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Family and Children's Services Children's Developmental Services

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Horse Therapy for Children with Special Needs



Therapeutic riding programs bring disabled children and adults together with horses in a world where disabilities can fade away, if only for a short time.

Therapeutic handicapped riding programs are popping up all over the country.

These riding programs bring disabled children and adults together with horses in a world where disabilities can fade away, if only for a short time. Fears can be overcome, self-esteem built up, can inspire confidence and often times the programs can give control of movement via the horse to a child that has not much control.

Some of the other important factors that horseback riding offers is it teaches a skill while at the same time helps the rider to stretch and strengthen muscle tone. The rhythm of riding helps to relax the body and improve balance and coordination. A good riding program will have safe, gentle horses, provide riding helmets, assist with getting off and on the horse/pony and provide a handler for leading and an attendant walking on alongside the rider. These are special horses with a special attitude, many of these horses know that they have to "take care" of the rider.

Riding is a very motivating activity. It is so much more fun than exercising in a gym. It is social, entertaining, enlightening and sometimes even spiritual. But above all else it is therapeutic in so many aspects of everyone's life, for the rider, for the parents, for the volunteers and for the instructors. It brings people together from all walks of life, people who would never have a chance to interact with a horse or with a person with a disability. It levels the playing field for those who could never think about the benefits of riding. It is inspiring to watch a frightened youngster gain confidence. It is exciting to see someone who is bound to a wheelchair explore the freedom of movement.

Riding provides social integration for a person with Autism. It does require an awareness of socially appropriate behaviors. Other emotional benefits can be an increase in self-confidence once you are able to ride independently. It can give a person an interest outside of oneself and in another living being.

There are therapeutic riding programs across the district and country.

One other final note, the horse and rider usually make a friendship that lasts a lifetime.




Preschool Prep: Getting Ready for The Big Transition

Submitted by Brenda Witherspoon-Bedard


If your child is starting preschool this fall, you may be approaching this major milestone with conflicting emotions. You're probably excited about all the fun (you hope) your child will have and the new friends he'll make. At the same time, you may feel a little sad that your baby is venturing out into the big world without you. These emotions are normal. Your child is also bound to have a host of feelings about this transition, feeling proud to be a big kid but at the same time worried about being separated from you and starting something unfamiliar.


There's a lot you can do in the weeks before to get ready for the big day. But try to keep your efforts low-key. If you make too big a deal out of this milestone, your child may end up being more worried than excited. Here are some ideas to keep the focus on fun.





 **Use pretend play to explore the idea of preschool.** Take turns being the parent, child and teacher. Act out common daily routines, such as saying good-bye to mommy and/or daddy, taking off your coat, singing songs, reading stories, having Circle Time, playing outside, and taking naps. Reassure your child that preschool is a good place where he will have fun and learn. Answer his questions patiently. This helps children feel more in control which reduces their anxiety.




 **Read books about preschool.** There are many books about going to preschool available from the public library in your area. Choose several to share with your child over the summer before school starts. Talk about the story and how the characters are feeling. Ask how your child is feeling.

 **Make a game out of practicing self-help skills** like: unzipping her coat, hanging her coat on a hook, putting on her backpack, fastening her shoes. For example, you might want to have a "race" with your child to see how quickly she can put on her shoes. When you play school together, you can give your child the chance to practice taking off her coat, zipping her backpack closed, and sitting "criss-cross applesauce." If your child will be bringing lunch, pack it up one day before school starts and have a picnic together. This will give her the chance to practice unzipping her lunch box and unwrapping her sandwich—important skills for the first day! Your child may also have some questions or concerns about starting preschool, either before or after she starts in the fall. Help her get ready with these two key strategies:


 **Listen to your child's worries.** Although it's tempting to quickly reassure your child and move on, it's important to let your child know that his worries have been heard. No matter what they are, big or small, children's worries about preschool can significantly influence their experience there. Will you remember to pick her up in the afternoon? Will her teacher be nice? Let your child know it's normal to feel happy, sad, excited, scared, or worried. Explain that starting something new can feel scary and that lots of people feel that way. It can be helpful to share a time when you started something new and how you felt. When you allow your child to share her worries, you can help her think through how to deal with them. For example, if she is worried about missing you, the two of you can make a book of family photos to keep in her cubby and look at when she is lonely.


 **Notice nonverbal messages.** As much as 3-year-olds may talk, most are not yet able to fully explain how they are feeling or what they are worried about. Your child may “act out” his worry by clinging, becoming withdrawn, or by being more aggressive. Another common reaction as children take a big move forward is to actually move backward in other areas. For example, if your child is fully potty trained, he may start have toileting accidents. He may ask that you feed or dress him even though he can do these things by himself. It is natural to be frustrated by this regressed behavior, and you may be concerned that if you do these things for him, he won’t go back to doing them himself. In fact, letting him play this out often leads to children returning to their “big kid” selves sooner. Remember that your child is facing—and managing—a big change in his life. He may need more support, nurturing, and patience from you while he makes this transition.


