
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



Reduce Back- to-School Stress



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INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant.

A new school year is exciting and, for some kids, stressful. The change in daily routine, the transition from free-time to structure, or the anxiety caused by a new situation can be a source of worry and concern for many children.

Learning to manage this transitional stress can be a valuable tool for students that can help them as they move through the school system and later as they transition into college or work.

Parents can prepare for this start-of-school stress with tips from health experts about what to watch for and how to minimize anxiety. A little extra attention at the beginning of the year may set the stage for a smooth school year.

KidsHealth.com (<http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/back-school.html>) offers the following guidance for a good school start:

Remind your child that everyone feels nervous on the first day.

Children may feel that they are the only ones who feel anxious about the new schedule. Help them understand this is normal and it will become a regular routine in no time.

Emphasize the positives. Remind your child that he will get to see his friends, meet new classmates, have new extracurricular opportunities and get to start the year with some new school supplies and clothes.

Ask your child why they are anxious. Sometimes reassurance can look like a lack of understanding to your child. Be sure to ask what, specifically, they are concerned about. There may be tangible ways to address those concerns. Worries about a new school may be reduced with a visit to the school in advance. Worries about school work may be addressed by discussing a plan for managing homework.

In a few cases, student stress can develop into physical ailments. If your child's anxiety causes headaches or stomachaches, consult your doctor or a school counselor.

Work the plan

Planning for potential areas of stress can make a big difference in reducing actual stress for your child. Set up a consistent routine for the school year to help kids start the school year calmly and ready to learn.

These tips may help in the transition from summer to school:

- **Get enough sleep.** Students who are rested will be ready to learn and less likely to be anxious.
- **Eat a healthy breakfast.** When students are not hungry, they learn better.

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- **Write down the need-to-know information.** Help students with the important details they need by writing them down on a “cheat sheet” they can carry with them. Ask what the need-to-remember things are. Examples are locker combinations, teachers names, class schedules and room numbers.
- **Keep a calendar.** Put the weekly schedule for the family on a calendar that everyone can see. Include activities, assignment dates and test schedules.
- **Organize the night before.** Help your child set out clothes and homework the night before. Students with a smooth morning start are more likely to have a smooth day.

Make a checklist

Checklists are helpful tools for starting school. Build your own checklist with dates important reminders from your school. Include any of the following items that apply to your child or school.

Clothing: Does your school have a dress code? Will your child need a change of clothes for PE or art?

Backpacks: Look for a lightweight backpack that is large enough for school needs but not too heavy to carry.

Lunch: Will your child bring a lunch or eat school lunch? Do you know where to find the school lunch menu? Do you know how to pay for school lunch? If your child will bring a lunch, do you have lunch items on hand? Do they provide balanced nutrition?

School supplies: Did you check the school supply list for your child’s school or class?

Medical issues: Are your child’s immunizations updated? Did you complete the emergency contact form for your child? Did you inform the teacher and school nurse about any special medical conditions or medications?

Transportation: If your child is on the bus, did you find the bus stop and schedule? Does your child know the bus number? If your child walks to school, have you reviewed school safety issues?

Homework help

Homework assignments usually start early in the school year as a way to reinforce school lessons and develop good study habits. Learning to manage school work and time is another. Students can be more successful if establish a routine and do not have distractions.

- Designate a quiet area for homework.
- Set up a schedule.
- Turn off the TV and have students put their phones on “Do not disturb.”
- Be available to help with questions, but let your child do the work herself.
- Review assignments nightly to check for understanding.

Be a good listener

Routines are helpful back-to-school tools, but if your child feels stressed out, he may also benefit from simply talking about his worries. Be sure to listen when he needs to share concerns. You may identify steps to help, or you may just be a sounding board. Establishing good communication will help at the start of school and all year long.