

Tips for Parents by Susie Kohl

Fall Is a Time to Relax, Relate, Refocus

FALL BRINGS NEW BEGINNINGS in the lives of children and their families. Positive changes like moving to a new preschool classroom or going to the next grade in elementary school often provide steep learning curves for children that aren't always apparent to adults. Putting ourselves in a child's shoes, remembering what getting a new teacher felt like to us, can help us to pay attention to feelings before they get intense. Like starting a new job, responding to a new environment and the different rhythms and expectations of a new class leave children feeling vulnerable.

Children often become more reactive about little things. They cry more easily or get angry faster. Even though they tell us they love their new teachers and have a great time in the yard, they may show sensitivities to change in other ways—like waking at night or fighting more with a sibling.

We can help children feel capable of meeting challenges by making sure they get lots of rest and good food. This is the time to monitor how much they are doing rather than plunging them into new activities outside of school. The best antidote to feeling overwhelmed, for adults and children, is not only simplifying our schedules but spending time together relaxing and relating. Fall is the time to tune out distractions and focus on turning in to one another.

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