



Parent Backpack for Returning to School



TIPS FOR PARENTS:

Start Preparing Early:



- Two weeks before school begins, start to change and establish new routines, such as bedtime.
- [Sleep Hygiene for Children](#)

Try to get the family back to old routines:



- Establish the importance of routines.
- Mealtimes generally at the same time/place every evening.
- Reduce screen time, especially at night.
- Refreshers on reading, math, and other skills they had but may have forgotten.
- [Helping Kids Back into the School Routine](#)

Start preparing your child for the new school year:



- Show them that you are looking forward to a new school year.
- If possible, involve them in school supply shopping.
- Discuss positive things about returning to the school building.
- Encourage them to share their thoughts about returning to school.
- Speak about ways to stay safe throughout the school day.
- Brainstorm about how to handle anxiety about being back in school: [How to get your Child to Talk About School](#)

After the first day back:



- Ask open ended questions about their day.

Have a Plan B (or C) for kids who may have difficulty within the school day:



- Establish a school staff person (teacher, principal, guidance counselor) that they feel comfortable with or can go to if they are feeling upset in school.
- Enlist friends to create support and look out for each other during the school day and remind them that their friends are there too (if applicable).
- Think about planning something fun for the weekends (a family board game night, getting ice cream, watching a favorite movie, fun outside activity, visit to a family or friends house, long walk with a family member).
- Explore other options of support, such as an ADAPP Counselor, private therapist, support group, etc.

Mental Health Matters

Parents play an important role in promoting mental health and wellness in their children. The US Surgeon General's Advisory on Youth Mental Health indicates the following for parents and caregivers:

Be the best role model you can be for young people by taking care of your own mental and physical health. Young people often learn behaviors and habits from what they see around them. You can model good habits by talking to children about the importance of mental health, seeking help when you need it, and showing positive ways you deal with stress so children learn from you.

THE THREE C's - The beginning of the school year can be a difficult time for students. NAMI created **The Three C's** to help you and your child feel supported as you talk about mental health and wellness, identify concrete support, and connect empathetically at home.

Get **Curious**

Get **Concrete**

Stay **Compassionate**



ADAPP's Promoting Wellness Flyer

STRESS HAPPENS! It is important for parents and caregivers to take care of themselves. By engaging in practices that promote wellbeing, parents and caregivers can be more in-tune to the needs of their children and can model ways to cope. [Well-Being Practices](#) - Gentle Reminders for Times of Stress.

STAND UP TO STRESS - This [free coloring and activity book](#) teaches children about stress and anxiety and offers tips for coping in a healthy way.

STRESS CATCHER - Life can get challenging sometimes, and it's important for kids (and adults!) to develop strategies for coping with stress or anxiety. This [Stress Catcher "fortune teller"](#) offers some strategies children can practice and use to help manage stress and other difficult emotions.

Social Media Youth and Mental Health

Educators, physicians, and psychologists agree- social media poses risks to the overall mental health and wellness of children and teens. While there are benefits to social media platforms, all adults who care about children need to be mindful of how to mitigate the potential harms, monitor use and promote the benefits of social media that are age appropriate. According to the Surgeon General, parents can set a good example of what responsible and healthy social media use looks like by limiting their own use, being mindful of social media habits (including when and how parents share information or content about their child) and modeling positive behavior on your social media accounts. Below are tips adapted from the [Surgeon General's Report on Social Media and Youth Mental Health](#):

- Create a family media plan. Visit: www.healthychildren.org/MediaUsePlan
- Create tech-free zones and encourage children to foster in-person friendships. Visit: [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\) guidelines for media use](#).
- Model responsible social media behavior. [Research-based Tips from Pediatricians for Families](#).
- Teach kids about technology and empower them to be responsible online participants at the appropriate age. Learn more about the benefits and risks of social media use and get guidance from experts at [AAP's Center of Excellence on Social Media and Youth Mental Health](#) and from the American Psychological Association's [Health Advisory on Social Media Use in Adolescence](#).
- Report cyberbullying and online abuse and exploitation. Visit: [CyberTipline](#), [Take it Down](#), or contact your local law enforcement to report any instances of online exploitation.
- Work with other parents to help establish shared norms and practices and to support programs and policies around healthy social media use.

Resources:

- [Supporting Mental Health at Home, NYS School Mental Health and Training Resource Center](#)
- [CDC Parent Resource Kit: Ensuring Children and Young People's Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Well-Being](#).
- [Just Breathe](#) - Mindfulness Website with brief mindfulness videos for adults and youth.
- [ADAPP](#) - Mental Health and Wellness
- [Coping and Managing Stress Flyer](#)
- [Family Roadmap Toolkit](#), a new resource from the Office of Mental Health provides a step-by-step guide to give parents and caregivers a place to start. This toolkit offers valuable tips, suggestions, and resources to support families and children.

