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columns



the mindful divorcée

by Debbie Martinez, Divorce Coach

Navigating the School Year Stress Free (Part 2)

LAST MONTH I DISCUSSED HOW TO NAVIGATE THE SCHOOL YEAR WITH your ex in order to cut down on the stress level. This month, I am discussing how to manage things at home to head stress off at the pass.

Get organized – Do this well in advance so there's no rushing at the last minute to buy supplies, books and uniforms or to fill out paperwork.

Develop a command center – Set it up in a convenient location. Encourage the kids to write down on a whiteboard the things they need at least three days in advance. Establish an out box for each child. As they unpack their backpacks, they can put any papers you need to read or sign in the in box, and, in the morning, they can take whatever is in their outbox. Post a calendar so they see what their activities are and any special items they need for that day. Children thrive on structure; they will have the security of knowing where to look for information, and they will learn responsibility.

Create a safe, stress-free area – Create a place where your child knows he or she can have quiet time. It can be a corner of their room that you set up with big pillows, a blanket, coloring books, crayons and music. Make sure it's an unplug zone, with no computers or phones.

Set an example – Your point of view regarding stress invariably become theirs. Your mood sets the mood of your children.

Talk positively – Talk with your kids about the upcoming school year, and ask them which after-school activities they would like to participate in. Don't over schedule them.

Acknowledge their nervousness and brainstorm ways to ease it. Keep the focus on the positive and not about how the previous year went. Keep communication open by making yourself available to listen, not necessarily to talk. If they start to get anxious, redirect their thoughts to the fun they had over the summer.

Get into school mode – About two weeks before the first day of school, talk with your kids and make sure everything is in place. Let them know that school mode begins during the last week of summer vacation. This means going to bed at the set school time. During that week, talk with them about your expectations, explain what the command center is all about and make a cheat sheet with their schedule, locker combination, teachers' names and room numbers. Once school starts, establish a nighttime routine of packing lunches, getting school clothes out, setting the alarm clock and putting the backpack by the door. In the morning, don't throw open the bedroom door and yell "Time to get up." Give the kids a few minutes of cuddle time before you turn on the light. Make them a healthy breakfast and send them out the door with a bottle of water. Staying hydrated means less fatigue and a better mood and memory. After school, give them play and quiet time and a structured time and environment in which to do their homework.

And last, but certainly not least, it is never too early to teach your children to think positively and to laugh as often as they can. Except, of course, in class.

Debbie Martinez, MA is a certified, mindful life coach specializing in divorce (aka: heartbreak coach). She professionally coaches clients on how to avoid the breakup backlash and live better, not bitter. As a Florida Supreme Court Certified Family Mediator trained in collaborative divorce, Debbie gives clients the tools they need to successfully untie the knot and stand strong in the wake of adversity. She brings her formal training and life experience into her coaching practice to empower and educate clients through their divorce journey and onto new beginnings. You can contact Debbie at debbie@transformationthrudivorce.com.

