Summer Ending—New Routines Abound

It is time to face reality—Summer is not as long as it was when we were kids. Mid-August is the signal for “all hands on deck.” It is time to shift gears, and set up fall routines—even though technically, it is still summer. No matter the ages of your children, the change is likely to put strain on you as well as them. Therefore, let’s get started NOW.

Make review fun—have they been reading this summer? If so, great, if not, it is not too late. Encourage them to read one book. What about math? Perhaps, you could help them review the concepts they learned last year. This is a great reinforcement to the review they will get at the beginning of the semester. Were there problems with particular subjects—science, history, etc.? You might consider quizzing them a little. Most of the school districts have links to material that was covered and what is to be covered. Check them out, and help your children review what they can before classes start. Reward their review with fun!

Early Routines—have they been on a more relaxed bedtime schedule? It is a good time to begin the implementation of more specific times. It is best to start out with 15- or 20-minute increments. They should be going to bed a little earlier, and then they should rise a little earlier. The rule of thumb is 8-10 hours uninterrupted sleep nightly. The younger kids need the longer sleep hours, and the older ones should definitely have at least 8 hours of sleep.

Brain Health Nutrition—have they been in the habit of just eating on the run? Scheduled meal times become more critical. Consider reviewing menus and making sure the meals are well-balanced. Proteins, healthy carbs and fats, with lots of fruits and vegetables should be in the mix. A healthy diet is a key to helping the brain function as it should to learn, focus, and avoid anxiety and depression during the school day.

Finally—do they have what they need to start the next year? Do they need some wardrobe replacements? School sales are abundant now. Take advantage, and do your shopping accordingly. Take your kids with you to help choose things they like in order to keep items from being “lost” in the bottom drawer and at the back of the closet. It is also the best time to stock up on the school supplies—pens, paper, glue, etc. It is a good idea to double up on the items that will be consumed by the next semester. The prices are never better than during the “back to school” sales, so you will save a lot of money if you have some back-stock at home.

Enjoy the rest of your summer, and be active in preparing for the year ahead. You will thank yourself as you are sending your children back to their respective schools starting with a good review, proper diet, and some special school supplies.
Children Affected by Trauma May be Fragile

Trauma is defined as a catastrophic event which may affect individuals in different ways. Depending upon the age of children and their varying life experiences, the effects can range from devastating, to confusing, to indifferent. The specific events, of course, may vary; however, the death of a loved one, a car accident observed, a car accident in which the child is present, as well as local, national and international events that may be viewed on television can all emerge as a catastrophic event for a child. In addition such seemingly routine events in the eyes of adults, such as entering school for the first time, moving and having to establish new friends, and entering middle school or high school may impact children. Therefore, it is a good idea, if your child has faced a traumatic event, to be aware of signs he/she may have been impacted. There are some general guidelines that may be of help to assist children who have been traumatized, and these include:

1. Try to maintain routines to help the child understand that he/she is safe and life has glitches but will continue on.
2. Assure the child that you, and/or another adult, are his/her support, and encourage the child to come to you or the other designated person when he/she needs to talk or otherwise be comforted.
3. Reinforce clear and firm limits on behavior. Develop some logical consequences to compliment the reinforcement—both positive and negative behaviors.
4. Give choices in order help the child recognize he/she does have some control. Traumatic events often appear to the child that he/she no longer has control over anything, and this needs to be reversed.
5. Often children react to trauma by repeating the effects in play or story-telling. Allow them to reflect and guide them to recognize that the outcome does not have to be a repeat of the initial event. For example every severe weather warning is not going to result in a tornado. Allow them to express their feelings while helping them sift through new outcomes.

Therefore, it is wise to address the trauma without obsessing over it. This allows the child, no matter the age, to recognize you understand it is serious. Maintain routines, and encourage the child to talk with you or another designated adult. Remember to have firm limits on behavior and have consequences appropriate to the specific behavior (good and bad). Allow choices to be made so the child recognizes he/she maintains some control. Allow story-telling or acting out as appropriate as a means for the child to address the traumatic event in an understandable and manageable way. Finally if you need help, please call employee assistance to talk with a counselor. ARBOR FAMILY COUNSELING, (402)330-0960—our 24-hour number, or you can reach us at www.arborfamilycounseling.com. We are happy to set up an appointment to help you through this difficult time.

Trauma happens. It does not discriminate by age, sex, color, or religion. It is real, and it is necessary to deal with it in a healthy way—particularly when it involves children. Sort out your own feelings to avoid projection of them onto the children. Allow questions to be asked, and know confusion will surface. Be patient. Don’t expand your explanations until children are ready. Be open to accepting help from others to assist you when you don’t have the answers. Understand there are likely to be times when the questions will resurface. Answer them again. Children need to know it is OK to be confused and need reassurance.

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