



Starting high school is a big step in your child's life. It comes with exciting opportunities and new challenges. As a parent, you can help your child navigate this transition by using the principles of child-directed play therapy to foster confidence, independence, and emotional resilience. Play-based approaches give your child the space to process their feelings and practice new skills in a supportive environment.

### **What is Child-Directed Play Therapy?**

Child-directed play therapy allows children to take the lead in their play. This approach respects their choices, encourages self-expression, and helps them work through feelings and concerns at their own pace. For high schoolers, the methods can be adapted to suit their developmental stage by incorporating creative activities, symbolic play, and collaborative problem-solving.

### **How to Support Your Child Using Play Therapy Principles**

#### **1. Explore Emotions About High School**

- **Validate Feelings:** Encourage your child to share how they feel about starting high school, whether they are excited, nervous, or unsure.
- **Activity:** Use creative outlets like drawing, journaling, or symbolic play to express emotions.
- **Say:** "It's okay to feel a mix of emotions about starting something new. What would you draw or write about how you feel?"
- **Play Out Scenarios:** Use figurines, role-play, or storytelling to act out high school situations, such as meeting new friends or finding their way around.
- **Say:** "This character is starting a new school. What do you think they are feeling? What could help them feel ready?"

## **2. Practice New Routines and Skills**

- **Build Familiarity Through Play:** Let your child practice routines like packing a bag, organizing their locker, or planning their schedule in a playful way.
- **Activity:** Set up a pretend locker or desk at home and let them lead the activity of organizing it.
- **Say:** “How would you set up your locker to make things easy to find?”
- **Role-Play Challenges:** Practice problem-solving for situations they may face, like asking for help from a teacher, navigating a larger campus, or managing homework.
- **Say:** “Let’s pretend you can’t find your classroom on the first day. What could you do to solve the problem?”

## **3. Foster Social Confidence**

- **Practice Peer Interactions:** Use role-play to act out conversations with new classmates or joining a group activity. Let them guide how the scenario unfolds.
- **Say:** “What would you say if someone invited you to sit with them at lunch?”
- **Discuss Empathy and Boundaries:** Use play to explore how to recognize others’ emotions and set boundaries for themselves.
- **Say:** “This character is feeling shy. What could someone say to make them feel more included? What can they say if they don’t want to join in?”

## **4. Address Academic Pressures Through Creative Play**

- **Use Symbolic Play:** Encourage your child to use toys, drawing, or storytelling to represent their academic concerns, such as balancing homework or preparing for exams.
- **Say:** “If this toy has too much to do, what could help them feel less stressed?”
- **Practice Positive Self-Talk:** Through play, introduce affirming phrases to build resilience, such as, “I can handle this one step at a time.”
- **Say:** “What could this character say to remind themselves they’re doing their best?”

## 5. Create a Safe Space for Open Communication

- **Let Them Lead:** Give your child space to direct conversations or play about high school, reflecting their emotions back to them.
- **Say:** “You’re showing me that this part feels tricky. Can you tell me more about what you’re thinking?”
- **Normalize Their Concerns:** Share relatable stories or act out scenarios that show they’re not alone in feeling nervous.
- **Say:** “When I started something new, I felt unsure too. What do you think would help make things easier?”

### Additional Tips for Parents

- **Be Available:** Let your child know you’re there to support them without pushing them to share more than they’re ready for.
- **Celebrate Wins:** Acknowledge small successes, like preparing their uniform or packing their bag, to build confidence.
- **Say:** “You’re doing such a great job getting ready for this new adventure!”
- **Encourage Balance:** Help your child make time for fun, hobbies, and downtime to manage stress during the transition.

By using child-directed play therapy principles, you can support your child’s transition to high school in a positive and empowering way. Play allows them to explore their emotions, practice skills, and build the confidence they need for this new chapter. Trust their pace, celebrate their efforts, and create opportunities for connection as they step into this exciting phase of life.

At **Little Life Warriors Play Therapy**, we specialize in empowering children through play to embrace new experiences with confidence and joy.

### Parent Resources to Support You:

- **Emotion Matching Game** - A school transition-themed game to play at home promoting connection, problem-solving, building confidence, and starting conversations.

**Meditation** - A school transition-themed meditation. Set the scene with a darkened room, calming music and soothing scents and enjoy this meditation together. Building confidence

and practising mindfulness.

Available for free at [Resources | Little Life Warriors Play Therapy](#).

Let's Connect!

Contact us to explore how we can make this milestone fun and successful for your child.  
You've got this—and so do they!

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