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READY FOR K!

Tips for Providing Emotional Support as Your Child Transitions to Kindergarten

- ★ **Recognize feelings** – Your child may express feeling worried or scared, not wanting to go to school, or feeling very excited about school. Whatever they feel, take time to appreciate that feelings come and go. Make space for your child to share, and then provide validation and help them work through the difficult feelings that come to visit.
- ★ **Help build independence/personal agency at home** – Encourage your child to put on their own clothes, hang up their coat, use the bathroom by themselves, wash their hands, and put on their own shoes. These skills encourage independence and help them cultivate a “can do” attitude.
- ★ **Allow stories to be told** – Spend time *really* listening to what your child has to share. Telling the story of their day helps them process feelings and make sense of the learning that happened. Ask open-ended questions to encourage them to remember details and specific information. This helps with brain integration and increasing communication skills.
- ★ **Create and follow routines** – Set up predictable daily structure like getting up, eating breakfast, getting dressed, and brushing teeth around the same time. Spending time reading every night, eating dinner together, and making time for connection helps our brain relax and restore. Routines are valuable in creating safety and predictability.
- ★ **Teach responsibility** and encourage self-help skills – When your child asks you to do something for them, if they can do it for themselves, let them! Even if it would be easier for you to do it, it’s a perfect opportunity for your child to build responsibility. Building self-help muscles like blowing your own nose, getting your own drink, and picking out your own clothes builds a narrative of personal agency that transfers to school.
- ★ **Understand that kindergarten can be tiring** – Novelty is emotionally and physically draining. When things are new, curiosity and fear come to our aid. We’re asking our kids to leave their secure home base, so expect some growing pains. Provide plenty of downtime for your little one to recharge and pause. Building in unstructured alone time is an important habit to create. Current culture keeps kids plugged in and active, but research suggests that our brains need time for unstructured play, creativity, and even boredom.