetable during the first few weeks to help your child (and you) ease back into the school routine.
- **Try not to overbook yourself when more social experiences open back up:** As schools reopen so may lots of other social opportunities. Whilst these activities can be refreshing and exciting, transitioning back to a social calendar whilst also re-adjusting to school may be difficult and take more energy.
- **Battery checks in:** Your child's battery will be low as they adjust to school life, be prepared for more emotional children who need extra love and support.
- **Use emotion coaching** to hold space for difficult emotions. Your children may need you to talk them through and explain what they are feeling. You can try some of these phrases:
 - *"There have been lots of changes, and this can feel really stressful and hard"*
 - *"You are finding it difficult being back at school"*
 - *"You miss being at home, and find it hard going to school all day"*
 - *"Your teacher wasn't there today and so you had a new teacher, this change was really tricky and made you feel uncomfortable"*
 - *"You miss how I used to walk you to class, this change is really difficult"*
 - *"I can see that you're feeling really drained after school today"*
 - *"You feel sad that you have to go back to school, because you will miss being with your family"*
- **Introduce connection time at the end of the day:** Schedule in some 1:1 time with your child so that you can re-connect and acknowledge the recent changes. Perhaps you could chat informally while playing a game together or use journaling to talk through any emotions or fears. Use this time to hold space for any of their worries and to answer any questions they might have about recent or future changes.
- **Gratitude Practice:** Introduce gratitude practice and reflect on what went well during the school day. This could be introduced into your afterschool routines such as at the dinner table or before bed.
- **Practice self-compassion:** This is a very difficult time and children may express their emotions in different ways including tricky behaviors. Remember to practice self-compassion and remember you are doing your best. Seek time for self-regulation if you can and reach out to those around you.