These strategies can ease the jitters of separating on your child’s first day at preschool:

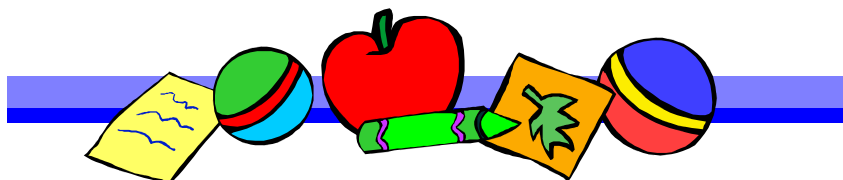
 **Plan to stay a little while.** Staying for 15-30 minutes on that first morning can help ease the transition. Together, the two of you can explore the classroom, meet some other children, and play with a few toys. When you see that your child is comfortable, it is time to leave. If he is having a harder time getting engaged, you may want to ask your child’s teacher to stay with your child as you say good-bye so that when you leave, he can turn to another caring adult for support.



 **Keep your tone positive and upbeat.** Children pick up on the reactions of the trusted adults in their lives. So try not to look worried or sad, and don’t linger too long. Say a quick, upbeat good-bye and reassure your child that all will be well.

 **Think about creating a special good-bye routine.** For example, you can give your child a kiss on his or her palm to “hold” all day long. Or, the two of you can sing a special song together before you leave. Good-bye routines are comforting to children and help them understand and prepare for what will happen next.

 **Resist the rescue.** Try not to run back in the classroom if you hear your child crying, as upsetting as this can be. This is a big change and your child may, quite understandably, feel sad and a little scared. But if you run back in, it sends the message that he is only okay if you are there and it is likely to prolong your child’s distress and make it harder for him to adapt. Rest assured, teachers have many years of experience with helping families make the shift to preschool. Instead, you can wait outside the classroom for a few minutes to ensure that all is well, or call the school later in the morning to check-in.





What House Do You Live In?

"I got two A's," the small boy cried.
His voice was filled with glee.
His father very bluntly asked,
"Why didn't you get three?"
"Mom. I've got the dishes done!"
The girl called from the door.
Her mother very calmly said,
"And did you sweep the floor?"
"I've mowed the grass," the tall boy
said, "And put the mower away!"
His father asked him, with a shrug.
"Did you clean off the clay?"

The children in the
house next door
Seem happy and
content.
The same things
happened over there,
But this is how it went:
"I got two A's," the



small boy cried,
His voice was filled with glee.
His father proudly said, "That's great!
I'm glad you live with me!"
"Mom I've got the dishes done!
The girl called from the door.
Her mother smiled and softly said.
"Each day I love you more."
"I've mowed the grass." the tall boy
said. "And put the mower away!"
His father answered with much joy.
"You've made my happy day!"
Children deserve a little praise
For tasks they're asked to do.
If they're to lead a happy life,
So much depends on you.

By Badger Leionnare



Are you aware that Family and Children's services offer a variety of voluntary services within the Rainy River District? These services include:

Children's Mental Health Services – Assisting children, adolescence and their families who may be experiencing emotional, social, and/or psychological problems in their school, family, and/or community life. Services are provided free of charge, for a wide range of difficulties from mild adjustment reactions to severe psychiatric problems in children ranging in age from birth up to 18 years.

Infant & Child Development – Servicing children 0 – 6 years of age who are at risk for a delay, or children with a diagnosed physical, developmental or sensory disability. Some of the services provided include early intervention programs, developmental screening and assessments, assistance with transition to school for special needs children, and parenting programs on a group or individual basis.

Community Integration – servicing children with a developmental disability 6 years – 18 years. The primary focus of this program is to facilitate integration into the community. Some of the services provided include developmental assessments, advocacy in relation to other agencies, linkages to health, financial, and educational resources in the community.

Family Relief – a program that provides families a respite period from the responsibility of the daily care of an individual with a developmental disability. The three options to services include In-home respite – provided in the family home, Out-of-home respite – provided in the approved worker's home, and community participation – The individual is accompanied by their Family Relief Worker into the community to participate in community events or activities.

For more information about the above voluntary services please contact Family and Children's Services
For Fort Frances call (807) 274-7787 or 1-800-465-7764 (Toll Free), for Atikokan call (807) 597-2700, and for Rainy River call (807) 483-1357.

To make a referral for service, please call Integrated Services Northwest, The Integrated Services for Northern Children Program for Single Point of access. For Fort Frances, Rainy River and area call 274-7787, for Atikokan area call 807-597-4528

Do you have something to Share?
Please phone **Debra Bruyere**
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