

Thursday, 19 January, 2017

## Kids Helpline's tips for beating back to school stress

With the start of school year just around the corner, children, young people, and parents/carers can be feeling both excitement and stress. Kids Helpline (KHL) is offering tips for parents to help beat the stress and get the new school year off to a great start.

According to **yourtown/KHL** Head of Client Services Brendan Bourke, going back to school, starting school for the first time or moving from primary to high school can bring with it new challenges and uncertainties for both children and their parents/carers.

"Parents know that school transitions are not just an important milestone but also a crucial time in a child's development. Often these times set the standard in terms of how they develop coping strategies, problem solving skills and ways of seeing and understanding the world outside their family", Mr Bourke said.

"Kids Helpline believes that by providing acceptance, encouragement and support to children - and also remembering to look after your own wellbeing - parents and carers can help ensure the new school year gets off to a great start."

**KHL's 'Back to School' top tips for parents** include:

1. Be excited about the new change. If you are enthusiastic and confident, your children will be too.
2. Plan outfits and lunches the night before to avoid the early morning rush and any unnecessary stress.
3. If possible, visit the new school with your child before the first day to familiarise and explore areas of interest.
4. Make sure the teacher and school are aware of any special needs your child has before the first day e.g. health and dietary requirements.
5. Start and maintain daily routines that will add structure and make your child more at ease e.g. dropping your child off at school at the same time each morning.
6. For children catching public transport, do some practice runs so they are confident about what train or bus they need to catch. Develop a strategy on what to do if they miss a bus or train.
7. Don't forget a healthy and nutritious breakfast. Students are more alert and perform better at school if they eat a good breakfast.
8. Make sure your child gets plenty of sleep each night during the school week.
9. Take 15 minutes out at the end of the school day to listen to your child's stories.
10. Take time out for yourself. It can also be an emotional time for parents, particularly when little ones are going to school for the first time. That first drop off can be a teary one - and not necessarily for the kids! It always helps to talk with someone about how you're feeling. Reach out to another parent for a cup of coffee and a chat.

Mr Bourke said children and young people call Kids Helpline about any number of things during the back to school period.

"Anxiety about making new friends or changes in friendships due to the long break are some of the most common concerns faced by children when starting a new school year," Mr Bourke said.

"The most important thing parents can do during this time is to be positive, patient and supportive - if you listen your child will share what they are experiencing and you can talk things through."

For more tips for parents and carers about supporting their children see [www.kidshelpline.com.au/parents](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au/parents).

KHL gives children and young people choices, support and someone to listen. It is Australia's only national 24/7 counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years – free call **1800 55 1800** or **[www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)**.

Parents or carers in Queensland and the Northern Territory looking for support can contact Parentline on **1300 30 1300** or **[parentline.com.au](http://parentline.com.au)**.

Primary schools across Australia can access the free **Kids Helpline @ School** program. KHL counsellors connect with classes via video link to talk about issues like staying safe online, friendships and resilience. See **[www.kidshelpline.com.au/school](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au/school)** for more information.

**ENDS**

#### **INTERVIEW/PHOTO/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES**

- Brendan Bourke, **yourtown/KHL** Head of Client Services
- KHL counsellors
- VNR footage available of Kids Helpline call centre and interviews with counsellors

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