



Supporting Your Child Through The Term 4 Stretch

A Guide for Parents & Carers • From Kim Turner, The Mindful Jungle

Term 4 has a flavour all of its own. The weather warms up, the year is winding toward an end, and there's a lot of change in the air — new classes, new teachers, sometimes a whole new school next year. If your child seems more tired, more wobbly, or less like themselves lately, they're not alone — and neither are you. This guide unpacks what's really going on in this last stretch of the school year and offers some practical ways to support your child (and yourself) through it.

Understanding the Term 4 Slump

By Term 4, children have been “on” at school for a long time — learning, socialising, following routines, and regulating their emotions all day, every day, for three terms. It makes sense that things start to fray a little. A few things tend to collide at once:

- Cumulative tiredness — a full year of effort catching up all at once.
- Warmer weather and longer days — daylight saving and hotter afternoons can disrupt sleep, appetite, and energy levels.
- A less predictable routine — concerts, excursions, swimming, orientation days, and special events replace the steady rhythm of earlier terms.
- Uncertainty about next year — a new teacher, new classroom, new classmates, or a bigger transition like starting school or starting secondary school.
- Emotional accumulation — a year of growing, learning, and navigating friendships takes a real toll, even when it's gone well.

None of this means something is wrong — it's a very normal response to a long year and a lot of change on the horizon.

Signs to Look Out For

Physical Signs

More tiredness than usual, harder mornings, trouble winding down at bedtime despite being exhausted, or getting unwell more easily as their body runs on empty.

Emotional Signs

Increased irritability, tearfulness, or what's sometimes called “restraint collapse” — holding it together all day at school, then melting down the moment they're home and feel safe to let go.

Behavioural Signs

More resistance to school or homework, increased friendship friction, difficulty concentrating, or a lot of talk (or avoidance of talk) about “next year.”

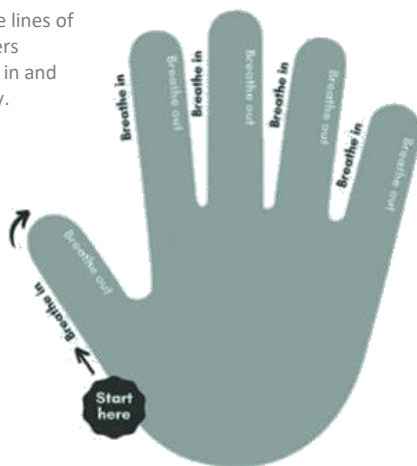
Coping Strategies for Your Child

These simple tools can help your child manage overwhelm and settle their nervous system when energy and patience are running low.

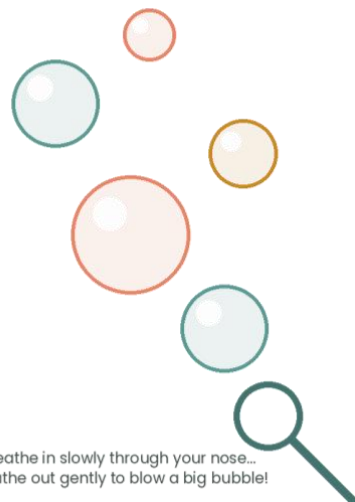
Deep Breathing

Five Finger Breathing

Follow the lines of your fingers breathing in and out slowly.



Bubble Breathing



5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

A simple way to settle a busy or overwhelmed mind by bringing attention back to the present moment through the senses.

- 5 things you can SEE
- 4 things you can TOUCH
- 3 things you can HEAR
- 2 things you can SMELL
- 1 thing you can TASTE

Identify what charges your Social Battery

Our energy is like a battery, some tasks throughout our day can fill up your battery and some can use up your battery. It can be helpful to discover what makes your child's battery change.



Gives Me Energy

- Playing outside
- Drawing
- Reading
- Music
- Spending time with a favourite person
- Quiet time



Uses Some Energy

- Schoolwork
- Sport
- Socialising
- Homework
- Shopping
- Busy classrooms



Uses Lots of Energy

- Arguments
- Loud environments
- Too many activities
- Big changes
- Feeling rushed
- Difficult social situations

The goal is to help the child recognise: **“I don't have to wait until my battery is empty before I take a break.”**

Use the “3 Things Today” Strategy

When children feel exhausted and overwhelmed, the entire day can feel like an enormous task, instead ask them to think about:

1. One thing I need to do.
2. One thing I would like to do.
3. One thing I can do for myself.

This helps reduce the feeling of “I have so much to do!”.

Protect Sleep and Recovery

A consistent bedtime routine becomes particularly important when children are depleted. Having a bedtime routine calming the child down and chatting about something that they might feel worried about tomorrow, something that they felt proud about today, something they are grateful for. Giving permission for their brain to rest.

More Strategies to Try

- Protect wind-down time — a predictable after-school routine helps your child decompress before tackling homework or activities.
- Talk about “what stays the same” and “what's changing” next year, so change feels a little more familiar.
- Create a simple “this year I...” list together, celebrating growth and things they're proud of.
- Keep a consistent bedtime, even as the sun stays out later.
- Build in extra water breaks and shade as the weather warms up — heat and dehydration make big feelings bigger.

Coping Strategies for You, the Parent

This stretch of the year asks a lot of children — and of you too. A few small shifts can make it easier for everyone:

- Lower the bar a little — Term 4 is not the term to introduce big new expectations. Protecting rest and downtime matters more than pushing through.
- Expect — and allow for — restraint collapse — an after-school meltdown often means your child felt safe enough to finally let go, not that something has gone wrong.
- Talk about next year honestly and calmly — answer questions simply, and it's okay to say “I don't know yet” about things that aren't decided.
- Make the most of transition days — if your child's school offers orientation or transition sessions, attend where you can, and talk through what they noticed afterwards.
- Hold routine boundaries — bedtime, screens, and mealtimes matter even more when everything else feels less predictable.
- Model calm about change — children take their cues from us; a steady, matter-of-fact tone about “new things” goes a long way.
- Loop in the school — teachers often have great insight into how your child is coping day-to-day and can flag anything worth watching heading into the transition.

When to Seek Extra Support

A bit of Term 4 wobble is normal — but it's a good time to reach out for professional support if:

- Tiredness, overwhelm, or irritability isn't easing even on weekends or during breaks
- Worry about next year is significant, persistent, or affecting sleep and appetite
- Your child is unusually withdrawn, or friendships and school engagement noticeably decline
- Your child talks about feeling hopeless, or you have any concern for their immediate safety — in this case, please contact your GP or a mental health professional promptly

A little extra support heading into the holidays and the new school year can make the transition feel much more manageable — for your child, and for you.