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Back to School

Practical Steps for Supporting Children's Mental Well-Being:
Guidance for a smooth start to the new school year

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September brings with it a new beginning. For children, returning to school means new experiences, new friendships, and more knowledge, but also challenges. For parents, it is a time to re-establish the family's daily routine, with schedules, obligations, and adjustments.

Going back to school is not the same for every child. Some look forward to seeing their friends again and discovering new activities, while others may feel anxious or even fearful about what lies ahead. This is perfectly normal—every new beginning comes with a mix of excitement, anticipation, and anxiety.

During this transition, the role of parents and teachers is crucial. Patience, support, and open communication help children feel secure and adapt more smoothly. Small daily practices—such as maintaining a consistent sleep routine, taking time to discuss the child's feelings, and encouraging them to try new things—can make a significant difference. These strategies help families see going back to school not as a source of stress, but as an opportunity for growth and the development of positive habits.

Starting the new school year

Getting back into a routine

Summer completely changes children's schedules: they go to bed and wake up later and often spend more time in front of screens. A few days before school starts, it can be helpful for the family to return to a more "school-like" rhythm—setting a consistent bedtime and wake-up time, and preparing for the next day. Even shopping for school supplies can serve as a pleasant reminder that something new is beginning.

Nutrition and energy

A child who eats well and sleeps well has more energy and concentration. Small, regular meals throughout the day, along with a light snack in the afternoon, help prevent exhaustion in the evening. It is important for parents to know what their child eats at school or during activities so that there is a balance.

Changes in friendships

With the start of the new school year, friendships may shift. Some friends may drift apart, while new relationships may form. It is important for children to know that this is normal. Parents can listen to their child's feelings without immediately trying to provide solutions. A simple phrase such as "I understand that this is difficult" is often enough to help them feel that their emotions are respected and acknowledged.

Small tests

For children who are changing schools, familiarizing themselves with the new environment before the first day can be very helpful—visiting the building, locating their classroom, or exploring the playground. This helps make the unknown feel more familiar and can make the first day less intimidating.

Managing expectations

The first few weeks are not always smooth. Children may experience days of fatigue, anxiety, or resistance. This does not mean something is wrong; it is often a natural part of the adjustment process. When parents acknowledge and accept this, children feel more confident in navigating the ups and downs.



Balancing activities

At the beginning of the year, many children are excited and want to sign up for lots of activities. It is helpful to start with a few and see how they fit into their schedule. Free time and rest are just as important as studying.

Cooperation with the school

Teachers see the child within the context of the classroom, while parents have a better understanding of their daily life at home. Both perspectives are valuable. Timely communication with the school can help address minor difficulties before they

develop into bigger issues. Collaboration and mutual trust between parents and teachers form the foundation for a smooth and successful school year.

How to boost your child's motivation

Identifying potential challenges

When a child seems uninterested in school or studying, there is often an underlying difficulty. Learning, emotional, or social challenges can reduce a child's motivation. Careful observation and open communication with the child can help identify the cause and guide supportive steps.

Show children sincere interest

Parents' genuine interest in school life has a reinforcing effect. Ask your child what they learned at school, share moments from your own day, and create an atmosphere of open discussion. For younger child

Rewards and reinforcement

Rewards do not always mean gifts. A smile, a hug, praise, or a simple "well done" is often enough to give a child a boost. Short breaks during study time or shared activities afterward can also help maintain motivation and make learning a more positive experience.

Focus on efforts and accept mistakes

Children need to hear that effort matters, not just results. When their hard work on a challenging exercise or their consistency in studying is recognized, they feel that their dedication is truly valued.

Mistakes and failures are part of learning. Children need to know that it is normal not to succeed every time, and that mistakes are opportunities to improve. This mindset reduces stress and encourages them to keep trying. In this way, they learn to appreciate the learning process itself.

Setting goals

For older students, discussing long-term goals can be very beneficial. For example, showing how their current studies help prepare them for high school, exams, or even future career aspirations. Connecting the "now" with the "later" gives their effort more meaning and motivation.



Collaborating with others

Support doesn't have to come solely from the family. An older student, mentor, or teacher can also have a positive influence. At the same time, collaboration with teachers is important, as they can provide valuable insights into what helps the child thrive in the classroom.

Support for parents, too

A lack of motivation can create tension and frustration at home. Parents should remember that they are not alone. Sharing experiences with other parents or seeking support from specialists can provide relief and practical guidance. The most important thing is to stay realistic in expectations and focus on gradual progress rather than perfection.

