

Island County Parent to Parent Newsletter

September 2018

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS FAMILIES IN ISLAND COUNTY



PARENT to PARENT

Special points of interest:

- **Never too early to start planning for the future**
- **Anxiety and School Tips to a successful school year**
- **Support Groups are starting back up in September**

transition

-noun

movement, passage, or change from one position, state, stage, subject, concept, etc., to another; change: the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Island County Transition Resource Fair

Tuesday, October 9th 5-7:15pm

Coupeville High School



20+ Booths of Resources, Providers and Information from Island County and Regionally. Great way to have face to face time with those that could assist your student/child to become more independent. Open to All Families, Resources and Community Members. ***Dinner Included**

Geared towards middle school students through adulthood, throughout the community, who experience disabilities. Presenters Scheduled:

Melinda Bocci with Social Security-Benefits Planning

Carol Way- Art as a Way local art classes and opportunities

Employed graduates of local schools, their parents and employers -Panel with Q & A

Here are some of the representatives that will have **resource tables** available:

Washington State's ABLE Savings Plan

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and other employment services

Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA)

Recreational opportunities- Special Olympics, Art Classes, TRIPS Inc., etc.

Advocacy and Support Groups, Parent to Parent, People First-self advocacy

Questions? contact Susan Armstrong (360)279-5876 sarmstrong@ohsd.net or

Mike Etzell (360)678-7883 mikeet@co.island.wa.us

Guardianship & Alternatives to Guardianship Special Needs Trusts & Wills

Parent to Parent is pleased to announce Christine Thompson Ibrahim from Jones & Ibrahim, PLLC and recent recipient of the "LifeSpan's Good Life Award", will be presenting on Guardianship and Special Needs Trusts to Island County Families. Time for questions with disability attorney that practices in Island County will be worth your time.

Saturday, October 20 Time: 11:00--1:00pm

1 NE 6th Street Annex Building #B102

Island County Commissioner's Board Room

Coupeville, WA 98239



Jones & Ibrahim, PLLC was established in 1992 to serve people with disabilities and their families. We have particular expertise in intellectual and developmental disability law. Our attorneys practice in Island, King, Snohomish, Pierce, Kitsap and Whatcom counties. We understand the challenges that families face: worry about the future, navigating complex systems and advocating for change.

www.seattledisabilitylaw.com

To RSVP or if you have questions, contact Tiffany Wheeler-Thompson

(360)632-7539 t.wheeler-thompson@co.island.wa.us

Helping Your Child Cope with Back-to-School Anxiety

Anxious feelings are normal and expected during times of transition or change. This is especially true for children and teens going back to school, or for first-timers starting kindergarten. This transition can be stressful and disruptive for the entire family! Prior to the first day of school, your anxious child may cling, cry, have temper tantrums, complain of headaches or stomach pains, withdraw, and become sullen or irritable.

Worries are Common. Anxious children and teens worry about many different school-related issues, such as teachers, friends, fitting in, and/or being away from their parents. Some common worries include:

Who will be my new teacher? Will my new teacher be mean? Will any of my friends be in my class? Will I fit in? Are my clothes OK? Will I look stupid? Who will I sit with at lunch? What if I miss the bus? What if I can't understand the new schoolwork? What if something bad happens to mom or dad while I am at school?



Although it is normal for your child to have worries, it is crucial to make your child attend school. Avoidance of school will only increase and reinforce your child's fears over the long-term, and make it increasingly more difficult to attend. Besides missing school work, children and teens who stay home because of anxiety miss:

valuable opportunities to develop and practice social skills important chances for success and mastery being acknowledged and praised for talents fostering close friendships with classmates. Most importantly, anxious children and teens who miss school cannot gather evidence that challenges their unrealistic and catastrophic fears!

How To Deal With Back-to-School Worries!

Below are some general strategies parents can use to deal with back-to-school worries, followed by a schedule leading up to the first day of school.

Look after the basics. Nobody copes well when they are tired or hungry. Anxious children often forget to eat, don't feel hungry, and don't get enough sleep. Provide frequent and nutritious snacks for your child. During this time, you also need to build in regular routines, so that life is more predictable for your child. These routines can involve the morning and bedtime habits, as well as eating schedules. See [Healthy Habits for the Home](#)

Encourage your child to share his or her fears. Ask your child what is making him or her worried. Tell your child that it is normal to have concerns. Before and during the first few weeks of school, set up a regu-

lar time and place to talk. Some children feel most comfortable in a private space with your undivided attention (such as right before bed, or during mealtime). Teens often welcome some sort of distraction to cut the intensity of their worries and feelings (such as driving in the car, or taking a walk).

Avoid giving reassurance...instead, problem-solve and plan! Children often seek reassurance that bad things won't happen in order to reduce their worry. Do not assure them with "Don't worry!" or "Everything will be fine!" Instead, encourage your child to think of ways to solve his or her problem. For example, "If (the worst) happens, what could you do?" or "Let's think of some ways you could handle that situation." This gives you the opportunity to coach your child on how to cope with (and interpret) both real and imagined scary situations. You will also be giving your child the tools he or she needs to cope with an unexpected situation that might arise. See [How to Address Excessive Reassurance Seeking](#) for more details.

