

KNOW! TO MANAGE BACK-TO-SCHOOL STRESS AND ANXIETY

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HERE ARE FIVE TIPS TO HELP YOU MANAGE THE BACK-TO-SCHOOL SEASON!

1. Acknowledge Your Stress

Kids are tuned in to their caregivers' emotions. If you're overwhelmed, your child may pick up on it and react similarly. You can have a positive influence on your child by modelling healthy stress management. Use positive self-talk, express confidence in the future, and be kind to yourself in the tough moments. You'll help your child learn how to manage their own emotions while taking care of yourself at the same time. Don't hesitate to reach out for support from family, friends, or a professional if your stress becomes overwhelming.

Model naming your emotions with your child. Try saying, "I'm nervous about a presentation at work tomorrow. I'm a little scared, but I know I'm prepared. Is there anything you're nervous about? Maybe we can work together to help you feel more confident."

TALKING TIP

2. Practice New Routines Together

A new school year brings new routines and busy schedules, which can feel overwhelming. Ease into the transition by reintroducing school habits, like bedtimes, wake-ups, homework hours, and regular meals, ahead of time. If your teen is driving to school or your child is walking to the bus stop, you might practice those routes ahead of time. Practicing new routines without the pressure builds familiarity and helps reduce anxiety. It will also help you adjust to the school-year rhythm more smoothly.

Ask, "What makes it easier or harder for you to get ready for school or do homework?" Then, work together to adjust your routine so it supports their success and reduces stress.

TALKING TIP

Going back to school can be stressful for kids of all ages. Younger children may feel anxious about being away from home or meeting new peers, while older children and teens often face academic and social pressures

As a parent or caregiver, you may also be feeling the pressure of juggling new schedules, maintaining work-life balance, and managing costs tied to school supplies and activities.

It's a challenging time for everyone, but with a little planning, you can ease the transition and reduce stress for both you and your child.

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3. Emphasize the Fun

Change can be scary, but it can also be exciting! Remind your child of the fun things school brings, like seeing friends, favorite teachers, or fun activities. You can also build excitement by making the first week of school special. Try planning a special breakfast or a fun weekend outing. A little excitement can go a long way in easing anxiety and building positive anticipation.

Ask, "What's one thing about school you're excited about?" If they're unsure, prompt them with something like, "Last year, you loved science class. Do you think you'll enjoy it again this year?" Helping them remember what they've liked in the past can generate excitement for the future.

TALKING TIP

4. Listen and Validate Concerns

It's hard to help your child manage stress if you don't know what's bothering them. Help young people feel safe talking to you by actively listening to them and validating their concerns. Be fully present in the conversation – no phones or distractions. Ask open-ended questions, listen without judgment, and resist the urge to "fix" things right away. Your curiosity and understanding will help them feel supported.

Practice reflecting their feelings back to them. You might say, "It sounds like going back to school every day is hard. I understand why you'd feel upset – big changes can be frustrating."

TALKING TIP

5. Learn the Signs of Serious Stress

Some stress is normal and can even help build resilience. But it's important to recognize when stress becomes unhealthy. Watch for signs like:

- Major changes in behavior or mood
- Withdrawal from friends
- Drop in grades
- Loss of interest in favorite activities
- Sleep issues
- Irritability or extreme reactions
- Unexplained physical symptoms like headaches or stomachaches

If you notice these signs, it could point to something more serious. Don't hesitate to reach out to a healthcare provider if you're concerned.

Check in regularly. Consider a weekly mental health check-in or sharing one hard thing and one exciting thing each week during dinner. This keeps the door open for honest conversations about stress.

TALKING TIP

RESOURCES

- [Back to School | Nemours KidsHealth](#)
- [Back-to-School Tips for Parents | Child Mind Institute](#)
- [Back-to-School Tips for Families | healthychildren.org](#)
- [7 Active Listening Techniques For Better Communication | verywellmind](#)
- [5 Tips to Ease Back-to-School Anxiety | Johns Hopkins Medicine](#)

SOURCES

- [Weathering Back-to-School Stress and Burnout | Cedars Sinai](#)
- [Managing Back-to-School Stress for Parents | Insight Hospital & Medical Center](#)
- [Tips For Easing Back-to-School Anxiety | National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
- [Back-to-School Anxiety | Child Mind Institute](#)

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