Starting Daycare/Preschool

One of the first big changes

Enrolling in daycare or preschool is one of the first major transitions in a child's life—and in that of their family. For many children, it is the first time they spend several hours away from the family environment. This change can bring excitement and curiosity, but it may also trigger separation anxiety—for both the child and the parents.

New experiences and a stable routine

At daycare and preschool, children are introduced to new activities, including group play, creative projects, and their first structured learning experiences. They learn to follow rules, wait their turn, and cooperate with others. A consistent daily routine that balances play and rest provides a sense of security and supports children in taking their first steps toward independence.

Separation anxiety

It is completely normal for children to struggle with separation from their parents in the first few days. Crying, resistance, or reluctance to enter the classroom are common and expected reactions. With the repetition of daily routines and the sense of security provided by the school environment, these feelings usually fade away.

Parents can help their child with small but consistent actions. For example, they can say goodbye quickly and with a smile, avoid prolonged "goodbyes" that make separation difficult, give the child a small object with sentimental value (e.g. a bracelet or a photo), and show confidence in the teacher. Their own attitude is crucial! If parents are calm and confident, the child understands that they are in a safe environment.

It takes time for a child to feel secure, and every child has their own pace of adjustment. Some adjust within a few days, others need weeks. Consistency is important. Children need to go to school every day, know that their parents will always come back to pick them up, and feel that they can trust their new environment. In this way, separation gradually becomes easier, and children gain autonomy and self-confidence.

Skills building

Attending preschool is not only about learning letters and numbers—it is mainly about developing essential life skills. Children learn to share, express their feelings, resolve small disagreements, and take care of themselves, such as getting dressed, using the toilet, and eating on their own.



The role of parents

Parents are called to support their child with patience, encouragement, and consistency. A positive attitude toward school, open conversations about the day, and collaboration with teachers are all key to a smooth transition. It is important to remember that every child has their own pace—some adapt within a few days, while others may need several weeks.

Daycare and preschool mark the start of a new adventure, full of experiences and small victories. With support, understanding, and stability from both family and educators, children gradually become more independent, discover the joy of playing and learning, and build a strong foundation for the future.

Starting elementary school



Starting elementary school is a major milestone for both children and their parents. Daily routines shift, responsibilities grow, and children are asked to handle greater independence. The first day often comes with mixed emotions—excitement for what's new, but also anxiety about the unknown. Children must adjust to increased expectations, new friendships, and unfamiliar rules, while parents play an essential role in encouraging and supporting them with patience and reassurance.

Creating a stable routine, organizing daily life, and strengthening small social skills—such as introducing oneself or making new friends—contribute significantly to a smooth adjustment. Practical details, like preparing the school bag the night before or helping to choose supplies, give children a sense of responsibility and autonomy.

It is important for parents to speak positively about school while also remaining attentive to signs of difficulty, such as persistent anxiety or physical symptoms. With the right preparation and organization, the transition to first grade becomes not only easier but also a more enjoyable and creative experience for the whole family.

Practical ideas for a smooth transition:

Prioritize sleep: Children aged 5–6 need 10–13 hours of rest to be ready for the demands of the school day. Quality sleep improves concentration, emotional balance, and behavior. To ease the transition, begin adjusting bedtime about two weeks before school starts by moving it earlier in small steps. Avoid screens at least an hour before bed, and instead choose calming activities—such as reading together—to help your child relax and feel prepared for sleep.

Familiarize your child with group activities: If your child has little experience in group settings, activities such as music lessons, theater workshops, or sports can be very helpful. These activities create an environment similar to school, where children learn to follow instructions, wait their turn, and cooperate with others—skills that make adapting to the new school environment much smoother.

Visit the school in advance: The first day of school can feel overwhelming for children. A visit beforehand—whether a walk around the neighborhood or a tour of the building—helps them feel more familiar and secure. Show them the entrance, the classroom, or the playground, and talk about it with enthusiasm. The way you speak matters: your tone of voice can reassure your child that school is a safe and welcoming place.

Put an item of sentimental value in their bag: Separation anxiety is most common during the first few weeks of school, but can reappear at different times—after a long weekend, holiday, or vacation. Even children who initially adjusted well may suddenly show reluctance to leave. A small object from home, such as a family photo or a favorite toy, can act as a “security bridge.” When your child feels anxious, having something that reminds them of you helps them calm down and feel reassured.

