

The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

Getting The School Year Started Right

from the American Counseling Association

The start of the new school year brings a big sigh of relief for many parents that another summer vacation period has been survived. But the reality is that while the kids may be the ones going back to school, you also have school-related work to do to help ensure a successful school year.

Taking a few positive steps now can help increase the chances for a positive school experience for your children and help minimize the problems, stress and tension that school can sometimes bring, both for you and your kids.

One easy tension and chaos reducer is to institute a little organization into the usual morning, "Mom, I'm late again, I can't find my shoes, where is my history paper and...!"

The key is to make that organizing happen the night before. Create designated spots where the next day's school clothes, homework, lunch money, permission slips and whatever else will be needed. All must be gathered pre-bedtime, or there are consequences.

What kind of consequences? That's part of the negotiation with your child. It might be missing a favorite TV show, or losing game-playing time on the computer, but the two of you should agree on the process and the consequences, and then enforce the penalty if the agreed to actions don't take place. Remember that the goal isn't to punish your child, but to teach a little organization to make life easier for the both of you.

This beginning of the school year is also the time to take action to make in-school activities run more smoothly. Get copies of the school calendar so you know when school breaks and vacations are happening. It's much less stressful to find out now when the kids have off for that teacher training day, than it is to find out about it the night before your big work meeting with the boss.

This is also a great time to contact your school's counselor. You don't need to have a problem to talk to the counselor. Instead, schedule an appointment where you can meet him or her, can talk a bit about your child, and can learn what the counselor may have to offer during the school year. A good, early relationship with the school counselor can be a real stress reducer if problems arise (at school or at home) and some help is needed during the school year.

Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.

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