



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 teens manage their behavior better when they know what to expect. Having consistent expectations and a routine for remote and in-person school days will help your teen feel more in control and less overwhelmed.
 - Have your teen work with you to make their schedule. The more ownership they feel, the more likely they will be to follow the schedule.
 - Check in at the end of the day to celebrate accomplishments and support your teen with wellness goals. Ask your teen if they ate, took breaks and made time for exercise.
 - Acknowledge that this year is very different from previous school years. It brings challenges and opportunities for your teen to become more independent in navigating their learning, setting a schedule and advocating for themselves.
- **Acknowledge your child's feelings**
 - Many teens 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 saying, "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 frustrated about all the changes due to COVID." Work together to identify activities that are safe and talk openly about how you handle frustration and change.
- **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 independently getting started on your remote assignment."
- **Open the lines of communication**
 - Support your teen in speaking up for their needs with teachers. This might be regarding understanding assignments, workload or how they learn (for example, they may learn better with visuals). They will learn important self-advocacy skills. Given that teens will be seeing their teachers less often this year, it's especially helpful for students to be proactive about communicating with them.
- **Prioritize your own self-care**
 - The start of the school year can be an overwhelming transition for families. Make your own mental health a priority and find your own outlets for stress relief, to ensure that you're not passing on stress and frustration to your teens. This is a great opportunity to model healthy coping skills and acknowledge that this "new normal" is hard for you, too.