PREPARING BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS:

Going into a new environment can make a child feel anxious. The main goal of preparing a child prior to starting school is giving them as much information about the location & their days as possible. Every child is unique & has different past experiences with new locations that may impact their back to school experiences. Depending on our child's level of anxiousness, we may decide to do one or all of the following suggestions to prepare our child with going back to school.

READING *BACK TO SCHOOL* BOOKS

Spend some time at our local library **reading books on going to school** & take some books home. While reading the book, we can ask our child:

"How do you think he feels meeting his new teacher for the first time?"

"Looks like they are enjoying lunch time, what would be your favourite lunch meal to bring to school?"

This brings our child to communicate with us & imagine what going to school is all about.

PREPARING BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS:

GO SCHOOL SHOPPING TOGETHER

Involving our child in the school preparations such as shopping for their supplies, backpack, lunch bag & uniforms or clothing needed can help them feel excited. We can also involve them in choosing their school snacks etc. It also gives our child the feeling of as much control over the situation.

Being the one to choose their own items helps them gain some autonomy & that just feels good especially when so many things involving school doesn't provide choices for our child.

This will also help our child express their individuality which we want them to feel confident about in a school setting especially.

PREPARING BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS:

DISCUSS & PREPARE MORNING ROUTINES

Mornings can be a stressful time & when we are stressed our child can also feel stressed which won't be helpful towards our separation when dropping them off at school.

- Prepare as much as possible the evening before school. Some ideas of what can be prepared: breakfast, clothing laid out & backpack.
- Try to squeeze in some time for YOU. 5-10 minutes uninterrupted coffee/tea time. It's okay to tell our child, "Right now, I am drinking my coffee/tea, I need a moment & I'll be right with you."
- When your child doesn't want to do something that needs to get done, rather than repeating ourselves over and over simply let them know that we will be helping them. Saying something like, "I see how hard it is for you to put your water bottle in your bag, let me hep you." **boundaries course for more on this**
- Have a morning checklist so that our child can have a visual of what needs to be done & check off what they've done.
- Discuss that they will be dropped off & that we will be back to pick them up after XYZ (nap time / playground time...) .

PREPARING BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS:

EMPOWER YOUR CHILD TO HANDLE TRICKY SITUATIONS

School days can be filled with many various interactions. We want our children to know that they can always share how they feel with their teachers & peers. Role play various situations to empower your child by being prepared to navigate whatever challenges they feel anxious about.

- If a child feels anxious about having no friends: role play asking another child to play with them & the various possible outcomes. Discuss how they can choose who to play with & that it takes time to get to know new friends. Discuss how not everyone is going to like them & they won't like everyone.
- If a child feels anxious that another child will be mean towards them, empower them with guidance on how to navigate this type of situation. Role play with our child & let them practice speaking up for themselves & setting their personal boundaries ("please don't speak to me that way.") & then going to see their teacher if their classmate doesn't stop.
- Find out the things that bring anxiety to your child & role play the various scenarios around it.

PREPARING BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS:

VISIT SCHOOL / CLASSROOM PRIOR TO STARTING

Going to visit the school & walking into the classroom can truly help very anxious children feel more calm about going to school. If we do this, we can take pictures of our child in different areas of the classroom so that we can continue to look at them & discuss how it feels when going back home.

If this is not possible, we can request from the school to send us some pictures of the classroom & main school areas (ex:backyard) so that we can show our child & discuss it together. Here are some of the things we can discuss:

"Oh look, this is the reading corner. Looks like there are so many new books we never read...what do you think about this corner in your new classroom?"

"Wow, the art section looks interesting, I wonder what arts & crafts you'll be creating. I can't wait to see them!"

"What is your favourite part of your new classroom?"