

## Reflections on Back to School

I am one of those parents that feel all the things, big, small and everything in between! Perhaps not everyone can relate, so this is for those that also feel big when it comes to their kids. My husband thinks I am strange, being such an emotional human. Yet, I am grateful his feet are firmly planted on the ground. He is my buffer and shield when I feel too much. For those parents who feel all the things, I hope you have someone in your life that gives you a safe place to land, especially at this time of year when there are many new changes, hard goodbyes, see-you-laters, and letting go.

There is a saying that when you become a parent your heart is forever walking outside your body. This is so true, particularly each September when it is time to send kids back to school. Whether you are dropping your “baby” off for their first day at junior kindergarten, or a new school, to junior high or high school when you are certain you are feeding them to the wolves.

That feeling may come over you when you watch them at their piano recital, at their first race for track and field, at their Christmas concert, or delivering a speech at a school assembly. You may feel it profoundly when you watch them nervously bite their lip or play with their fingers, scanning the crowd for your familiar face and smile.

That feeling may come in strong and fierce when you watch them walk across the stage to receive their high school diploma, or say goodbye at the airport, or leave them at a university campus and drive away.

That feeling is a part of your heart, raw and tender, that is physically outside of your body. It is vulnerable and exposed. That feeling is pieces of your heart which leaks unconsciously out your eyes and down your cheeks. That feeling is love, pride, joy, excitement, heartache, perhaps a little guilt or regret.

I don't know what it is like to not feel these things and I sometimes envy those parents (like my husband) that can meet such milestones with nothing but happiness, elation and relief.

No matter what you feel as a new season starts, know and trust that you have loved, taught and prepared your kids for the next chapter. They are ready. You have done your job and have done it well.

For those like me, I see you with your red eyes, the tissue crumpled in your clenched fists, the deep sighs as you desperately put on a brave face.

I see you.



This article was written by Tammy Charko BA, BSW, RSW. Tammy is Northern Gateway Public School's Student Support Facilitator. She is a support and advocate for students and families promoting wellness and success in school. Tammy has been a Registered Social Worker for more than 24 years and is a mother to 4 children; 1 in high school and 3 in university.