



2014 VAPT Enote

Dear VAPT members,

School is starting soon! For many children and families this is a time to engage in back-to-school activities that mark the approach of school, communicate that school is valued, and that help the child be prepared to successfully engage. Many parents may be eagerly anticipating more regular schedules and routines. For some children anticipating the start of school fills them with ambivalence, stress, or fear. This VAPT enote has resources that may be helpful to you as the play therapist or to the child and parent.

SAVE the DATES

Learn, Play, Grow with VAPT

VAPT Winter Workshop January 30, 2015. Richmond, VA

VAPT COME PLAY with US!! Conference June 13 and 14, 2015. Harrisonburg, VA



What are the main sources of anxiety for young children around starting a new school year?

Here is advice from the Mother Company that you can share with parents, daycare providers, and teachers.

Anxiety is about what is unknown or new, so children of any age are worried about things that are unfamiliar or that they haven't mastered yet. For young children who are just starting school, everything is new: the building, the teacher, the routines, the wake up time, the longer school day. Same thing happens even with kids who have a year or two of school under their belt. They hear some idea that school is hard, or that the expectations are completely different in, say, second grade and they think: "Yikes! Can I really do that?" (See more at <http://www.themotherco.com/2014/08/quelling-anxiety/>)

Tips to Ease Back to School Anxiety

What parents can do to alleviate back to school jitters



Below is some of the advice from the about parenting website at <http://childparenting.about.com/od/schoollearning/a/Tips-To-Ease-Back-To-School-Anxiety.htm>

Help your child feel more comfortable about his new school environment. One of the things that can cause back to school anxiety for kids is not knowing what to expect. Help your child become more acclimated to new routines and unfamiliar surroundings by doing the following:

Take him for a visit to the school. If your child is starting kindergarten or first grade, he may be uneasy about going into a new building. Older grade-schoolers may be nervous about being in a new classroom or meeting a new teacher. To alleviate some of these concerns, ask your school about arranging a visit to school and meeting the teacher before school begins.

Make a couple of drives back and forth from home to school. Whether your child will walk, take a school bus, or be driven to school by mom or dad, helping him become familiar with the route to and from school will make considerably ease back to school anxiety. Even if your child is already familiar with the route to school, making a pre first-day run will remind him where school is, and help him feel more connected to where he will go on the first day back to school.

Make sure she gets enough sleep and eats a balanced diet. Getting adequate sleep and eating a healthy diet -- especially a protein-carbohydrate balanced breakfast -- is important for brain function, mood and the ability to focus and pay attention in school.



Easy Daysies

Easy Daysies are magnetic schedules that show children the 'shape of the day'. Use these great magnets for a single routine, like bed time or after school routine, or plan the whole day! www.easydaysies.com

You could create a schedule with a child in play therapy or have a filial or family meeting to craft schedules using magnetic tape or Velcro and poster board. Consider having the family take photographs of the activities being done and then use the photos to create the schedule.



[The Importance of Family Routines](#)

Play therapists can share the importance of routines to help reduce anxiety and stress.

Structure and routine promote feelings of safety for children, as well as an ability to predict happenings in their environment. Early experiences of stress, such as may occur in school, can be helpful teaching moments for therapists and parents to model an appropriate and consistent routine. If a consistent schedule or routine does not already exist in a client's home, concerns related to homework, stress etc. can provide a smooth segue into the important concept. *The Importance of Family Routines* (link to article is below) offers a rationale for the importance of structure in the home environment.



Create a High-Five Bedtime Routine

This poster can be placed on the wall in the bedroom with 5 bed times tasks to complete. The poster can be decorated with a hand tracing of the parent's and child's hands. When all the tasks are done the child and parent do a high-five!

An example of making the poster with a young child can be view at:

<http://blog.melissaanddoug.com/2013/08/13/create-a-high-five-bedtime-routine-for-your-child/>

VAPT Chapters

Are you active in your area VAPT Chapter? Are you looking for ways to find out more about play therapy and connect with play therapists in your area? Well, VAPT has regional chapters around Virginia to bring play therapy resources and networking opportunities to your area.

All our VAPT sponsored trainings that award CE's are posted on the national APT site--look in the APT directory to find play therapy training and select Virginia! Look on our VAPT FB page or contact your local Chapter Chair to find out more about what's happening in your area and around the state. If there is not a chapter listed that is close to you, please consider volunteering to serve in your area. Contact a chair close to you and offer mutual support to a playmate!

VAPT Chapters and Chapter Chairs

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Thanks to the VAPT Board of Directors for all your service.

Playfully,

Anne

Visit our VAPT Website

<http://vapt.cisat.jmu.edu>

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