



Personal Tool - Parents Returning to School

There is nothing quite so permanent as change. 2020 and COVID-19 have created a vast amount of change for all people but for those who are school-aged – their whole world view has been rocked and most probably been changed forever. Just for a brief moment, remember your life at aged 15. It may have been terrible (for many varied reasons), but it also may have been filled with hope as there were dreams, plans and goals that you were constructing in your head. Some of those goals may have been to travel, work overseas and cross borders whenever you liked. Our children and young people can no longer reliably create a dream within this framework, and their mental health is suffering.

How to help your kids deal with change?

The easiest answer here is to skill them up with as many different skillsets and roles that you think that they can handle. Talk with them and use other appropriate adults to show all the different roles that a person can have in their life. Let them play around with ideas of being doctors, lawyers, astronauts, and farmhands. All are possible. Some require different and varied paths but encourage rather than minimise efforts.

Have fun with your children. Of course, there are many serious things to consider, and there are a million different chores to do at home but take the time to have fun and listen.

Encourage children to talk about their friends and to have them over on the weekends, within restriction guidelines. It is a great way to get to know their friends and any stress that they may be experiencing - you are right there to help. This also provides an opportunity to meet your children's friend's parents; conversations can help uncover a fuller picture of school and social life.

School

- Ask about their day at school. What were the good and interesting bits? What are they finding difficult to understand or pick up? Prioritise some time in the day to assist them with this task.
- Get them to keep talking about the people that they do not connect with or struggle to understand. School is where kids learn to fit in and be aware of other people. It also assists with helping them to listen to others. Try to model to the kids what behaviours you want to see in them.
- School helps children to resolve conflict. As they age, the more sophisticated their approaches become. Do not be afraid that there is conflict and try to resist the temptation to swoop in and resolve it for them. Children resolve conflict just like you do – so modelling is important. Assist with support where and when they request it. If the conflict escalates, find the appropriate professional at the school to support the child and see what solutions can be found.



Feelings

- All children learn how to cope with their feelings. Slow down and assist your child to name their feelings and talk to them about age-appropriate ways to express them. Get them to ask for help with words that they can use to describe their feelings.

Children respond well to boundaries (and adults do too)

- Be clear and consistent on the boundaries and avoid changing the limits. Explain the reasons (many times over if necessary) for why the limits apply.
- Look for the child behaving well and do not hesitate to praise them when they are “doing good”.

Seek advice

- If you need some support, try to avoid being stubborn or proud to ask for it.
- Talk about what your concerns are with a trusted person and listen to their response.
- You are their parent and are the best judge of what needs to be done.
- Remember, only you can decide what is right for you and your child.

When to speak to someone?

- If your child’s academic progress declines, or they do not appear to have any friends to play with or report no fun in attending.
- If their cooperation levels drop quickly and remains that way for a reasonable amount of time.
- Refusing to attend school.
- Being hard to settle at night or getting to sleep because of worries or fears.
- Temper tantrums for no good reason.

The start of school is a change. Going back to school after COVID-19 - another change. New grade, year level, teacher, or class - change. People from all groups, ages and sizes struggle with change, and our kids are no different. How to manage? Ask questions of your children and wait for their answers – the solution is there somewhere. We often just need to be patient to find it. Keep looking! For a confidential conversation with one of our experienced clinical professionals, please contact **AccessEAP** on **1800 818 728**.

