

nice to meet you!

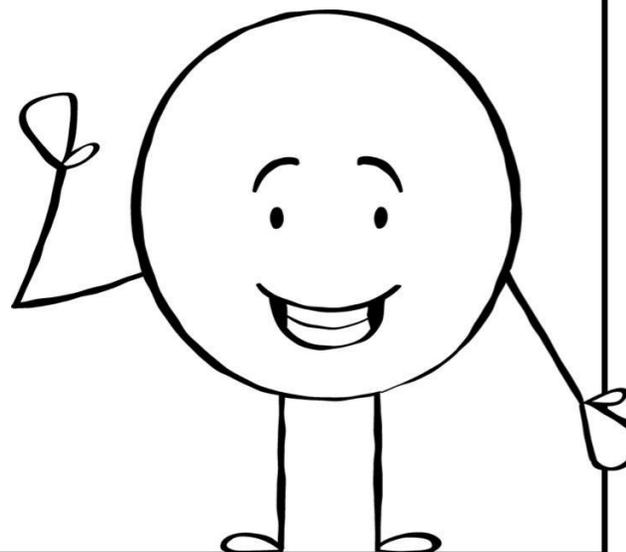
Hi, there!

I'm Barbara Eisenmenger – mom of two, child therapist, and licensed clinical social worker. I am thrilled to begin the partnership between Gundersen Health System and the School District of La Crosse to provide care to students and their families in the form of brief school-based mental health support and family outreach.

As a parent, guardian, or caregiver of an elementary student enrolled in La Crosse schools, you can anticipate a monthly newsletter that covers a wide range of common questions about child development AND some tips and tricks to help manage tough moments at home.

Caring for kids is HARD, support is crucial, and you are not in this alone!

Take care,
Barbara



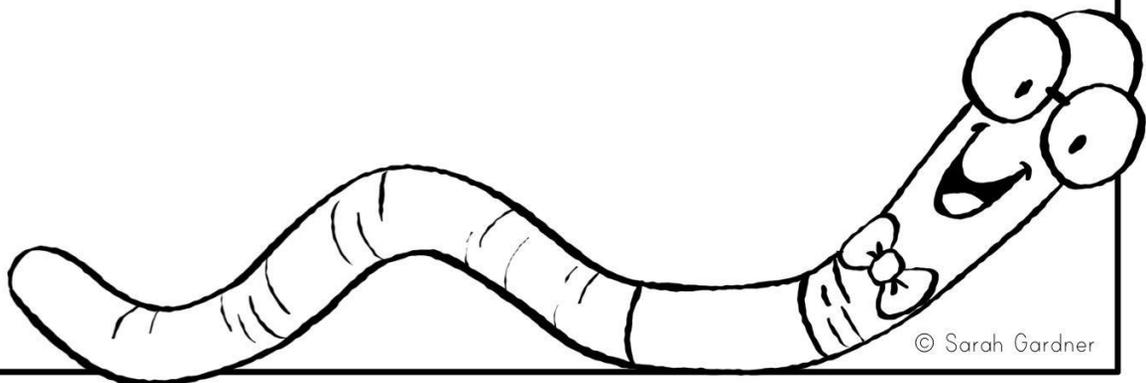
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Brainstorming with Barbara – September 2021

Hi, there –

Welcome to our first edition of Brainstorming with Barbara. The new school year may have some of you wondering how to best support your kids in their return to a routine away from home, and away from you. Here are some helpful tips and resources to prepare your child for those upcoming separations and transitions.

Take care,
Barbara

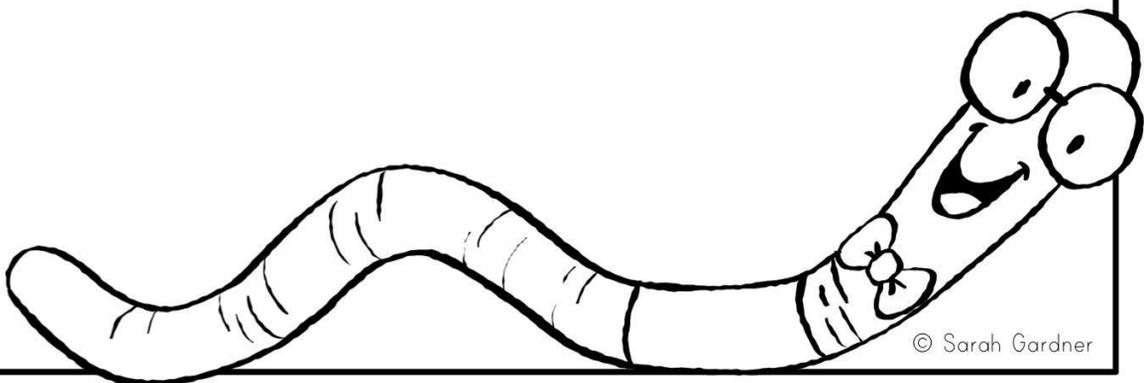


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Strategies to Try -

Start PRACTICE SEPARATIONS prior to the first day of school

- This might look like: your child staying with a family member, babysitter, childcare provider for brief periods of time for a series of days leading up to the first day of school. It can be helpful to gradually increase the amount of time your child spends with this person – ie. 20 minutes the first day, 30 minutes the second day, etc. Having the same caregiver for each practice separation also helps to establish routine, consistency, and predictability for children.
- If possible, keep surroundings familiar for your child during practice separations. Have your child stay at your home or a location they know very well (ie – grandmother's home, a cousin's home, etc.)
- If your child is unable to remain in their home, suggest they bring a special object from home with them. This could be a stuffed animal, a favorite book, a family photo or even a parent's clothing item.



