



Returning to school after a holiday break can be a mix of emotions for children. Child-directed play therapy principles can provide a supportive, empowering way to help children process their feelings, build confidence, and prepare for the transition. Below are strategies based on play therapy techniques to help your child feel ready for the new term.

1. Use Play to Reintroduce Routines

- Morning and Evening Routines Through Role-Play: Use toys or puppets to act out getting ready for school. Let your child guide the play while you reflect on their choices.
- Example: “Your teddy is packing his school bag! What should he bring for lunch?”
- Create a Visual Schedule Together: Encourage your child to draw or use pictures to map out their day. This helps them feel in control and understand what’s coming.

2. Explore Emotions Through Play

- Validate Feelings: Use open-ended play to allow your child to express emotions. For example, set up a pretend school scene and observe how they play out interactions.
- Say: “It looks like this doll feels nervous about going back to school. What do you think would help her feel better?”
- Emotion Cards or Toys: Provide tools like feeling faces or figurines to help them identify and name emotions about returning to school.
- Say: “It’s okay if your toy feels unsure. What might make them feel more ready?”

3. Foster Independence Through Playful Practice

- **Encourage Problem-Solving:** Use scenarios in play where a character needs to manage tasks like packing their bag or asking for help. Let your child come up with solutions.
- Say: “This teddy isn’t sure how to pack his school bag. What should we tell him to do first?”
- **Self-Care Skills Through Pretend Play:** Practice independence skills like putting on shoes or organizing belongings by pretending to teach toys how to do it.

4. Build Social Confidence Through Play

- **Role-Play Reconnecting With Friends:** Use puppets or figurines to act out greeting friends or asking to join a game.
- Say: “What could this doll say to her friend? Maybe, ‘What did you do on the holidays?’”
- **Practice Conflict Resolution:** Play out scenarios where toys navigate sharing or resolving disagreements. Let your child take the lead in finding solutions.
- Say: “It looks like these two toys both want the same crayon. What could they do?”

5. Prepare for School Through Symbolic Play

- **Create a Mini School Setting:** Set up a pretend classroom with toys to act out typical school-day routines like sitting in class, recess, or asking the teacher for help.
- Say: “Let’s pretend this bear is starting his first day back. What will he do first?”
- **Use Stories to Build Anticipation:** During play, share positive “what if” scenarios, such as meeting a new friend or enjoying a fun activity.

6. Encourage Emotional Resilience Through Playful Coping

- **Normalize Mixed Feelings:** During play, model language like, “It’s okay if this toy feels a little nervous and excited at the same time.”
- **Teach Coping Tools:** Use play to practice deep breaths, counting to five, or finding a comfort item when a character feels overwhelmed.
- Say: “This doll is feeling nervous. What could she do to feel better? Maybe hold her favorite toy?”

7. Follow Your Child's Lead

- **Let Them Direct the Play:** Allow your child to guide the scenarios. This gives them control and helps them work through concerns at their own pace.
- **Say:** “What should happen next in this game? You decide!”
- **Reflect and Empower:** Repeat and validate their feelings during play: “It sounds like this teddy is really excited to see his friends again!”

By using child-directed play therapy principles, you can create a safe, supportive space for your child to process their feelings and build confidence for their return to school. Play not only makes the preparation fun but also helps children feel understood and capable of navigating their new term.

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!

Email: alison@littlifelifewarriors.com.au

Website: www.littlifelifewarriors.com.au

Phone: 0498558415.