

“I don’t want to go to school!”

Easing Child Anxiety!

As we start the school year and our children are back to school routine you may find that your child may begin to show signs of anxiety. Anxious feelings are normal and expected during times of transition or change. This is especially true for children in the first few weeks of school. This transition can be stressful and disruptive for the entire family!

As educators, we understand that children’s thinking is often affected by anxiety and this can lead to underperformance in the classroom and social withdrawal on the playground. It is important that we as educators and you as parents work together to recognise the signs of anxiety in our children and then help address the concerns.



Signs to look out for in your child include:

- Fear and avoidance of a range of issues and situations.
- Headaches and stomach aches that seem to occur when the child has to do something that is unfamiliar or that they feel uneasy about.
- Sleep difficulties, including difficulty falling asleep, nightmares and trouble sleeping alone.
- Lots of worries and a strong need for reassurance

Children with anxiety may develop their own strategies to try to manage situations that cause them distress. Often this involves trying to avoid the situation or having a parent or other adult deal with it for them. Avoiding a situation makes it more likely that the child will feel anxious and be unable to manage it the next time. This behaviour makes it more difficult for the child to cope with everyday stresses at home, at school and in social settings.

Help your child cope with feelings of anxiety by:

- **Increasing your child’s helpful coping skills**
Anxious feelings are fed by anxious thinking. It is important not to dismiss children’s anxious feelings, but to help children see that the situations they are worried about may not be as bad as they think.
- **Teaching by example**
Showing children how you cope positively with feeling anxious or stressed and remaining calm and positive when they are feeling anxious can help them to feel more confident.
- **Avoiding taking over**
Children with anxiety are usually very happy for someone else to do things for them. However, if adults take over, it stops children from learning how to cope themselves.
- **Encouraging your child to ‘have a go’**
Having a go helps to show children that they can cope. Praise or reward them for every step they manage to take.

