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First day jitters: There's an app for that

By Blake Schuller

Technology has been an amazing resource for almost anything one would ever need, but did you think that maybe technology could help you with those first day anxieties? I have come to realize that talking through an issue can really help, giving you the opportunity to figure out your feelings with the help of an outside insight.

Whether you are 6 or 26, the first day of school can be very exciting, but for some it can be an anxiety provoking time. Here I am going into my senior year of college, and I still experience those first day jitters. On the first day of kindergarten, I wore my powder blue leather outfit and matching sparkly clogs. That special outfit helped take my mind off that crazy, nervous feeling because honestly, how could one be scared wearing such a hip outfit?

Since those days, I have not been able to find a suitable leather leisure suit or nice enough clogs to take away those start-of-school fears. The beginning of school is still a time I look forward to, but as the day comes closer, my anxieties and apprehensions seem to spike. After all these years, I still get nervous even though I know that I am not the only one going through this. So after 15 years of "first days," I have become somewhat of a "First Day Pro." With that in mind, I would like to share some tips and suggestions to help fight off those uneasy feelings.

Technology has been an amazing resource for almost anything one would ever need, but did you think that maybe technology could help you with those first day anxieties? I have come to realize that talking through an issue can really help, giving you the opportunity to figure out your feelings with the help of an outside insight. As you get older, talking through issues becomes a lot easier. So a younger child may possibly need a little more assistance. I have found some great resources to help you or your child work through that first day apprehension or any negative feelings for that matter. It is a free app called "Positive Penguin." It is perfect for a child who is trying to work through something that's weighing on them. The child starts off by creating their own character, and then, their character's friends help them work through whatever concern is at hand. Before they even know it, they have talked through something that's upsetting them and have come up with a solution.

"The Worry Box" is another app that can help with getting over any anxiety. It is a resource that helps you identify irrational thoughts and gives you the opportunity to participate in activities that help reduce negative thinking. No matter what age, sometimes all we need is someone to bring us back to reality. Meditation is an amazing tool that can also relax and calm certain thoughts. When I first discovered meditation, I was completely against it. However, after I gave it a chance I realized how life changing it could be. For adults, meditation can be as simple as laying on your back listening to calm music, but for children this may be a little more difficult to accomplish. For children there are two apps that are great for guided meditation. One is called "Enchanted Meditation"; the other is "Smiling Mind." Both are geared towards kids, and they make meditation easily accessible at any age.

I wish I had known about these resources when I was younger to prevent that sleepless night right before school started. I would lie in my bed and think about every little detail. Whether that be what I was wearing or which subject got the pink folder and which one got the orange. Whether you or your child is struggling with these anxieties, many of these resources can be helpful. Talk to a friend, a family member, take a yoga class or even seek out mental health counseling. You are not alone with this daunting feeling about the first day of school, and who knows, maybe one day you will find a leather outfit that takes away all your worries.

—Blake Schuller is an undergraduate intern at Needham Youth Services. Learn more about Needham Youth Services at needhamma.gov/youth.