

Mindworks Information on: - Managing the Emotions of the school run

The school run can be a challenging time of day. Our clinicians share their top tips for parents on managing your child's emotional wellbeing needs for the start of the school day.

- Be prepared, logistically but also mentally and emotionally. Try to strike a balance between not thinking the worst will happen when you get to the school gate but having a plan for if you have a wobble.
- Reflect on your own levels of anxiety about the school run and separation. Practice managing this and gradually teach your child, with mindfulness and grounding techniques and practice helpful thoughts about what the reality/likelihood is about the rest of the day.
- Make the school run fun, play games or sing songs together.
- If you can possibly include exercise/physicality in the journey do – walking, scooting, cycling, even some star jumps before and after getting in the car to use up nervous energy, park further away from school to walk further if it is safe to do so.
- If your child has a special interest try and relate the journey or the goodbye to this i.e. role play.
- Have a prepared script for saying goodbye and stick to this. Invite your child to write their part. Don't make it too long or drawn out. A short, simple, fun and loving ritual makes goodbye enjoyable and no big deal.
- If your child likes to have some control give them two choices of what you'll do on the journey and on what kind of goodbye you'll have. No more than two. Tell them the options if they are too anxious to think of ideas themselves.
- Make a time for worry time (talk time) after school for a limited time of 15 minutes every day, same time every day. This way if worries are brought up on route to school, before leaving the house or at bedtime as a way of stalling you can remind your child that you have worry time so you can make sure you can talk about it then.
- Work with the school if the drop off/goodbye is difficult. Perhaps make a plan together if necessary, could the same member of staff greet your child every morning and help them transition in.
- Books like *The Invisible String* are helpful for reading with children.

Recommended books for parenting interventions

- *Helping Your Child with Fears and Worries 2nd Edition: A Self-help Guide for Parents (2019)* by Cathy Creswell and Lucy Willetts (for primary aged anxiety).
- *The Incredible Years (2006)* by Carolyn Webster-Stratton (for primary aged behaviour management)