**Claire de Jager**

**HAPPY FAMILY TOOLS**

[**www.happyfamilytools.co.za**](http://www.happyfamilytools.co.za) **Facebook: Happy Family Tools**

**Emotions for teachers to be aware of as kids return to school**

Our children returning to school may experience a number of different emotions as discussed in my talk. Below the emotions have been written out in bullet form for ease of reference.

**Anxiety**

* Fear of ‘something’ that will ‘get them’
* Having to leave home where they feel safe
* Having to separate from their parents after having been with them for so long

**Worried**

* Worried they might get sick
* Worried family members or teachers might get sick
* Sensory overload due to being in lockdown in a quiet home (blocking their ears, weeping, tantrums)

**Depression**

* Children may not seem themselves. They may seem withdrawn or very quiet
* Other children may appear very irritable which can be a sign of depression in children
* Children may be depressed because of home circumstances during lockdown such as gender based violence, verbal conflict in the home, possible separation/divorce
* They may have felt they were in the way and a nuisance the whole of lockdown while their parents with busy trying to work, homeschool and keep their homes together

**Relief**

* Getting out of the house
* Getting away from a stress-filled home
* Able to interact and play with friends again
* Being in a place they feel safe

**Anger**

* Angry that they have to return to school
* Angry because of all the conflict in the home
* Angry as a loved one is unwell and they can’t see them
* Angry that they haven’t seen grandparents for an extended period of time
* Angry as they have felt disconnected in their homes with their parents being busy and distracted
* Angry because their world has chaged and they can’t understand why
* Not understanding why they are being prevented from seeing loved ones and friends
* Angry that they are at school while their parents/ some siblings are still at home
* Hitting other kids because that’s what they do at home

**Sad**

* Having lost family members to illness
* Having lost family through separation/divorce
* Having said goodbye to people over the phone
* Not understanding why they can’t see certain people

Isolating

* May sit alone, not want to interact – just trying to readjust and get back in touch with life

**Lack of self-awareness**

* Parents doing things for them as its quicker – therefore reduced abilities/skills
* Needing to be reminded of their capabilities
* Need space and time to redefine themselves as individuals as not having been apart from the family group for many months

**Lack of respect for rules**

* Lack of boundaries at home
* Experienced hunger and eat food the moment it is placed before them
* Talking back
* Silent treatment – learnt it at home
* Fussy – busy parents having taken the easy way out
  + Will lead to tantrum’ing at mealtimes or refusal to eat

**How do I manage these behaviour’s in the classroom?**

* Remind them regularly of the classroom rules so that they can familiarize themselves with them again
* When they do something wrong, ask them if they made a wrong decision and what decision they could have made. With the younger kid, show disappointment with your face, maybe shaking your head to emphasize it.
* Don’t jump into strict discipline as we don’t want school refusal
* Emphasize how happy you are to see them again. Many may not have felt valued at home with busy parents
* Remind them how to use manners, don’t expect them to have remembered
* Have a certain amount of flexibility in the class in order to give children the chance of readjusting to a routine
* Teach kids how to do butterfly hugs by facing their hands towards themselves and linking their thumbs to form a butterfly, and then move the wings (fingers) of the butterfly to resemble a hug. Tell the children that when they want a hug, they can do this sign and you will then do it back to them and that sometimes you will do I to them when you want a hug and they can do it back to you. Practice doing it in morning rings
* Superhero theme programs will work well and build courage (some downloadable ideas attached)
* Allow children to express their emotions but remind them that it need to be done appropriately
* Use humour as it takes the edge off anxiety and will help to bond the class together more quickly

**How to deal with loss of life**

* We can’t bring back people that have been lost, but we can allow children to talk about their loved ones, draw pictures or write letters (with your help) to their loved ones