Don’t make promises you can’t keep: Parents should avoid reassuring their child with phrases like, “If you don’t feel well, I’ll come and take you back.” Although well-intentioned, such promises reinforce avoidance and make adjustment harder. Instead, it is more helpful to encourage children to develop small coping strategies for managing their an

Explain to your child that feeling anxious is normal: Many children worry about not knowing anyone in their class or having difficulty making friends. It is important to reassure them that these feelings are completely normal at the start of something new. Teachers often share with students at the beginning of the year that they, too, are meeting their class for the first time, helping children see that everyone experiences some nervousness. Parents can also share their own past experiences of similar anxieties, so children understand that feeling this way is a normal part of starting something new.



Practice social and relaxation skills: It can be helpful to give your child small “introduction scenarios,” such as asking simple questions like, “What’s your name?” or “Do you want to play?” Even role-playing these situations at home can help them feel more prepared. For children who find socializing difficult, you can practice simple ways of connecting, such as smiling or saying hello.

Simple relaxation techniques, like deep breathing, can also be very effective. You can find short videos demonstrating diaphragmatic breathing and practice together. Visual aids—showing how to fill the belly with air like a balloon and then empty it—help children learn to calm their bodies and minds when they feel anxious.

Teach organization and independence: At school, children are responsible for their own belongings and need to follow simple routines. You can practice at home by playing “school,” showing your child how to put their jacket and bag in their place or how to prepare their own lunch and snack. A simple visual chart with pictures (e.g., notebook, pencil case, water, snack) can help them remember what they need each day. These small rehearsals build your child’s confidence and make it easier for them to adapt—especially if they struggle with organizing and managing their personal belongings.

Help them strengthen their hands: In recent years, many children start elementary school with reduced fine motor skills, which can make writing and crafts more challenging. Frequent screen use has limited activities such as drawing or building, which naturally develop dexterity.

There are simple ways to strengthen fine motor skills. For example, playing with firmer plasticine, making bracelets with beads, threading beads onto wire, or even using tweezers and clothespins. Practicing these activities helps strengthen the fingers and increase flexibility. It is equally important for children to become familiar with scissors, even if it is just cutting a piece of paper in half, so they feel comfortable using them.

Prepare them for school lunches without stress: One concern children often have is eating alone at school. You can help them practice at home by letting them open their lunch box or packaging and eat at the kitchen table, simulating a school setting. This allows you to notice any difficulties (e.g., opening packages) and gives you time to help them practice until they gain confidence.



The noise and intensity of the school dining hall can also cause anxiety. A visit to a busy eating place, such as a café or food court, can help your child become accustomed to background noise and a bustling environment, making the transition to school lunchtime smoother. A shopping mall can help them get used to eating in a noisier environment. Finally, they need to know that if they need help with eating or any other issue and cannot find their teacher, they can turn to any adult at school. This simple clarification often significantly reduces their anxiety.

First grade can bring fatigue, intense emotions, and minor adjustment difficulties. With the right preparation, encouragement, and understanding from parents, children can gain confidence, develop new skills, and enjoy their new beginning.

Starting Middle School



A new beginning with more autonomy

The transition from elementary to middle school is both exciting and challenging. Students now encounter a more complex school structure, with multiple teachers and a variety of subjects, while their workload and responsibilities increase. At the same time, adolescence brings physical and emotional changes that influence self-image and relationships with friends, classmates, and family.



What are the big changes?

Daily life in middle school is very different from elementary school. Instead of having just one teacher, students now have multiple teachers, each with their own methods and expectations. The schedule involves frequent changes of classes and classrooms, which can feel stressful at first. Visiting the school before the year begins can help children become familiar with the environment and reduce uncertainty. It is equally important for them to learn how to approach their teachers or the department head when they have questions or face difficulties.

More organization

New demands make organization essential. A system of color-coded folders and notebooks, a calendar for deadlines, and a short checklist for the school bag each morning can make a big difference. At home, establishing a regular reading or study routine in a specific space helps children concentrate. For those who struggle with focus, breaking tasks into small steps and using a timer can be very helpful. It is also beneficial for parents to have regular conversations with their child about how their week went, what was challenging, and what brought them joy, so they can offer support without creating daily pressure.

Social life and changes in friendships

High school brings new acquaintances and changes to existing friendships. Some bonds grow stronger, while others may fade, and this is perfectly normal. Parents can discuss with their children what friendship means and how to politely distance themselves from a group without causing hurt. For children who are hesitant to make new friends, participating in extracurricular activities can help. What matters most is not the number of friends, but having even one meaningful connection.

