



Mental Health Matters

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Back to School Tips for Parents

Source: Harold S. Koplewicz, MD



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Every child faces challenges when heading back to school. But back-to-school time can be especially difficult for the 20% of children who suffer from a mental health or learning disorder. The school environment demands many things that summer activities don't, many of them challenging tasks for any child with anxiety.

Here are six things parents need to know about starting school with vulnerable children:

1. ***Mental health problems emerge at back-to-school time.*** As a parent, you can ease your child's anxiety by modeling confidence and calm behavior, and by imposing structure in family life.
2. ***Kids' brains are changing dramatically.*** It's important to keep communication open at this vulnerable time, when teenagers are starting to look like adults, and think they are adults, but may not have the skills to manage stress.
3. ***Anxious parents send anxious kids to school.*** One of the most helpful things you can do is model calm, confident behavior, particularly while helping a child get ready for school.
4. ***Teachers matter, maybe even more than you think.*** Parents can get all kinds of information about a child from their teacher – information about learning difficulties and peer problems as well as academic achievements and close friendships.
5. ***Homework time is crucial.*** Young children can benefit from their parents' involvement during homework time, and parents should set aside time for a structured session each night.
6. ***Don't jump to conclusions.*** Kids grow and develop at different rates, but if you think there might be a problem with your child's development, talk to their teacher. Good teachers are invaluable allies.



7 Mental Health Tips for Kids Going Back to School

Source: Bob Beilke, Ph. D.

Good Advice for Starting the School Year On the Right Foot

Heading back to school is an exciting time for children and families, but changes in schools, teachers, friends, and routines can also make it a stressful one.

Here is some advice from a pediatric and clinical child psychologist to start the school year on the right foot.

- **Establish a routine early.** Prepare your child for a successful start back to school by getting them back on routines a week or two before school starts. Ensure your child develops adequate sleep patterns.
- **Talk to your children.** It's always good for parents to sit down and talk about what children might be concerned about going back to school. Don't forget to talk about the positives too!
- **Ease worries.** If children are nervous about a new school, classroom, or teacher, take them to visit the school before the first day.
- **Monitor social media.** Keep an eye on older children's social media accounts. Restrict your teen from text messaging in bed after bedtime.
- **Foster positive friendships.** For kids who are worried about friendships or loneliness, encourage them to reconnect with a friend before the start of school. Schedule a play date and help them make plans to see each other at recess or lunch.
- **Create homework strategies.** Work with your child to develop a plan for getting homework done and assignments turned in on time. Make a plan to touch base with teachers regularly.
- **Don't stress, parents.** Talking to other parents can be helpful, as can getting as much information as you can. Review your child's schedule.

The bottom line: Organization and communication with your child can help start the school year off on the right foot both at school and at home.

For Educators...

Educators are often the first to notice mental health problems. Here are some ways you can help students and their families.

What Educators Should Know

- The warning signs for mental health problems
- Whom to turn to if you have questions or concerns about a student's behavior
- How to access crisis support and other mental health services

What Educators Should Look for in Student Behavior

Consult with a school counselor, nurse, or administrator and the students' parents if you observe one or more of the following behaviors:

- Feeling very sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks
- Seriously trying to harm oneself, or making plans to do so
- Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason, sometimes with a racing heart or fast breathing
- Involvement in many fights or desire to hurt others
- Severe out-of-control behavior
- Not eating, throwing up, or using laxatives for weight loss
- Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities
- Extreme difficulty concentrating or staying still
- Repeated use of drugs or alcohol
- Severe mood swings that cause problems in relationships
- Drastic changes in the students' behavior or personality

What Educators can do in Classrooms and Schools

You can support the mental health of all students in your classroom and school, not just individual students who may exhibit behavioral issues. Consider the following actions:

- Educate staff, parents, and students on symptoms of and help for mental health

problems

- Promote social and emotional competency and build resilience
- Help ensure a positive, safe school environment
- Teach and reinforce positive behaviors and decision-making
- Encourage helping others
- Help ensure access to school-based mental health supports

Developing Effective School Mental Health Programs

Efforts to care for the emotional well-being of children and youth can extend beyond the classroom and into the entire school. School-based mental health programs can focus on promoting mental wellness, preventing mental health problems, and providing treatment.

Effective programs do the following:

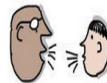
- Promote the healthy social and emotional development of all children and youth
- Recognize when young people are at risk for or are experiencing mental health problems
- Identify how to intervene early and appropriately when there are problems.

10 Things Students Want Educators to Know

by Justin Tarte @justintarte

1

Students want you to spend the time to get to know them.



2

Students want to have a voice in the learning process and want to share their way of doing things.



3

Students want to be treated with respect and dignity.



9

Students want to know the work they are doing & the time they are committing to school will make a difference in the world.



10

All students want to know their existence matters and that they are important.



4

Students want to be "appropriately" challenged with meaningful and relevant learning experiences.



8

Students want to be partners with you when it comes to the learning process.



5

Students want educators to know that they too have bad & off days



7

Students want educators to be truthful & honest.



6

Students want their interests & passions to be infused into the learning that occurs in the classroom.



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Maintaining Your Mental Health as a Teacher

By Lisa Koplik

Self-care is important, especially when you spend the majority of your day focused on the well-being of others. Work/life balance is hard to achieve, but not impossible. See the tips below in order to make the most out of your hectic life as a teacher and still feel fulfilled.

1. **Exercise.** There are so many proven health benefits to exercise that you're throwing away if you don't get moving a few times a week. Exercise is also a great way to help yourself and your students by creating some mental distance from the classroom.
2. **Make time to socialize.** Plan one day per week (or two weeks, monthly, etc.) to see friends and actually stick to it. Having something to look forward to and spending some downtime with close friends is essential to maintaining sanity.
3. **Find outside professional opportunities.** While working multiple jobs can add stress, it can also allow for a mental break from your teacher persona.
4. **Think before you vent.** For the sake of your mental health, it is best to enjoy the company of those around you without always bringing it back to the classroom.
5. **Don't shy away from therapy.** Unfortunately, going to therapy isn't something that a lot of people feel comfortable discussing, but therapy is not something people should be ashamed of. If therapy is something you're considering, it is highly recommended. Go – you won't regret it.
6. **Go to sleep!** Get some sleep. Enough said.

HOW CAN TEACHERS LOOK AFTER THEIR

MENTAL HEALTH

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