



ask joan

kindergarten parents need a warm welcome, too!

When our children officially become “kindergartners”, we feel a bit out of sorts for a while. We worry about how our kids will do without us in the big new world they are entering. We will not be with them to help navigate the challenges they will encounter. Teachers and other educators will be in charge of handling our children’s concerns. I envision the kindergarten transition similar to the experience that young adults encounter when they begin a new job - stressing about expectations and fears of measuring up, worrying about getting along with peers and bosses, and diving into an unfamiliar environment without having time to understand or assess the culture. The adjustment requires risk taking, resilience, and measurable amounts of self-confidence.

Because we are so preoccupied with our children’s well being, we might not think about how disconnected and adrift some parents feel in a new school environment. More often than not, preschool communities are much smaller than kindergarten settings. Many families have bonded over the years as their children have been together in toddler groups and preschool classes. Strong attachments develop when we go through similar experiences with our children. Moving on often

entails the loss of long-term associations that have been a tremendous source of support and comfort.

A mother of 6-year-old identical twin boys was thrilled about how well her boys were adjusting to school; however, she confessed that she was having difficulty. She felt estranged and alone when she walked her boys into school. She explained that most of the other families knew one another because their children transitioned together from preschool into kindergarten. She described that she felt as if she were back in middle school trying to fit in when it appeared as if everyone else were part of a clique. Although other friends reassured her that it takes time to make new relationships, she continues to feel somewhat isolated and alone. She has become involved in some of the school’s fundraising activities in hopes that she will meet other parents in this way.

Just as children transition into new experiences at their own pace, parents also must be patient and philosophical about these unfamiliar circumstances. Please make an effort to reach out to families that are looking for new connections. Both children and adults thrive on warmth and friendship to help soothe the anxiety and discomfort that accompany life-changing events.

Dr. Joan A. Friedman is a psychotherapist who has devoted years of her professional career to educating twins and their families about twins’ emotional needs. A twin herself and having worked through her own twinship challenges and parented her fraternal twin sons, she is a definitive expert about twin development. She is the author of *Emotionally Healthy Twins: A New Philosophy for Parenting Two Unique Children*. Her second book that is now available, *The Same but Different*, addresses the intricacies of adult twin relationships.

