

August 31, 2015

Press Release – For Immediate Distribution

Association of Psychology Newfoundland and Labrador

Strategies to Decrease Back to School Stress

As students prepare to return to school, the Association of Psychology Newfoundland and Labrador (APNL) wants to remind families of strategies to decrease back to school stress.

Proper sleep is very important for children in school. Without good sleep, they will have difficulty focusing on schoolwork, learning, and interacting with their peers. Primary school children typically need 10-11 hours of sleep at night, and elementary school children typically need 9-10 hours. Over the summer, many children stay up late, and then cannot get to sleep early enough for school when it starts. If children have developed a later bedtime over the summer, it is a good idea to begin to restore their usual bedtime about a week before school starts. Making bedtime about 15 minutes earlier every couple of nights over the week should help.

Primary and elementary school children are often anxious in the weeks before school opening. They wonder if their friends will be in their class and if they will be comfortable with their new teacher. Parents can help children with these fears by helping them discuss what might happen if their preferred friends are not in their class, and providing strategies on how they can make new friends, as well as maintain friendships after school and on weekends. Parents can also reassure children that, if needed, help is available from their teacher, guidance counsellor, and/or school administration.

Students entering junior high often report many fears, particularly around new routines such as remembering their locker combination, having to cope with different classrooms and teachers, as well as new classmates. Students are sometimes worried about how they will be treated by older students, as they have often heard frightening stories about initiations, drug use and bullying. Parents can help their children by problem solving how they would cope with potential situations, provide reassurance that the likelihood is low, and remind them of how to seek support from school personnel, peers and family members.

For any child who is anxious about returning to school, it is helpful to talk about they can expect. Children will feel calmer when they realize that they already know a great deal about their upcoming school year. Whenever possible, providing children with choices (e.g. clothing, snacks, school supplies for first day) may help to reduce anxiety.



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If you think your child is experiencing symptoms of anxiety related to returning to school that are above and beyond what is to be expected, a Psychologist in your area can offer help. Please visit our website at www.apnl.ca to find one nearest you.

About: APNL is a fraternal organization dedicated to the promotion of Psychology in Newfoundland and Labrador and to the service of our members across the province. Our parent organization is the Canadian Psychological Association. Currently there are approximately 200 APNL members province-wide.

Contact: Media interviews with a Psychologist on this (or other topics), can be arranged by contacting APNL at info@apnl.ca or calling 709-739-5405