



Epping School District Mental Health and Wellness Newsletter Tips for Managing School Anxiety

September 14, 2020

Dear Epping School Community,

A new school year has begun, and while it is certainly different this year, it is exciting to be back together as a school community. This year will likely be challenging for many of us, especially as we get used to all the new safety protocols and rules. However, it is through challenges that we grow as human beings. I am confident in the resilience of our community and that we will get through this difficult time together. Typically, a new school year is an exciting time, though it is also normal for students to feel a bit nervous about the start of school. Younger students may feel anxious about separating from family, and older students may also be nervous about their school performance or fitting in with friends. This year these worries may be heightened as students have been out of school for so long, in addition to potential anxieties about themselves or others becoming ill and the overall uncertainty of the situation. Adjusting to new routines and new systems and rules may be particularly challenging for some students. This edition of the newsletter will focus on some tips for helping children and teens manage school anxiety, what to look for and what to do if you have significant concerns regarding your child's school-related anxiety. Feel free to reach out with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Sarah Wagner and the Epping School Counseling Department

MANAGING SCHOOL ANXIETY

What to look for:

- Notice changes in your child's mood or behavior. The following are possible signs of school-related anxiety:
 - Increased defiance or irritability
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Loss of appetite
 - Lack of concentration
 - Less energy
 - Physical complaints such as stomachaches, headaches, or nausea
 - Sadness or crying
 - Refusal to go to school



How to respond:

- Stay calm when your child expresses anxiety about going to school.
- Listen to their concerns and reassure them that their feelings are understandable.
 - Help them “dissect” their fears by asking them questions to break them down to be more specific and concrete
 - Make a plan together for what to do and who to talk to if the worries become overwhelming at school
- Empower your child by asking them to name a time when they have conquered a fear or gotten through something difficult in the past.
 - Have them identify what they did to get through it.
 - Remind them that they can do hard things, that courage is not about not feeling fearful but it is about facing those fears head on.



You are stronger than you think!

Actions you can take:

- Establish bedtime and morning routines to help with sleep and so that your child knows what to expect in the morning
- Allow extra time in the morning as rushing is likely to increase anxiety
- Send positive or encouraging notes in their lunch or backpack
- Younger students who are worried about separating from parents may benefit from having an object with them at school that helps to soothe them (e.g. a stuffed animal, a rock, a picture of you)
- Be firm with your expectation that they attend school every day and reward them when they do



How to know and what to do if the anxiety is a significant problem

- For most children, the back-to-school jitters will resolve within a week or so
- If the anxiety lasts more than a week and interferes with daily functioning, it is time to seek help. Contact your school counselor if:
 - Your child refuses to go to school for multiple days
 - There are frequent and significant arguments about going to school
 - Your child has significant and ongoing physical symptoms such as inability to sleep, stomachaches, nausea, etc.
- You may also want to seek help from your child’s pediatrician if the anxiety is prolonged or symptoms worsen

Epping Counselors/Psychologists contact information:

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