Video 6: A change for the whole family

Leaders Guide
This KidsMatter resource was written and produced by the Australian Psychological Society on behalf of KidsMatter.

Acknowledgement

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Video 6: Learning objectives

- To increase awareness of how starting school might affect the whole family.
- To acknowledge the varied emotions families experience as their child starts school.
Outline

The following table provides an outline of Leaders Guide for Video 6: A change for the whole family. Starting School: Tips for facilitating sessions contains warm-up activities that Session Leaders can use at the beginning of any session to provide parents and carers with the opportunity to meet each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>Review Video 5: Coping skills for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>Introduce Video 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Show Video 6: A change for the whole family</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summarise Video 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>Activity: A mix of emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>Group discussion: Looking after yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>Summary</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Checklist

- A mix of emotions activity sheet
- Starting School A change for the whole family information sheet
- Blank paper, pens, whiteboard markers
- Additional KidsMatter information sheets

Further resources

You might like to have additional KidsMatter information sheets available for families. See the Starting School A change for the whole family information sheet that lists other KidsMatter resources you might find helpful.

Review Video 5

Provide a brief overview of what was covered in Video 5 to give parents and carers the opportunity to ask questions before presenting Video 6. For example:

In the last video we had a look at some helpful techniques that you can use to encourage your child to learn positive coping skills. We also had a closer look at the step-by-step approach to coping and brainstormed some challenges that children may face when starting school. Does anyone have any questions or comments before we move on to Video 6?

Introduce Video 6

Start with a brief introduction before presenting the video. For example:

We are now going to show a video that looks at some of the changes that happen for the whole family when children start school. We will also see some helpful tips that parents and carers may like to try to assist with a positive transition to school, not only for their child but for the whole family.

Show Video 6
Summarise Video 6

After the video you may like to summarise the key points. For example:

Starting school is a time of transition for your child, and it is also a time of transition for parents and carers and the whole family. As we saw in the video, parents and carers may experience a mixture of emotions including excitement, pride, nervousness or even a sense of loss during their child’s transition to school. It is important to be aware of your own thoughts, feelings and reactions during this time, particularly if you are experiencing new or unexpected emotions. As we just saw, two helpful tips that may help the whole family during transition include:

- planning enjoyable activities for the whole family outside of school hours
- sharing your hopes, concerns, experiences, tips and ideas with other parents and carers. You may find a great sense of comfort sharing similar experiences.

Activity: A mix of emotions

Go to page 6 for instructions to facilitate this activity.

Group discussion: Looking after yourself

Estimated time: 5 minutes

1. Introduce the discussion by mentioning the following key points:
   
   As we saw in the video, starting school is a time of change for your child and also for the whole family. Many parents and carers find that a large part of supporting their child to have a positive transition to school is to also set aside time to ensure that they are taking care of themselves. Let’s share some ideas for looking after yourself and promoting your own wellbeing during your child’s transition to school.

2. Ask parents and carers to take five minutes to think about some self-care strategies and activities that they already practice or may be able to introduce into their daily routine.

3. Within the large group, invite parents and carers to share some of the self-care strategies they already practice or could introduce into their daily routine. If the group has difficulty coming up with ideas you could prompt them with some examples like regular exercise, eating a balanced diet, getting enough sleep and practising relaxation techniques.

4. If a whiteboard is available, write down a few of the suggestions and ask parents and carers to think about a convenient time during the day when they may be able to schedule some self-care activities.

Summary

Conclude the Starting School information sessions. For example:

Throughout these sessions we have had a look at how you can prepare your child for starting school. In this session we have had a close look at some of the feelings parents and carers and families may experience when starting school, and in previous sessions we looked at problem solving and coping skills and discussed some of the feelings children experience when starting school. Everyone’s experience of starting school will be different. Parents and carers can do a lot to help children with the preparations for starting school. Now that you have learned lots of hints, tips and strategies you should be feeling better equipped to start this exciting journey.
This section contains background information for Video 6 and the accompanying resources. It is not necessary to present this information to parents and carers; however, it may assist you to answer questions and provide some additional information during discussions. For more information on transition to school, see Transition matters and Transition to Primary School: A Review of the Literature. Parents and carers who are interested in the research behind the video and resources can also access these documents online at www.kidsmatter.edu.au

**Background information for Session Leaders**

**Supporting parents and carers to feel confident**

**Why focus on parents and carers?**

The literature emphasises the important role parents and carers play in preparing and assisting children to adjust to the demands of formal schooling. In addition, researchers have highlighted that the family and effective parenting are central to children's mental health. Parenting practices and the quality of the parent-child relationship have implications for children's academic and social competence and behaviour in the early years of school, as well as longer term school success and achievement.

**What supports parents and carers?**

Parents and carers are better able to support their children when they are familiar and informed about the challenges and changes children face as they start school. Having an understanding of the school system can also support parental confidence. Providing information and support to parents and carers about school and the types of changes their child is likely to encounter as they start school can enhance parental confidence and, in turn, also enhance children's confidence. This means that working with parents and carers has the potential to lead to better outcomes for children during the transition period and beyond.

**Why are social networks important?**

Research suggests that when parents and carers have good social support networks it can help to reduce stress and promote sharing of parenting strategies that have a positive impact on children's social and emotional wellbeing. Higher levels of social support have also been associated with parents and carers having increased involvement in their child's schooling.
References


Activity: A mix of emotions

Aims

- To help parents and carers reflect on how starting school might affect the whole family.
- To normalise the range of emotions parents and carers feel about starting school.

Preparation

- Prepare emotion cards that represent various feelings parents and carers may have about their child starting school. These can be sourced from your school or ECEC service, or you can make a set of cards with the template provided.
- Lay the cards on the floor or a table so that they can be easily viewed and accessed by all parents and carers.

Materials

- Emotion cards
- Information sheet: A change for the whole family

Instructions

Estimated time: 15 minutes

1. Introduce the activity. For example:

   *As discussed in the video, starting school involves a big change not only for your child but for your whole family. Starting school brings out a mix of emotions as families start to prepare for the changes.*

2. Explain to parents and carers that in a moment you will ask them to walk over to the emotion cards and select one that represents how they are feeling about their child starting school, or where their family is at in the journey. You may like to model selecting a picture and explaining what emotion it represents for you as a teacher or educator. For example, you may feel proud that the children are achieving this milestone. Remember to be mindful of sharing personal information about individual children or anything that could be uncomfortable for you or parents and carers.

3. After five minutes, or when everyone has chosen a card, ask parents and carers to return to their original seat. If you have a large group, you may like to ask parents and carers to form smaller groups of five to seven people. Invite parents and carers to share the reason they chose a particular card and which emotion starting school represents for them. You may need to keep the discussion short and provide information on where parents can obtain further assistance (see Starting School: Tips for facilitating sessions for details). Give all parents and carers the option to decline to share their response with the larger or smaller group. Thank all parents and carers for sharing their feelings.

Conclusion

Conclude the activity. For example:

*In this activity we thought about some of the emotions you may be experiencing as your child starts school. We have also reflected on where you think your family is at in this journey. This may include feelings of loss as your child is moving into someone else’s care for longer periods or excitement as they are starting the next stage of their lives. Being able to reflect and plan ahead for the changes will help you and your family adjust to being part of the school community.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>Sad</th>
<th>Worried</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Excited</td>
<td>Apprehensive</td>
<td>Hopeful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proud</td>
<td>Terrified</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>Pleased</td>
<td>Angry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>Scared</td>
<td>Relieved</td>
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