

First Day Of School Jitters

By Melissa M. Williams

As a children's author, one of my main goals in the Iggy the Iguana series is to focus on situations that are relatable to children. In the beginning of Iggy's story, he is nervous to start his first day at a new public school ... and to make matters worse, he is also changing from a private "All-Lizard" school to a public "All-Animal" school. Just like Iggy, all children experience "the first day of school" and many experience the rollercoaster ride of changing schools multiple times in their life. For some children, new experiences are fun and exciting as they look forward to meeting new friends, however, others can't help but dread the inner turmoil when facing these new situations.

I remember having to change elementary schools multiply times in my life, and eventually I switched from a small private school to a large public school. I always had a very nervous and shy temperament when I was around unfamiliar people and places. Now, I am quite the opposite, but back then I almost trembled when called upon in class to answer a question. The teachers loved that I was so polite and quiet, but inside, little did they know I was a nervous wreck.

While talking to students about how nervous Iggy was on his first day at a new school, I explain to them all the reasons why he may feel this way. Many students will raise their hand and tell me that they relate to Iggy. So, the appropriate thing to do to validate the way a child is feeling requires normalizing these universal feelings for them. This is also the basic principle I studied while preparing to counsel individuals with anxiety prone disorders. Anxiety is basically a normal instinct. It keeps us alert, but many of us will develop a sensitivity to it, which has even thought to be partly genetic by many scholars in the psychology field.

Normal First Day of School Jitters:

- It is normal to feel nervous when you don't know what to expect.
- It is normal to worry that you are going to be the tallest girl or shortest boy.
- It is normal to worry if anyone else is going judge you on the outside.
- It is normal to worry you aren't going to know the answer to a question.

When kids understand that everyone will have these worries, some of the focus can be taken off of themselves and directed at making another student feel comfortable instead. It is also important to remember that everyone deals with insecurities differently. Some children may pick on others, like Buddy the Bullfrog

(the bully from the Bronx) or they may turn red and act clumsy, like Iggy the Iguana, or they may come off shy and quiet, like Snap Shell the wannabe surfer Box Shell Turtle, or maybe they are naturally great at making friends, like Lizibeth the Lizard.

The important thing to do is to listen to your child's worries and even give them an example of a time when you felt nervous at their age or currently as an adult. Kids love to hear that their parents may be normal every once in a while. Don't we all yearn to relate to one another?