

MENTAL HEALTH MEMO: HELPING KIDS (AND YOURSELF) GET BACK INTO THE SCHOOL ROUTINE

The start of a new school year is exciting for most kids. It can also be a little anxiety provoking for both caregivers and children). The school environment makes demands on kids that they don't usually face during summer activities: organization, attention, highly structured daily schedules, separation from family, and engaging in peer interactions.

While every child faces these challenges when heading back to school, this can be especially difficult for the approximately 20% of children who experience a mental health issue. Here are some ideas to help make the transition from the lake to the classroom:

- validate that it's normal to be nervous when transitioning back to school and problem-solve ways to address their concerns with them
- return to back to school routines such as realistic bedtimes and setting time limits on electronic use as soon as possible
- arrange play dates with familiar peers to help re-build these connections and ease the separation from family members
- visit the school rehearse drop off, spend time in the playground, and ask to visit the classroom (if possible)
- start practicing the morning routine to clarify expectations and try to get as much done as possible the night before

Transitions such as these are times that can trigger significant emotional distress. During the first month of school, pay attention to your child's behaviour. Changes in sleep and appetite, as well as increased irritability or isolation, may be warning signs that more help is needed to address their anxiety.

For more information, please contact the RRDSB Mental Health Leader: tracey.idle@mail.rrdsb.com