Here's a sample script for engaging your child in problem-solving and planning (instead of giving reassurance):

Role-play with your child. Sometimes role-playing a certain situation with your child can help him or her make a plan, and feel more confident that he or she will be able to handle the situation. For example, let your child play the part of the demanding teacher or bullying classmate. Then, model appropriate responses and coping techniques for your child, to help them calm down. For more information on role-playing, see [Helping your Anxious Child Make Friends](#)

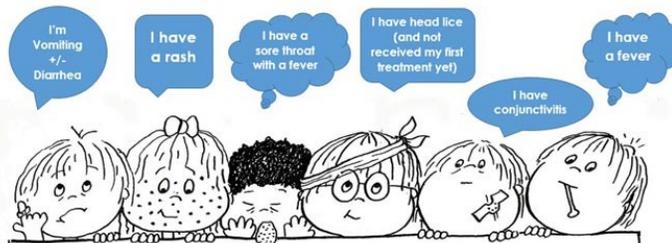
Focus on the positive aspects! Encourage your child to re-direct attention away from the worries, and towards the positives. Ask your child, "What are three things that you are most excited about on your first day of school?" Most kids can think of something good, even if it's just eating a special snack or going home at the end of the day. Chances are that the fun aspects are simply getting overlooked by repetitive worries.

Pay attention to your own behavior. It can be anxiety-provoking for parents to hand over care and responsibility of their child to teachers. Children take cues from their parents, so the more confidence and comfort you can model, the more your child will understand there is no reason to be afraid. Be supportive yet firm. When saying goodbye in the morning, say it cheerfully - once! Ensure you don't reward your child's protests, crying, or tantrums by allow him or her to avoid going to school. Instead, in a calm tone, say: "I can see that going to school is

Questions to Ask Your Kids After School Instead of “How Was Your Day?”

- ◆ What made you smile today?
- ◆ Can you tell me an example of kindness you saw/showed?
- ◆ What did you do that was creative?
- ◆ Who did you sit with at lunch?
- ◆ Tell me something you know today you didn't know yesterday?
- ◆ Did you like your lunch?
- ◆ What was the hardest rule to follow today?
- ◆ If you could change one thing about your day, what would it be?
- ◆ What made your teacher smile?
- ◆ What made your teacher frown?
- ◆ If you could switch seats with anyone in class, who would it be and why?
- ◆ What kid of person were you today?

Please keep me at home if.....



Vomiting or diarrhea two or more times in 24 hours. Please do not return for a minimum of 48hours*

Until rash has gone or confirmed by a doctor that it is not contagious
*supply medical certificate to school nurse

Remain off school for 48hrs after post reduction in fever (Temp >37.5). Monitor for signs of strep throat, scarlet fever & Hand Foot and Mouth

Remain off school until 1st treatment completed. Keep hair tied up, do not share hair brushes.

Please remain off school until no more discharge from eyes

Remain off school for 48hrs post reduction in fever. Inform school if diagnosed with influenza A or B

Back to School may mean “new germs coming home”. Remember, kiddos recover more quickly if they have an opportunity to rest and recover. Trying to stay engaged in class can be a struggle when you don't feel well. There maybe kiddos and/or adults in their school with compromised immune systems. A simple cold for your kiddo maybe life threatening for another kiddo in their class. When in doubt, keep them home or call the doctor.

School Anxiety Continued....

making you scared, but you still have to go. Tell me what you are worried about, so we can talk about it.” Chances are, your child is anxious about something that requires a little problem-solving, role-playing, planning, and/or involvement from the teacher.

Timeline Leading Up to the First Day of School

(You may not need to take all of these steps) **At least one week before:** Start your child on a school-day routine – waking up, eating, and going to bed at regular times. Explain that everyone in the family needs to adjust to the new schedule, so he or she doesn't feel alone with these changes. For older children who having troubles getting up and out of bed, give them a “big person” alarm clock, and let them practice using it. Ask your child to help plan school lunches for the first week. Create a list of school supplies together and plan a fun shopping trip. Teach and practice coping skills to use when feeling nervous, such as How to Do Calm Breathing and Developing and Using Cognitive Coping Cards
A couple days before school: Go to school several times – walking, driv-

ing, or taking the bus. For young children taking the school bus, describe and draw out the bus route, including where the bus goes and how long it takes to get to school. Talk about bus safety. For new students, take a tour of the school. Show your child the classrooms, the cafeteria, and the bathrooms. If possible, meet your child's teacher with your child present. Ask your child to help choose the outfits for the first week of school. Let your child wear his or her favorite outfit on the first day. Together with your child, pack up the schoolbag the night before, including treats. For younger children who are nervous about separating, suggest taking a special object to school that reminds him of home. A reassuring note in a child's lunch can also help ease separation anxiety. **The first day of school:** Have your child go to school with a friend for the first couple of days. Tell the teacher that your child is having some separation anxiety – most teachers are experts in this area, and have years of experience! Most importantly, praise and reward your child for brave behavior. *Anxiety BC

