

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Back-to-school jitters

By Dr. Linda Reinstein

Back-to-school season is upon us. It's a time of transition that some kids welcome and others dread. If you have a kiddo who is excited to get back at it, see their friends, meet their new teachers, and face the challenges of the school year ahead, good on you. Skip this article and go straight to the fall recipes. I am sure they are delish.

If on the other hand, you have a kiddo who is getting increasingly fearful, irritable, and sad as the first days or weeks of school approach, read on. Here are some tips on what you can do to help ease this transition.

Set your child up for success

Do not underestimate the importance of routines and sleep! Coming off the summer months when regular routines soften, slip, and fall to the wayside to make way for family fun, vacations, and relaxation for everyone, it will be important to re-establish your family routines. Ease everyone back into routines gradually. If you have the week before school begins to make these shifts, great, get started. If not, all is not lost. Take the first week or two of school to re-jig your family rhythms. Slowly adjust bedtimes in 15-to-30-minute increments over a week or two and re-set to your regular school-year bedtime schedules. Wake-up times are bit more fixed with limited flexibility in the mornings. In the first week or so, create less rushed, more relaxed mornings by having things prepped for your child the night before – clothes picked out, lunch made, backpack ready to go. This will help ease the mad-dash to get out the door and start their day off on the right foot.

Refresh their memory

Visit the school playground in the days leading up to school. If you know that a friend is in their class, make a point of having a pre-school

play-date to re-connect and re-fresh the friendship. If you know the name of the teacher ahead of time, let your child know their name and anything fun or good you've heard about them.

Validate your child's feelings

If your child is talking about being nervous, scared, and unsure, it's ok to go there with them. It is not helpful to tell them that there is nothing to worry about and that their fears are unfounded. Let them know you understand that this is an uncomfortable time of year with a lot of unknowns. Let them know you get it. You won't make it worse. Remind your child that you will be there to help them solve problems as they come up. If you can think of a time when your child bravely faced something that was scary for them, now is a good time to remind them of that and talk about what they did to help themselves be brave.

Make a plan

Lots of kids have difficulty with leaving their parent in the mornings of the first few weeks of school. Make a plan with them that includes a short and sweet good-bye ritual. This could include a kiss, a hug/squeeze, a secret handshake but must always end with your departure... leaving them with the message that even though this is hard, you know they can do it! If you have the luxury of time, do a few dry-run-throughs before the school year begins. In those first few days, arrange to arrive at the same time as a pal, so that they can go off to play together. If need be, arrange with a teacher to do a "hand-off" when the ritual is done. At the end of the day, don't forget to laud on the praise for them spending the day at school.

Set aside daily Quality Time

It is highly recommended that you carve out a short (10 minutes) but consistent period of Quality Time to spend with your child after school before the evening routines



PHOTO BY BRENDAN MCCOY

with shoulder shrugs and one-word answers anyway.) This is their time with you, when you devote your full attention to their agenda – what they want to talk about, what they want to do, and how they want to do it. It's their magic portal into a space with no demands on them. A suspension in time to take a breather from their day, unwind, and start their evening at home afresh. No matter how good or bad their day went, they are exhausted to be sure. This time with you helps them refuel. Who knows, they may even spontaneously talk about their day during this time, later that evening, over dinner, or before bed. Or maybe not.

Most children settle back into the routines of school life within the first month of school. If serious problem behaviours persist into October, it may be time to reach out for some professional support to help make life go more smoothly.

Linda Reinstein, C. Psych., is a Child Clinical and School Psychologist who lives in OOS and works nearby.

begin. The intent is for the time to be completely child-led. This means no drilling about how the day went, who is in their class, what they did, or what they learned. (This type of questioning is usually met

NEIGHBOURHOOD RECIPES

Deanna's Tasty Tofu

Ingredients:

1 block firm tofu (No need to press unless it's very wet. I usually rinse and pat dry.)
Tamari or soya sauce
Nutritional yeast
1-2 tbsp vegetable oil

Directions:

Cut tofu into bit-sized chunks
Put tofu in mixing bowl and douse with tamari or soya sauce, tossing to coat
Let sit a few minutes to marinate and toss again
Pour off any excess liquid
Add nutritional yeast and toss to coat
Heat oil in a frying pan
Fry tofu lightly in vegetable oil, turning to crisp the sides (Do not fry excessively as tofu will dry out.)
For a quick and simple meal, we serve this on rice noodles with a side of wilted greens and a bottle of tamari on the table so people can add more to taste.

Enjoy!

Submitted by Deanna Young.



SANDY HILL
CONSTRUCTION

Your neighbourhood
QUALITY HOME RENOVATIONS
and restoration specialists

AWARD WINNING CONTRACTOR –
RENOVATOR OF THE YEAR

For a comprehensive overview,
please visit our web site:
www.sandyhill.ca or call
Nathan Gurnham at **(613) 832-1717**

SERVING OTTAWA SOUTH FOR OVER 20 YEARS



Do you have a great recipe you would like to share?

Send it with the subject line "Neighbourhood Recipes" to the OSCAR editor at OSCAR@oldottawasouth.ca