

BACK TO SCHOOL RESOURCES

July, 2012

Believe it or not school is just around the corner. Back to school sales have been going on for several weeks. Letters have arrived in the mail with dates for orientation and enrollment. Children and parents alike have mixed feelings about returning to school. Returning to school can be traumatic for children with challenging behaviors. I always encourage parents to get an early start on monitoring how their child is doing in school. Prevention and early intervention are the keys to success.

The following is a quote from *Trauma-Sensitive Schools Are Better Schools*. “Children with toxic stress live their lives in fight, flight (freeze) mode. They respond to the world as a place of constant danger. Their brains overloaded with stress hormones and unable to function properly, they can’t focus on schoolwork. They fall behind in school or fail to develop healthy relationships with peers or create problems with teachers and principals because they are unable to trust adults. With despair, guilt and frustration pecking away at their psyches, they often find solace in food, alcohol, tobacco, methamphetamines, inappropriate sex, high risk sports, and/or work. They don’t regard these coping methods as problems. They see them as solutions to escape from depression, anxiety, anger, fear, and shame.” You can read this two-part article in its entirety by going to [Trauma Sensitive Schools](#) and [Trauma Sensitive Schools Part 2](#). I found this two-part article informative as well as having many useful resources.

The following resource focuses on the very sensitive topic of ***HOMEWORK***. Alfie Kohn, author of *The Homework Myth*, states “There is absolutely no evidence of any academic benefit from assigning homework in elementary or middle school. For younger students, in fact, there isn’t even a correlation between whether children do homework (or how they do) and any meaningful measure of achievement. Meanwhile, no study has ever substantiated the belief that homework builds character or teaches good study habits.”

Both of these quotes are very powerful statements. They are backed by empirical research. I have included this information in this month’s newsletter to help empower you as a parent to advocate for your child. My intent is not to be critical of any institution. Information and education bring about change. If your paradigm remains the same, you will continue to get the same or even worse results. Equip yourself with information. Talk to your school about what your child needs. Be firm and assertive. A few minor accommodations and strategies can make a big difference in your child’s school performance.

Homework Hints

Emotional regulation is still the key to success for you and your child in any circumstance. When children demonstrate negative behaviors in association with homework, they have reached their window of academic learning tolerance. Forcing a child through this window of tolerance only creates a negative neurological feedback loop associated with school and homework. As a parent, you may have to dig deeper, to help your child become regulated around homework. Your child needs your help in shifting from dys-regulation to regulation.

You may need to change some of your own beliefs around homework. You may also need to ignore what others tell you. Remember that you know your child best. You know what your child's emotional needs are. Here are some simple suggestions that may help your child be successful.

- * Have your child teach you what he is learning in school. Your interest tells him that what he is learning is important. Teaching will help your child be a great student. This also helps create a more secure attachment with your child.
- * Focus on helping your child regulate during difficult moments. Reduce the focus on the task and connect with your child. Take a short walk, give your child a hug and a back rub, or get glass of juice together. Put a stop to the development any negative neurological feedback loops.
- * Reduce assignments into smaller pieces. This will help your child feel less overwhelmed as well as create immediate success. Success with smaller pieces helps build your child's window of homework tolerance.
- * Allow your child to express his feelings about homework. Using left brain logic and reason only creates more stress. By validating your child's feelings about his homework he will feel understood and supported instead of being judged and controlled. This will allow your relationship with him to influence a change in his paradigm regarding homework.
- * Eliminate or reduce the pressure you place on your child to complete his work. Examine what blueprints around home work you have that are creating stress. What were the rules you followed when doing homework? Don't allow your child's challenges to determine who you are as a parent.
- * Don't be afraid to do some of your child's home. Have him sit with you and talk through the problem as you are working on the problem. This will help him learn by demonstration. It will reduce his fear and strengthen your attachment with him. You can then gradually transfer doing more of the work to him.

These homework hints were adapted from Stress Free Homework by Heather Forbes, LCSW. Many of these suggestions may be a challenge to your own belief system. It is your own fear that keeps you from doing things different. Remember that low stress environments keep the brain regulated. A regulated brain learns and grows in a healthy manner. You may find yourself needing additional support for helping your child with homework. If so, contact me for a free 30 minute consult. Mention that you heard about this FREE offer though this month's Love in Action Newsletter.

Follow my August bi-weekly blogs @ <http://bit.ly/oxbMIK> for additional back to school tips.

In Christ,

Ken Thom, LPC