



Decode their tricky behaviour

<https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/families/enewsletter/decode-their-tricky-behaviour>

Starting school can be a mixed bag of feelings and emotions. Many kids will feel excited about how grown up they are and really look forward to making new friends. But, it's just as common for children to be sad, angry and even fearful about the looming transition and the time they will be apart from you.

Kids tend to demonstrate their feelings through their behaviour. Look at it like an iceberg: their (unexpected/confusing/erratic) behaviour is the tip poking out above the water. But if you take a peek into the depths below, you will likely find a mass of feelings that tell the real story.

Common behaviours in kids starting school

Kids might:

- cling to mum and dad
- be restless
- withdraw emotionally
- be anxious or aggressive
- refuse to follow the rules
- avoid doing things
- have problems planning and organising
- cry and throw tantrums
- have problems eating and sleeping
- revert to younger behaviours (like thumb-sucking).

What you can do

- First things first: you know your child best. Think about what is likely to be behind the behaviour, and how you have helped them manage these feelings well in the past. It might just do the trick.
- Never underestimate the power of love! Give your child some extra nurturing care and attention, knowing that they are going through a significant, challenging transition. They will feel safer and more secure.

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- Teach them to recognise and express their feelings as a way of understanding uncomfortable emotions. You could: role play with you child or have them draw their feelings; verbally label emotions; and even share your own experiences.
- Just feeling heard helps. Show your child that they have your full attention: come down to their level; listen to what they're saying and take in their body language; respond gently as to what you think they are saying and what the reason might be.

Have a look at our Starting School resource on [understanding behaviour](#).