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Strategies to Try -

Develop a special GOODBYE ROUTINE to use with your child

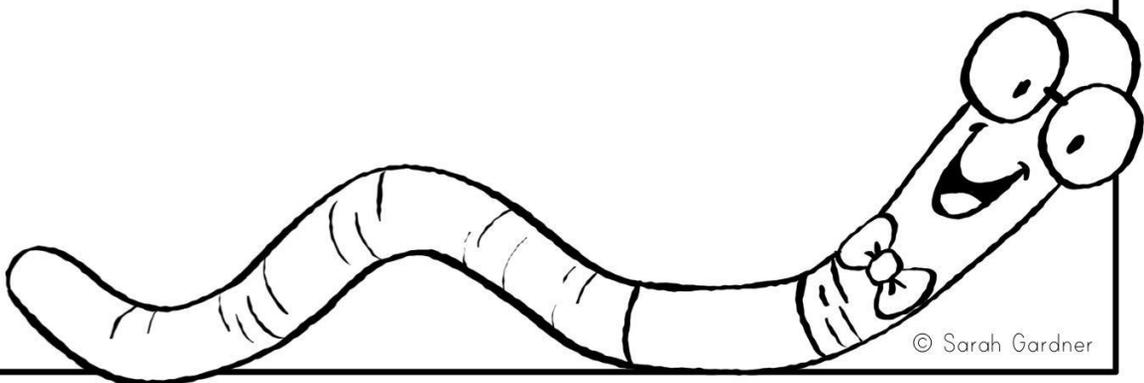
- This could be a special handshake, hug/kiss, phrase, song you sing, etc. Ask your child for ideas to actively involve them in this process.

Keep the goodbye process BRIEF

- It is often difficult to see your child in distress. This often contributes to parents/caregivers wanting to extend their goodbye process with hopes that their presence will soothe their child. However, a lengthy goodbye process tends to create MORE distress for children and their caregivers.

Plan your EXIT

- Even though it is tempting, try your best not to linger. Tell your child clearly that you are leaving – DON'T sneak away. Walk to your car, away from the building, etc. Don't hesitate to reach out to staff at your child's school if you need extra help or support with separation at drop off.



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Let's Practice –

Try the following sequence to help your child settle into their day more quickly:

- o Prepare your child for what is coming next:

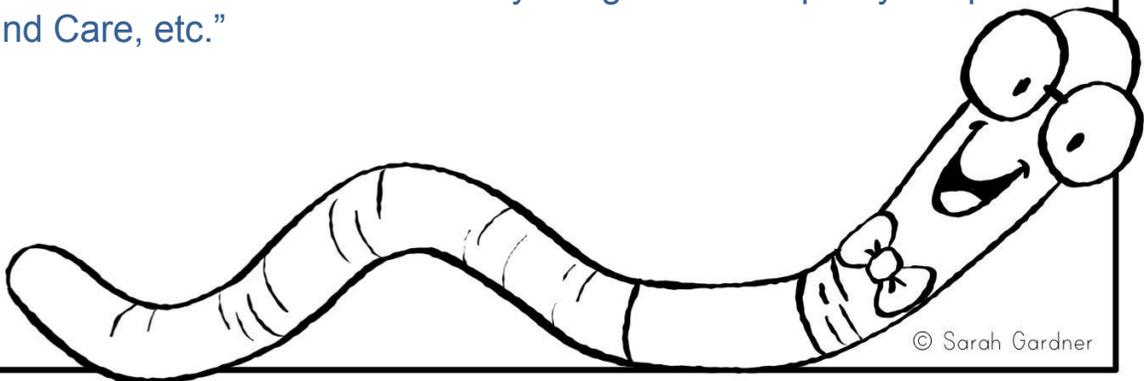
“When we turn the corner, we will be at school. I will walk you to (designated drop off space) and there we will (describe Goodbye Ritual). After we say goodbye, your job is to walk into the building (or to designated point person, etc.).”

- o Hold the boundary and practice Goodbye Ritual. Praise your child for their cooperation and participation EVEN if they are still tearful/sad/upset:

“I notice that you are (label feeling here). It can be hard to say goodbye. I really liked how you (one thing you liked or noticed about their participation in goodbye ritual).

- o Hold the boundary of your child doing THEIR part of this process. Tell them when you will see them next:

“I see (designated point person) waiting to say ‘Good Morning to you.’” OR “It is time for you to walk to the front door now.” “I can’t wait to see you again when you get off the bus.” OR “I can’t wait to see you again when I pick you up at BGC/Surround Care, etc.”



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Extra Resources –

Early childhood:

Bye Bye Time by Elizabeth Verdick

Daniel Goes to School by Becky Friedman

Kindergarten-specific

The Night Before Kindergarten by Natasha Wing

PreK-5th Grade

The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn

Llama Llama Misses Mama by Anna Dewdney

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst

A note to adults –

Children's books are great teaching resources. However, many families prefer to proofread books prior to introducing them to the children in their homes. The above titles are available for Read Aloud on YouTube. Additionally, some titles may be available at your neighborhood's Public Library or school's Media Center.

