

MAARIF FAMILY

The Turkish Maarif Foundation's publication for families



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IN THIS ISSUE

SCHOOL BAG

SELF-REGULATION

FEAR OF SCHOOL

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It's time for our children to gradually shake off the complacency that comes with fun trips and games during summer. It is important to get them ready for the new order and pace that will come with the start of schools and also to shorten the adaptation period as much as possible.

Starting school is a great novelty and change that families and teachers experience as well as children. This is an important beginning that will shape and guide children's attitude towards school, teachers, friends. The transition period to school can be the beginning of a stressful period for both the child and the family. So what can be done to reduce this stress and at the same time have a fruitful start for the child?

- Some children may have difficulty moving away from their family or comfort zone. The reasons for this can sometimes be the child's excessive fondness for his mother or father, and sometimes the fear that he will go to a different environment and stay apart from his family for a long time. Therefore, participation in the "Adaptation Week" scheduled at school can be a useful first step for the child to get used to school. This way, it can be significantly easier for them to become familiar with both their friends and teachers and, of course, the school building. If, as parents, you have the opportunity you should take them to school they will attend and explain what is happening there before they start school
- After enjoying the summer evenings and sleeping late in the morning, your child needs to find a new routine. To properly prepare for the beginning of the school year, you should change your child's bedtime and wake-up time (ideally 21:00 and 07:00) 1 week and 10 days before the start of school, so that they can get in shape and not have difficulties getting up.
- It is very important for children to focus while listening to the courses and are in good physical shape. In addition to sleep, one of the habits that must be acquired during childhood is the healthy eating habit. Regular and healthy nutrition plays a very important role in the child's development.

As parents, we cannot allow them to miss breakfast for the sake of catching the school bus. Just drinking a glass of milk will make a huge contribution to the development of the child. Having breakfast will lower your children's interest in junk food that they would like to consume outside. In addition, children should be advised to eat the meals in the cafeteria during breaks or to consume the food prepared by their families which they bring to school. It is of critical importance for the family to check and organize the nutrients appropriate for the child's age and needs. This habit acquired in childhood will continue to exist in adulthood.

- It is completely natural and normal for your child to resist the idea of leaving the comfort of summer vacation and going to school as the new academic year approaches. You can explain the situation in a soft manner, tell them that you understand why they worry about the change of teacher or classmates, that they will make new friends, they will play games, and that at their age you also had concerns when going to school.
- Setting goals with your children is a great strategy. In order for your child not to lose interest, focus and maintain motivation, your goals should be precise and planned. For example, we may suggest that your child completes all of their homework in one semester, reads a book for two hours a week, or participates in a creative activity that does not require him to be in front of the screen.



SELF-REGULATION

Each of us come into the world with various characteristics that are transmitted to us through genetics. We create diversity with our specific skills and abilities or predispositions to certain jobs. However, we all know that these abilities and skills change and develop with the experiences that we accumulate throughout our lives. Just as experiences shape our brain, our brain also shapes our experiences.

Each individual uses the skill of self-regulation in order to complete the tasks that they must perform from birth. So what exactly is self-regulation?

Self-regulation is the individual's capacity to focus on the purpose without needing the help or support of others and to keep this focus under control. Also self-regulation is the ability to monitor and manage our thoughts, feelings and behaviors in certain ways. Having such a skill has a number of benefits, such as openness to learn and have new experiences, the ability to find a balance of love in our relationships, and well-being. Basically, it can be said that self-regulation is a healthy way to deal with stress factors. Developing self-regulation skills; requires self-awareness, emotional intelligence, the ability to distinguish emotional stimuli, to be active in social relationships and to be able to maintain focus.



The development of self-regulation skill is one of the important tasks of childhood. Children acquire this skill in a natural way during learning processes. Parents should pay attention to the following issues in order to improve the skill of self-regulation in their children.

- You can get your child to spend more time with adults who have self-regulation skills. You can try to encourage conversations with well-educated, knowledgeable, cultured and conscious adults.
- You can encourage your child to devote more time to games and exercises that you consider educational and instructive. For example, you can find a variety of games and exercises online or outside (visual attention, hand-eye coordination, spatial memory, math skills, and visual, verbal and auditory memory) depending on your child's age.
- You can encourage your child to spend more time in nature. Spending time in nature positively affects people's physical and psychological well-being, that is, their health. Being in nature from an early age positively affects physical health. It minimizes the risk of diseases. If you want to encourage the development of your children, have them spend time in nature rather than artificial living environments. Nature has contributes to our health: it strengthens the psyche, increases the body's resistance, lowers blood pressure and the risk of heart attack, and also improves your quality of sleep.

