

TAKING TIME

by Rebecca Escott

Extension Home Economist



Easing Back-to-School Blues

Will your children be returning to classrooms at the end of the month? Do you have a youngster who is preparing for school for the first time? Parents of school-age children have an important challenge to face during the next few weeks — easing the transition to school.

Going back to school is a tough adjustment for kids. And going to school for the first time or to a new building is even scarier. These anxieties are normal. The trick is to take positive steps in advance of the first day of school to lighten the tension.

For children who are returning to school, you can help.

- Resume a regular bedtime and wake-up time two weeks prior to the start of school.

- Involve your children in back-to-school shopping for clothes, notebooks, lunch boxes and other school supplies.

If possible, take a relaxed walk around the school building and talk about the new classroom and teacher or the anticipated activities of the new year.

- If your child walks to school or walks to meet a bus, you may want to time the walk so that you allow enough time on the first day

of school. If your child has a problem or is frightened, where are "safe places" they can go for help? This may be a neighbor's house or a community business.

- Arrange "practice sessions" during the day where your son or daughter sits and works quietly at a task at a table for a period of time.

Then during the first weeks of school, clear the family of as many obligations as possible. Getting back into the swing of a school routine is stressful. The experience is intensified if the evenings are also filled with tasks and time lines. The structure of a school routine may be a frustrating change for your child. When they return home, offer a healthy snack as a tide-me-over until meal time. Then encourage them to play outside. This play time will help them release excess energy and bridge the switch from summer freedom to controlled school patterns.

Do yourself a favor. Plan meals that take few preparations. Anything you do to relax will make the transition back to school a more pleasant one for both you and your child.

If this fall's classes will be a first-time experience for your

child, you have probably already taken steps to introduce them to the idea and setting of school. If your child has not met their teacher yet, do this during the next two weeks. Often teachers may be around the school building during the week before classes preparing their room and materials. Call and arrange a visit.

Create opportunities for your child to spend time with future classmates. Invite some of them for a sleepover or a trip to a playground. Having a few familiar faces in a new group makes the introduction to school easier.

Remember a child's image of school is created from previous messages they've heard from brothers and sisters, neighbors, you and other adults. You should take time to talk about how many days during the week they will be at school and during what hours. Showing your child these days on a calendar may be helpful. Also review how your child will get back and forth to school and where they will spend before and after-school hours.

Some children may resist the idea of going to school — perhaps because of teasing from an older child about how "awful" it will be.

I remember bursting into tears in my first-grade classroom because I was afraid of my teacher — Mrs. McCann. My older brother and sister had told me repeatedly how mean she was. Don't allow this kind of teasing. You may have to pull the older children aside and instruct them directly about this.

Finally, even if the first day of school results in a tearful separation, be comforted. Most children's tears subside within a few moments and the child has a successful day. Our anxieties may be the ones we have to work on giving up!

In A Pickle Over What To Eat?

(NAPS) — Trying to figure out the new Food Guide Pyramid? Worrying about what to feed a baby? The American Dietetic Association, the nation's food and nutrition authority, provides timely advice on these and other topics through its Consumer Nutrition Hot Line at 1-800-366-1655.

Consumers can speak directly with a registered dietitian (RD) or listen to the pre-recorded messages, including one in Spanish, featured each month.

By listening to the "Whole Grain Goodness" message, scheduled for July, September and November, consumers can learn

how whole-grain foods provide adequate levels of fiber and other necessary nutrients. A message airing in August and September makes it easy to adapt the principles of the Food Guide Pyramid to any lifestyle and explains why some foods such as rice, bread, cereal and pasta are the foundation of one's diet. And, the importance of proper infant nutrition is explained in the October message entitled "Feeding Your Baby During the First Year."

Here's a schedule of upcoming recorded messages:

August: Diabetes and Food, Water — The Forgotten Food,

Learning About Food Sources of Vitamins and Minerals, Diet and Cholesterol (Spanish).

September: Whole Grain Breakfast Cereals, Learning About Cholesterol, Using the Food Guide Pyramid, and Food Guide Pyramid (Spanish).

Operated by ADA's National Center for Nutrition and Dietetics (NCND), the hot line operates year-round and features recorded messages 24 hours daily. RDs are available to answer questions from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. (EST). Callers also can get referrals to local RDs for individual or group counseling.



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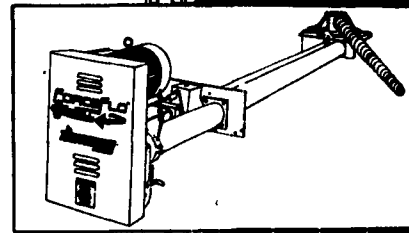
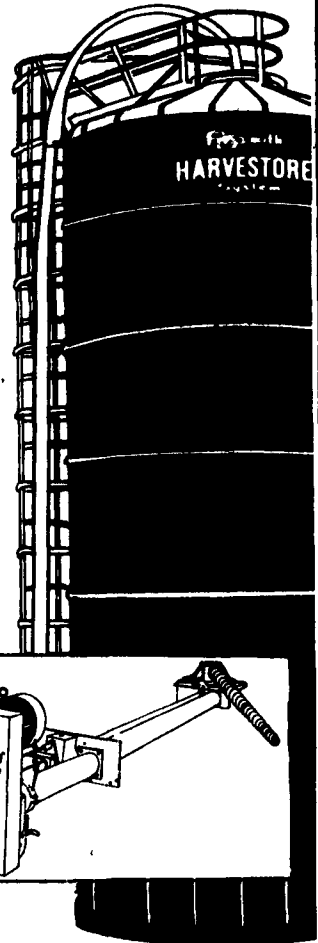
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