



Strategies for a Successful Start to the School Year

Our partners at the Child Mind Institute want to welcome you and your family back to school. Here are some tips to help you have a great start to a unique year!

- **Create routines and implement a daily schedule**
 - Most children manage their behavior better when they know what to expect. Having a consistent routine for remote and/or in-person school days will help your child feel more comfortable and less overwhelmed.
 - When you've set your routine, make a schedule (including pictures for elementary-aged children) and put it where your child can see it.
 - Each morning, review the activities, work and events planned for the day. Include scheduled times for breaks and movement!
 - Let your child know when they will be in school vs. at home in advance. Explain how life in the classroom might look different than last year at school or during home learning.
- **Acknowledge your child's feelings**
 - Many children are especially anxious about returning to school in these uncertain times. Listen to and acknowledge your child's feelings, instead of dismissing them.
 - For example, instead of, "Nothing to be worried about! You'll be fine!" try: "You sound worried about the changes in school this year" or "It's understandable that you're feeling worried about COVID. Let's think about some things you can do to stay safe, like wearing your mask and washing your hands."
- **Focus on positive behaviors**
 - Choose two or three positive behaviors that you'd like to see more often, like following directions, waking up or going to bed on time, and setting up technology for virtual sessions or starting homework before being asked.
 - Offer specific praise when you see these behaviors. For example: "Great job getting your technology ready for online learning!"
- **Open the lines of communication**
 - Connect with your child's teachers now to let them know what strategies have helped your child in the past and share any concerns you have about the school year. Establishing this partnership early is key to your child's success. Given that kids will be seeing their teachers less often this year, it's especially helpful to connect with them proactively.
- **Prioritize your own self-care**
 - The start of the school year can be an overwhelming transition for both students and families. Make your own mental health a priority and find your own outlets for stress relief, to make sure that you're not passing on stress and frustration to your children. This is a great opportunity to model healthy coping skills and acknowledge that this "new normal" is hard for you, too.

The Child Mind Institute is an independent, national nonprofit dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders. Our teams work every day to deliver the highest standards of care, advance the science of the developing brain, and empower parents, professionals and policymakers to support children when and where they need it most. Together with our supporters, we're helping children reach their full potential in school and in life. Learn more at childmind.org.