

Back to School and Back to Work: Six Tips to Address the Challenge of Transitions

As summer fades and fall settles in, families prepare for the annual transition back to school and work. This time of year usually marks not just a shift in schedules but also a for Canadians, a shift in season. While there is a lot to say about the carefree days of summer, the return to routines in the fall can be both needed and daunting. Embracing this transition involves letting go of the easy-going pace of summer and gearing up for a more structured routine.



For many, the anticipation of a new school year brings feelings of hope and excitement. Children look forward to meeting new teachers, making new friends, and tackling fresh academic challenges. Similarly, parents prepare to return to their jobs, often looking forward to the structure that the school year provides. Transitions can stir up feelings of anxiety for both children and parents. Understanding this emotional shift is the first step in navigating the journey back to school and work effectively.



Transitions can be hard, especially for children who may feel the weight of new expectations as they adjust to the classroom environment. Parents, also grapple with the change, balancing work responsibilities and supporting their kids through this time. The pressure to excel academically or manage job performance can be overwhelming. It's important to acknowledge these feelings and approach the transition with a mindset focused on understanding and flexibility.

One way to lessen anxiety during this period is to let go of perfectionism and increase predictability! As the new school year begins, parents and children can benefit from fewer expectations and more adaptability. Emphasizing progress over perfection allows for fewer bumpy roads. Instead of rigidly adhering to schedules, families can create a sense of fluidity that accommodates unexpected challenges. This shift may not only reduce stress but also create space to predict that not all things may go as planned.



Six Tips Towards a Smooth Transition Back to School and Work

- 1) Consistency:** Establish a consistent bedtime and morning routine a week before school begins to ease the shift from summer’s laid-back schedule. This is also a good idea for parents – even if you worked through the summer months.
- 2) Organize:** Organize supplies together with your children to foster a sense of ownership and enthusiasm for the new school year. You may also want to pick up a few new things to organize your work desk. A change of season often invites a new beginning or a new way of doing things.
- 3) Communicate:** Maintain open communication about feelings and expectations to help everyone process the change. This can be done using feeling faces magnets on the fridge – daily check-ins as to “how are you feeling today?” You can create short daily task lists with each of your kids so each knows what is expected of them. They can help create the list with you. Keep the list short – include a maximum of 3 items.
- 4) Family Meetings:** Incorporate regular family meetings to discuss priorities, schedules, and any issues that may arise. Family meetings can happen around the dinner table or possible on a weekend where you serve some snacks. It needs to have a beginning and end time (one hour maximum, half hour is better). Consider making up some cards that you put in a container and each person can draw a card to begin a discussion. You could do “Beefs and Bouquets” container as well. Each person puts something in the container on a piece of paper that they liked this week and one thing that really bothered them that week. Everyone draws the card back out and reads it. If it isn’t your card – guess whose it is!

5) Schedule Management: What is manageable? If you have 3 children going in 3 directions are there ways to share and offload some of the driving? Maybe one activity per child is reasonable? Free play is such an essential activity; is there a plan for no scheduled time?

6) Downtime: Allow for some designated downtime and relaxation in the evenings and weekends to unwind after busy days. Free play for both parents and children is important. Downtime will look different to each family member. It could be going out for a run for a parent (parents you might have to take turns) and a little bit of technology time or free play time with a friend for a child.

Predicting the unpredictable is a sure way to face any transition. The challenges will be there we all know that much. Keep your head above water and manage what you can!

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