



Having Mixed Feelings About Your Child Starting Kindergarten?

***Child Communication Expert and Kimochis® Education Director
Shares Tips to Make the Transition Easier for You and Your Little One***

SAN RAFAEL, CA – Entering kindergarten is a very exciting time in a child’s life. This meaningful stage is filled with possibility for kids—making new friends, forging new adventures, and a sense that they are growing up and taking the first real step in their academic lives. Starting Kindergarten can also be filled with emotions for parents.

“First words, first steps, first tooth, first day of school are proud, exciting and unforgettable moments. When a child starts Kindergarten, parents may be filled with happy and excited feelings along with scared and nervous feelings. This is called, ‘mixed feelings.’ When parents use simple communication tools to manage their own emotions, they stay connected with their child. As a result, a family can move more easily through emotional transitions,” says Ellen Pritchard Dodge, M. Ed. CCC-SLP, child communication expert. Dodge offers some simple tips to help parents navigate this emotional milestone.

Stay Connected. Avoid cell phones or deep conversations with other grown-ups at pick-up and drop-off. You can still send friendly signals to other parents such as smiling and making eye contact, but little ones need your full attention—this is the most important time for your child and you to connect.

Communicating from the Heart. Saying good-bye can be emotional for both parent and child. (It’s often harder for the parent!) Talk about and practice how you will say goodbye. Use the Kimochis® Nesting Heart to help ease the separation. Your child can take the inner Heart to school (clipped to a belt loop or back pack) and you can keep the outer heart at home. Create a playful ritual for separating the hearts at drop-off



and putting your hearts back together at pick-up. Reassure your child (and yourself!) that the Nesting Heart keeps you connected even when you are apart.

Listening to Upset Feelings. When your child is feeling upset, you will likely feel upset too! Practice acknowledging, rather than rushing your child through challenging emotions. Instead, make a compassionate noise and keep the conversation in your child’s court. “Ahhh...tell me more about why you feel sad.” (Listen.) “Can you think of anything you can do to make your sad feelings a little smaller?” (Listen.) If your child does not have any ideas you can lovingly say, “Would you like to know what some kids do to make their sad feelings better?” Share some ideas like asking for a hug, snuggling with a lovey, talking to mommy or daddy.

Practice Before the Big Day. Go to the school and play “let’s pretend it’s a school day.” Just being on the grounds will make you both feel more comfortable as you get the lay of the land—creating a fun, positive, safe connection to school.

Managing Your Own Mixed Feelings. When your child goes through a tricky transition phase, think of a prior phase that your child has already moved through to remind yourself that this too shall pass! To help calm your own mixed feelings, take a moment to look at the big picture by using the 5/5/5 tool. Ask yourself, “Is it possible that my child will still be having this issue in 5 days? 5 months? 5 years?”

About Ellen Pritchard Dodge

ELLEN PRITCHARD DODGE, M.ED CCC-SLP, Educational Director of Kimochis®, the makers of Kimochis®...Toys With Feelings Inside, has published numerous books and articles, has given over 400 workshops both nationally and internationally, and teaches in public schools in Northern California where her communication curriculum won a National Character Education Award.

About Kimochis®

Kimochi (KEY.MO.CHEE) means “feeling” in Japanese. Kimochis® characters help families learn how to identify and express feelings, solve behavioral problems, communicate openly, resolve conflicts, build the foundations for emotional intelligence and academic success, and create closer connections. For more information on Kimochis® and how to use them, go to www.kimochis.com.

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