

Family Living

Focus

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**SENDING KIDS
BACK TO SCHOOL**

If you are like most parents, your primary concern with sending your child back to school is clothes, notebooks, class schedules, and transportation. Just the fact that you've just spent your last two weeks' paycheck on new shoes and jeans is a clear signal that it's time to go back to school.

My children have always had this habit of growing in the summer — especially their feet. Sneakers that fit during June and July all of a sudden are cramming their toes. Their feet always have had perfect timing to grow the last two weeks of August. Even with all of this "physical growth activity," there's one social and emo-

tional other item you should consider as school begins — your child's adjustment the first few weeks.

According to Dr. James Van Horn, extension family sociologist, Penn State University, parents tend to minimize the importance of school adjustment, and sometimes view each school year as being similar to the last.

There are a lot of pressures created in school. If your child did satisfactory work last year, that work will probably continue, but not necessarily. Each new school year, new subjects, and new teachers will call for a certain amount of adjustment on the part of the student. An individual child's manner of adjustment may even

differ from year to year.

One year the child may return to school and the parent will barely notice the change, said Van Horn. The very next year, the child may become very "cocky" or noticeably quiet or moody. In a study of ninth and 10th grade girls who were asked to list problems or areas of difficulty, adjustment to school work was listed the greatest number of times. Other studies of youth have shown similar results.

Van Horn stresses that patience, understanding, and encouragement are called for as each school year begins. At times, adults tend to minimize the impact on the child that a new school year brings. It is important to remember that the child in our family is not the same person he or she was last year. The child has developed, has grown more and probably quite rapidly. Interests change, new doubts arise, old friends move on. All of these and more mean that the child must redesign at least a few aspects of his or her life. For some children this is not an easy task.

The study of the pre-teen girls also found that the second biggest problem centered on personal-psychological relations — their relationships with others. Here

again, Van Horn noted, the child's relationships may be grounded in school. Classmates of last year are no longer classmates. Everyone seems to be on a different schedule. Over the summer some friends moved away physically or they may have moved away emotionally. Friends of last year may choose new friends this year. Your son or daughter may not be included. This is a very difficult adjustment for the child to cope with at the beginning of school.

The third leading problem reported in the study on pre-teen girls had to do with their social and recreational activities. They worry about these activities and

often these worries grow as the child begins another year of school. Because so many of our children's waking hours are taken up with school activities, the child's social and recreational life truly belong to the school. Therefore, adjustment is necessary.

Most children adjust very well to back-to-school pressures, but some do not. Parents need to be extra patient, understanding, and encouraging. With your help, most of the pressures will subside in a few weeks and your child will adjust to the normal routine of school life. Welcome back to school!

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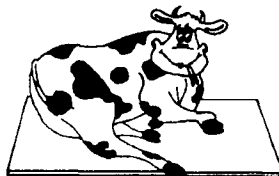
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