



Going (back) to school

A guide to new beginnings

Grade 1, the first day of high school, starting with tertiary education, a new or first job, starting a new study course or engaging in the excitement of a gap year after school... These are all new beginnings.

It is difficult for parents to understand the emotions of their children when they start their school career with grade 1 and all subsequent phases. This experience is different for all individuals, even those in the same family. Parents often do not remember their emotions and experiences around starting their school career, and the environment, pressure and circumstances around the learning organisation is drastically different than a generation ago.

"All grown-ups were once children... but only few of them remember it." (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, 1995)

Although the above is true, it is also true that our brains enjoy predictable change tremendously and will grow and develop to adapt accordingly. A little bit of stress encourages brain development and growth, and this opportunity for growth should be embraced by all generations. Our brains and bodies only change with some amount of pressure. Unfortunately, too much unexpected change can be very stressful and ultimately harmful to our brains and bodies. Ensure that all that can be controlled is under control before your child's (or your) first day at school, whether primary, secondary or thereafter.

Most of all, remember to tap into your child's world... and your own. Recognise and appreciate feelings and try to support

and assist rather than criticise and rectify. "It is only with the heart that one can see clearly. What is essential is invisible to the eye." (Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, 1995)

In order to encourage your child (or yourself), reward effort rather than achievements. As a new endeavour such as starting a new school career has the potential to spur growth, having a growth mindset is essential. "The growth mindset contrasts with the fixed mindset in that rewarding actions rather than adjectives leads to a growth mindset." (Huberman, 2023) Your child (or you) will be encouraged to take up big and difficult tasks if the action is rewarded but will avoid tasks that are perceived as too difficult if the adjective or noun is rewarded. "I love how hard you are trying to enjoy this day" is thus more effective than "You are the best grade 1 today!"

Encourage yourself to embrace growth with every new learning by rewarding the effort you put into it and not your accomplishments. Do the same for your children. Enjoy growth! 🌱

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