



NEWS RELEASE

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Transitioning your child back to school

western Nebraska. Back-to-school season marks the end of summer and the beginning of a new school year. Some children will be entering a new school, others will be moving up a grade, or both. Many will enter an entirely different environment with an added pressure of making new friends. Though your child may be good at hiding emotions, he may be stressed and have questions about this new beginning.

Whether it's back to school, starting puberty or moving to a new town, transitions can be challenging. Below are 10 tips for surviving back-to-school and other life transitions as recommended by the Panhandle Prevention Coalition.

10 Tips for surviving back-to-school and other life transitions

1. Start the dialogue.

As mileposts are reached, talk to your child about it. Try saying, "You're about to start a new school. How are you feeling about that?"

It's important for children to know that their anxieties are normal. Let them know that you understand it, and afterwards ask, "How was it for you? Was it as bad as you thought?" Give your child more information than they need, so that when they come home, they can say, "You know, it really wasn't as bad as I thought it would be."

2. Let your child vent.

Listen to your child. Try not to interrupt with your running commentary. If you're thrown off guard by something your child says, tell her you'll get back to her. Then talk it through with a spouse or friend and when the time is right readdress the topic with your child.

3. Ask questions.

Some children are stressed but don't show it like their siblings or peers. By checking in with your children and probing a bit, you may find that things are not often what they seem.

4. Eliminate some of the surprise.

Point out details of what's to come. Walk by the school and try to tell her something new about what it will be like. Whether it's what entrance she'll use or where she'll play with her new friends. Try to eliminate as many surprises as possible. .

5. Help them get organized.

The start of a new school can be overwhelming. Finding classrooms in an unknown environment can be daunting for some children. For those in their first year of middle school, getting a first locker and having to move from class-to-class versus staying in the same one all day can seem like a frightening venture. Help your child memorize her combination and class schedule before she starts school. If possible, do a walk-through with her before school starts so that she knows her classroom locations. Help her organize her back-packs so materials are easy to find.

6. Attend parent night.

For parents of high school and college kids, taking advantage of the school's parent orientations as well as any brochures, information sheets and web resources can help prepare and educate parents about these transitions. Your attendance will send a powerful message to your child that you are engaged and that this is indeed an important time for everyone. What's key is finding the time to share with your child what you learned. You may get the roll of the eyes and "Yeah, yeah," but it's worth the effort, and it's easy to do.

7. Establish guidelines.

Rules and guidelines are important anytime of the year, but especially during transition. Know where your child is, who he is with and what he is doing. If your child is heading to college, set specific boundaries with your child around topics like money, grades and keeping in touch.

8. Make time to connect.

Be supportive of your child's interests during times of transition. If he likes a certain type of music, get interested. Show that you care about his life. Spend a little more time together doing activities he likes to do.

Steve Paseirb, president and CEO of The Partnership at Drugfree.org, suggests scheduling family dinners or get-togethers every week. "Use the time to catch up on what's going on in your kid's life, including what's not going well," he said. "Stressed kids may feel isolated, which can lead to experimentation with drugs and alcohol. Let your child know that you love him too much to see him risk getting hurt by experimenting or using an illegal substance, he said."

9. Offer independence where appropriate and safe.

Give your child some autonomy so that she doesn't feel suffocated or untrustworthy.

10. Be aware of red flags.

Be aware of any unusual behavior. Ask yourself, “Is my child isolating himself? Is he locking himself in his room and not letting me in? Has his appearance dramatically changed? Is he looking a little bit more rundown? Are his moods more erratic than normal?”

Lastly, you can help your child sail through the back to school transition simply by letting her know that you’re always there to for her.

For more tips on talking to you child, visit the Panhandle Prevention Coalition on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/panhandlepreventioncoalition>.

About the Panhandle Prevention Coalition (PPC)

The PPC is a part of the Panhandle Partnership for Health and Human Services and is comprised of local community coalitions and a regional coalition united together by a passion and dedication to healthy and safe people across the lifespan. Our efforts include, but are not limited to, reducing underage drinking, binge drinking and drinking and driving in the Nebraska Panhandle. We do this by

- Seeking policy change at the local and state levels to reduce youth access to alcohol.
- Collaborating with law enforcement to facilitate, fund and standardize compliance checks, beverage server training, and sobriety checks.
- Educating and generating awareness about the dangers of substance abuse and consequences of minors in possession (MIPs) and buying/providing alcohol to minors.

Our community partners include concerned parents, health care workers, law enforcement, social service professionals, community leaders, elected officials, educators, business owners, volunteers and citizens both locally and statewide who seek safe communities for our children and families to live and grow.

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