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Back to School

As summer draws to a close and children start heading back to school, family life can get pretty hectic. It's important to remember some key tips that will help.

Practical Preparation

Talk about what to expect with your child(ren). What routines will be brand new? What's not changing? Walk them through what will be different. It's okay to tell them you don't have all the answers right now but share your confidence that your family will be able to manage whatever comes your way. Here are a few practical tips:

- Shift gradually into school-mode. One to two weeks before school begins, start moving bed and wake times up by about 15 minutes each day until you reach school hours.
- Restart morning routines and get in the habits that will bring you success.
- Gradually reduce screen time to ensure that bedtime schedules are kept.

Focus on the positives. Help them see what they can look forward to. If they'll be returning to the classroom, emphasize that they'll see their friends and teachers again. Remind them of the fun activities they'll be able to resume.

Emotional Support

Have realistic expectations. It takes some time for children to fully acclimate to a new schedule, even if some aspects are a return to an earlier routine. Take their age and temperament into account. You may need to provide regular reminders of what they need to do next. Try to be patient if they forget or make a mistake. Gently redirect them towards the plan you put in place.

Help them manage and express their reactions. Know that you might see stress reactions in your children. Depending on their age, they may not always be able to express what they are feeling. Be gently supportive. Remind them that everyone gets a nervous feeling when facing difficult situations. Acknowledge their stressors but share your confidence that they are strong and will manage the concerns.

Don't overlook "normal" back-to-school worries. If your child is changing school levels or starting in a new school, try to "fill in the blanks" as much as you can. Go to the school for a visit if it's possible. Problem-solve together and work on strategies for how to deal with concerns. Talk about friendships and how they might build them. Remind them of their unique talents and talk about realistic goals for the school year.

Model the behavior you want to see. Kids look to adults for cues on how they should think, feel, and react to a situation. Keep calm, confident, and positive. Show them how to use deep breathing and muscle relaxation techniques to help calm anxiety. Respond to challenges with flexibility, modeling effective problem-solving. This not only helps show them how to cope with change more effectively, but it helps you, too!

Be mindful of your child's personality and behavior patterns. If they have anxious tendencies or existing mental health concerns, you may need to reach out to school personnel ahead of time to discuss your concerns and put a plan in place. If you see changes or reactions to the transition or stress signs that concern you, and they go on for more than a couple of weeks, contact a mental health professional.

Additional Resources

- [Inova – Employee Assistance Program](#)
- [PBS Kids for Parents](#)

Mark Your Calendars ~ Coming Soon!



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