



Back to School Planning in Uncertain Times

The start of any school year is a stressful time for students. That stress is likely to be higher than ever this year. With the COVID-19 outbreak upending normal procedures, the transition back to school will require an immense adjustment, for both students and their parents. To help ease the stress and anxiety of the transition, consider the following tips:

Prepare in advance. With many school districts still formulating their instruction plans, it's hard to know what to expect and how daily routines will change. As much as possible, mapping out a schedule and preparing supplies and technology in advance will help you be flexible and respond to any last-minute changes.

Get up earlier. Even in normal times, the transition from summer freedom to school year routine can be a rough one. This year, it may be even harder. Try starting the new morning routine the week before the first day of school begins to help with the adjustment.

Arrive early. Whether walking to the bus stop or across the hall to a computer for distance learning, getting a head start on the day will ease stress and help your kids to settle in.

Talk about feelings. Stress levels will likely be high this year given all that is going on in the world. Encourage your children to describe how they feel about the new year and try to ease any fears they may have.

Express interest, be informed. Listen to your child's viewpoint, even if it is difficult to hear. Stay informed about school policies so that you can explain your district's decisions and why they may differ from other local schools.

Beginning something new can be stressful and adjustments take a lot of concentration and effort. Remember, how adults handle such transitions can set the stage for how well a child adjusts to his or her own challenges. Help children adapt by making preparations in advance, clearly explaining the changes about to take place and listening empathetically if they express doubts or fears.

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