Body image and adolescence

Entering adolescence comes with physical changes that can create feelings of insecurity. Comparisons with peers in the classroom or locker room can intensify these emotions. Children need to understand that everyone's body grows at its own pace and that these changes are entirely normal. Parents can also talk to their child about social beauty standards and the influence of social media, helping them distinguish between reality and the often unrealistic images portrayed online.

Sexuality, substances, and peer pressure—how to approach them

In middle school, children often encounter topics such as sexuality, substance use, and peer pressure—situations they may not yet be ready to navigate. It is important for parents to begin discussing these issues early and honestly so that their child is prepared. Children need to learn to recognize when a situation makes them uncomfortable and understand that they have the right to say “no.”

The adolescent's need to belong to a peer group can increase vulnerability to peer pressure. This is where the family plays a crucial role. Conversations about values and personal boundaries provide children with a framework for making confident decisions. Practicing scenarios at home, such as how to politely say “no” without harming a friendship, helps them feel ready to face challenging situations.

A key message worth conveying is: “My body is mine. I decide!” This applies to all children, regardless of gender. It reinforces the importance of self-respect, respecting others’ boundaries, and having the courage to ask for help if something feels wrong.

Middle school is a pivotal stage in every child’s life, marked by new responsibilities, evolving friendships, and bodily changes. Despite the challenges, with a bit of organization, open conversations about values and boundaries, and the steady presence of supportive adults, children can adapt successfully. They gradually find their rhythm, discover new aspects of themselves, and build the self-confidence that will guide them through adolescence and beyond.



Starting high school

Why does the adjustment seem more demanding?

The transition to high school is usually gradual, as most students are already familiar with the environment and have established groups of friends. What changes are the increased academic demands, greater pressure for grades, and the looming challenge of entrance exams. At the same time, teenagers need to take more responsibility for their studies and their time, while continuing to shape their identity.

New routine, and greater responsibility

In high school, students encounter new practical challenges, such as organizing their own assignments and meeting deadlines without daily reminders from teachers or parents. For many teenagers, this marks the first significant step toward independence, yet they still need guidance on managing their time or completing assignments that require several days of preparation. The role of parents shifts as well, moving from constant oversight to providing meaningful guidance, allowing teens to take on responsibilities while still feeling supported.

Increased academic pressure

High school students face more demanding schedules, with limited free time and the constant challenge of balancing studying, rest, and social life. Courses cover more material and introduce increasingly complex concepts. Grades become more significant, influencing graduation and, over time, national exams, which can heighten pressure. Teenagers need to understand that a low grade is not the end of the world and that effort and progress are what truly matter. Parental support should focus on encouragement, maintaining realistic expectations, and helping identify resources—such as tutoring, private lessons, or school support structures—if needed.

Social challenges

Friendships in high school become more complex. Existing relationships may change, new groups are formed, and involvement in extracurricular activities can play a key role in helping students adjust and feel connected.



Even if a teenager doesn't have strong personal interests, participating in a group for a few months can open the door to new acquaintances and friendships. It is perfectly normal for them to take some time to find the circle of friends that suits them, and there's no need to worry if this doesn't happen right away.

Time and sleep management

Daily life in high school is full of obligations, including classes, tutoring, studying, extracurricular activities, and social life. Amidst all this, sleep is often sacrificed. Many teenagers get far less sleep than they need, which can affect both their academic performance and mental health. Parents can support their children by setting boundaries, discussing their schedules together, and encouraging healthy sleep habits, such as maintaining a consistent bedtime and wake-up time, keeping screens out of the bedroom, and establishing a short relaxation routine before bed (e.g., a shower or listening to music). It is important for teenagers to learn to listen to their bodies, recognize when they need rest, and understand that good sleep is not "wasted time" but a necessary foundation for feeling well physically and mentally.



Learning to ask for help

Daily life in high school is not limited to studying; it also includes learning to ask for support when needed. For students with learning or emotional difficulties, it is particularly important to identify at least one adult at school they can turn to. Parents can encourage their children to ask for help or clarification confidently. This skill benefits them not only academically but also socially and emotionally.

The role of parents

Although high school often gives the impression that parents should “step back,” their presence remains crucial. Participating in school events and communicating with teachers, as well as with the teenager themselves, shows that there is interest and support. Parents do not need to be “overbearing,” but they should act as a stable point of reference, providing security and guidance.



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