- A healthy diet also benefits mental and physical health. A healthy body accelerates cognitive development, protects from diseases, which allows the body to become more energetic and dynamic. Resolves problems that affect daily life, such as fatigue, weakness. It improves psychological wellbeing. Therefore, you can follow child's nutrition and ensure that they eat healthy.

A simple symptom of a disruption in the development of this skill is that the child, as a general condition, is overexcited, nervous and tired. Stressful and (mentally) disorganized adults, lack of exercise, not spending enough time with nature, sleep disorders, malnutrition are factors that interfere with the development of self-regulation in a child. Children who grow up in this way may experience problems in learning, engagement, impulse control, and social relationships.

Dr. Stuart Shanker's illustration on the learning stages of self-regulation sheds some light on the functioning of this process. He basically talks defines it as:

"Self-regulation is like being able to stay stable at a certain speed while driving a car. If we want to constantly move at a speed of 75 km/h, we will also need to take road conditions and wind into account. Driving a car requires compliance with instantaneous changes in traffic and speed restrictions. Learning to accelerate, brake and change gears takes practice and time. This process is very similar to the development of children's self-regulation skills. Some accelerate too much, while others miss gears. Some accelerate very slowly. Children need time and support as they develop their skills to find and maintain their own optimal pace. In this process, they need to cope with stress and stimuli."

So in order to develop self-regulation skills, children need not only time but also the support of their parents.



FEAR OF SCHOOL

Children may not want to go to school because of anxiety they experience. Experts who define this with concepts such as fear of school or phobia of school indicate that fear of school can be experienced at all levels. This fear, which usually arises from the anxiety of separation from their parents during preschool and primary school, can manifest itself in later due to different reasons.

In early childhood, the child may cry and exhibit unexpected behaviors as a result of this separation during adaptation to school. The reason for this anxiety felt by the child often is similar to the attitude of the parents. After coming from school, parents who want to create an environment of trust for their child can increase their child's anxiety levels by saying things like; "I've missed you". Because when children go to school, they may also feel that they have betrayed their parents. For this reason, in order to eliminate the fear of school it would be useful for parents to change certain behaviour which they have shown with good intention.



Fear of school does not arise solely due to anxiety of separation from the parent. Individual differences, family dynamics and stress factors arising from the school environment can also cause school phobia. A child with an anxiety disorder may experience fear of school. Also, an addition of a new individual to the family, changing schools or class, being bullied at school can also cause fear of school in advanced childhood and adolescence. Refusal to go to school, experiencing psychosomatic pain (abdominal pain, headache, nausea, etc.), behavioral problems (outbursts of anger, depression and aggression, etc.), the child's attempt to miss the school bus, not socializing at school, and wanting to get out of school as soon as possible may be indicators of school phobia in children.

To help your children who are experiencing school phobia;

- It is important that you are patient and persistent in ensuring attendance to school.
- You shouldn't blame your child for not wanting to go to school. You can comfort them by telling them that they are not the only child who is experiencing this, and that many children are in a similar situation and suggest that they can overcome this difficult phase.
- When preparing your child for school, spend the day like an ordinary day without a fuss.
- Talk to the class teacher about the fear of school that your child is experiencing and cooperate with them against the problems they may have at school.

- Your child will benefit from socializing with their peers. It is essential that the child finds a social environment in which they can connect with people other than family members and feel safe. For this reason, you can encourage your child to communicate with their peers.
- Keep in constant contact with your child. Knowing about what is upsetting them is the first step to help your child overcome their fear of school. Even if your child doesn't want to talk to you about things that upset them, know their order of the day. During the day, you can chat with them and encourage them to talk about their experience at school.
- If the situation at home is what triggers a child to experience school phobia, don't hesitate to talk to them about it. Try to solve problems by talking to them. The healthy development and education that your children need can only take place in a peaceful and happy family environment.

Parents may not be able to solve their children's problems alone, so it is important to receive support from school where they spend most of their time. Being in cooperation with teachers, parents, administrators and other stakeholders significantly affects the social, emotional and academic development of the child.



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