Session 3

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Pro-Active Caring Home and School Transition Exchange

Stepping out of your comfort zone, putting your best foot forward in a Stress Free Way.

Rapid heart beat, fast breathing, tense muscles, sleeping difficulties, stomach aches, sleeping too much eating too little or too much, lesser immune responses, fight or flight. What do all these things have in common? They are responses to stress and anxiety. As we mentioned in earlier weeks, stress and anxiety are sometimes responses to transitions and changes in life.

Simply growing up and living day to day will require us to go through many transitions. Whether positive or negative, transitions/changes can create anxiety in our lives. Even happy moments can create stress due to the “newness” of the experience. Life transitions are challenging because they force us to let go of the familiar and face a future of unknowns. In life, we are generally on autopilot when our life changes; we are forced to find new ways of adapting. This new environment or “new normal” can create feelings of vulnerability and unease i.e. stress/anxiety. These new ways are different and unfamiliar we are unsure of the future and how to react. Change impacts how we view the world and challenges us to shift our worldwide view. We are therefore, forced to re-define things and perhaps even redefine ourselves.

Transitions with regard to children with special needs may make us feel anxious at times. These are uncharted waters and it is perfectly normal to feel unease during these new times. Our hopes for our child’s future may need to be modified or adapted; these changes can create a level of uncertainty, thereby creating possible stress/anxiety.

Research tells us that building resilience is a positive way of attempting to cope with these changes. So how do we build resilience and learn to cope with stress and anxiety? Some of the following strategies may be helpful.

\*Try to stay in the present, try not to look back or forward too much. The present time is the new environment.

\*Evaluate your level of control in the situation. There will be things that you can and can’t control set your sights on what you can control. Ask yourself what can I do and take responsibility for in this situation, and work towards that.

\* Acknowledge the “new normal” don’t push your feelings about it away. Embrace your emotions. Try to explore these feelings and review your reality.

\*Check your thoughts, remind yourself of other times when you have successfully navigated difficult situations, focus on your strengths in this situation. Keep your successes in mind and try to utilize those same skills in this situation.

\*Find your priorities, look towards your goals, and try to achieve small successes. Try not to worry too long term; taking short steps towards a positive end is important.

\*Keep some of your old familiar routines while also working on creating new ones.

\*Keep up with hobbies or preferred things, find things that can bring joy or happiness and participate in them despite the challenges you are facing.

\*Be good to yourself; give yourself time to adjust. Identify negative thoughts and feelings; see if they are accurate and constructive and try to change those that are not. For each negative thought try to identify an alternative positive thought/feeling.

\*Perhaps keep a diary of your experiences and thoughts. A diary is a positive way to review your progress and process your thinking.

\*Don’t expect to understand your feelings and overcome things right away, give yourself the value of time.

\*Listen to your body, it may be telling you to slow down, get support, take time out for yourself. The old saying “you can’t care for others if you don’t care for yourself” is true in this situation.

\*Identify others for support. Seek out people who have experienced similar issues for assistance or people who give you comfort. These could be friends, teachers, therapists etc.

\* Know that there will be mistakes we are all imperfect. There will be

re-adjustments within the adjustments. We are always adapting, reviewing and reevaluating changes within the transition.

\*Try to stay in the present and be kind to yourself.