

PARENT RESOURCE

Responding to anxiety about returning to school in person

These are some easy steps you can use to support your child if they are experiencing worry, fear or anxiety about attending school.

LISTEN

Get on your child's level and focus completely on what your child is saying. It is helpful to stop what you are doing and minimize distractions. Avoid interrupting even if it takes time to for them to find the right words to express what they are feeling. This is okay- let them know that!

VALIDATE

Repeat back or paraphrase what your child is telling you. This lets them know they are being heard. Acknowledge how your child is feeling and that this is difficult for them. Do not dismiss or minimize their worries.

REASSURE

Together review the practices that the school and yourself have put into place to keep everyone safe. It can be helpful to make a list of what the student can control and do to keep themselves safe such as handwashing and mask wearing.

CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Praise and celebrate your child for acknowledging their fears and taking steps to face them. This could sound like:

"Wow!! you were really worried about___ but you managed to ___"

MODEL

Be aware of your own anxieties- children are exceptional at picking up on our emotions. If needed take a minute so that you can respond to you child in a calm, empathetic way. Model healthy coping strategies and make sure you are taking care of yourself.

STRATEGIES

Practice coping strategies with your child to help them cope with and face their fears. The following websites have excellent strategies you can practice with your child:
<https://copingskillsforkids.com/calming-anxiety>
<https://www.anxietycanada.com/general/facing-fears/>

It is important to recognize that avoidance can perpetuate anxiety so if your child is struggling or refusing to attend please reach out to the teacher or school team so we can make a plan to support your child.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- <https://www.lutherwood.ca/mentalhealth/blog/2020/supporting-your-child-through-back-to-school-covid-anxiety>
- <https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/7-tips-for-educators-returning-to-school-during-covid-19/>
- https://www.sabp.nhs.uk/application/files/6015/9350/2842/CAMHS_Back_to_school_Resource_pack_for_Parents.pdf