

TRANSITIONING BACK TO THE SCHOOL BUILDING

The transition back into a school building may be challenging—even if students are excited to return. This guide provides resources for you and your child about ways to manage any anxiety around returning to in-person learning and how to cope if things get overwhelming.



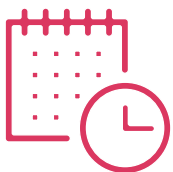
Start The Conversation About Back To School Stress.

VALIDATE THEIR FEELINGS AND MAKE THEM FEEL HEARD. Anxiety or nervousness about returning to full in-person learning can be a challenge for both students and adults.



- Start by listening without judgment and responding in ways that let them know that you understand.
- Let your child know that their feelings are important and that they aren't alone in feeling this way.
- Share with your child's teacher that your child is uneasy about in-person learning. Provide suggestions to your child's teacher about how he/she can validate your child's feelings as you do at home.

CREATE AND KEEP A ROUTINE. Predictable routines are one way to manage anxiety and stress related to returning to in-person learning. It can be helpful to involve your child in establishing these by asking them for their input and ideas.



- **Morning suggestions:** Eat breakfast at the same time every day, spend a few moments outside before class, or make sure all learning materials are assembled at the desk.
- **After school suggestions:** Choose a regular time for the school day to end, take a 10-15 minute walk around outside, or listen to your child's favorite song after classes are done.
- **Evening suggestions:** Put away the laptop when class and homework are done, pick out clothes for the next day's outfit, or go to sleep at the same time.



EMPHASIZE SCHOOL SAFETY MEASURES. Educate your child about how they can stay safe, and be open and honest about precautions and procedures that the school has established for the bus and the classroom.

- Discuss with your child that these should be followed to ensure everyone’s safety.
- Practice hand washing and other healthy activities with younger children at home.
- Offer praise for sticking to the safety measures.



STAY CONNECTED. Reassure your child that you care about their well-being by checking in with them regularly.

- Ask them about their day and inquire about their feelings about in-person learning. Check out the [How You Can Use Questions to Support Your Child’s Learning](#) guide for more tips about engaging students with questions.
- If needed, work with your child’s teacher to resolve any concerns.

Things To Know About Anxiety:

Reentry anxiety or nervousness is a natural reaction to a traumatic event like the COVID-19 pandemic. Children’s experiences may differ by age:¹

Preschoolers often have no memory of life before the pandemic. Parents and caregivers of preschoolers should introduce post-pandemic life in the same way that they would introduce any new situation.

Older children have memories of what it was like before the pandemic. They may be eager to “get back to normal” but have apprehension about their social life after the pandemic. Parents and caregivers should create predictable routines at home to help children feel safe.

Teens will have different experiences about reentry based on their individual experiences during the past year. You might consider giving your teens more autonomy with their social choices, which could include choosing which extracurricular activities they are comfortable with.



When should you get assistance with helping your child manage reentry anxiety?

If you need support with helping your child manage reentry anxiety, seeking additional support might be necessary. A counselor, social worker, or therapist can help your child create a step-by-step plan to practice strategies. There are also many free online resources to support families helping their children cope with anxiety.

Additional Resources:

- [How to Help Kids Handle Fears and Gain Independence \(Child Mind Institute\)](#)
- [Helping Kids Cope with Reentry Anxiety \(MIT Medical\)](#)
- [5 Tips for Taming Back-to-School Anxiety \(New York Times\)](#)
- [Child Mind Institute Family Resources](#)

References: ¹[Shive, 2021](#)