

Factsheet: Back to School

Provided by: Mental Health America

<http://www.nmha.org/>

The beginning of a new school year can be a stressful time for children, with new teachers and classmates, bigger classrooms, new routines and more schoolwork. This time can be particularly unnerving and overwhelming for children who are facing major transitions such as starting elementary school or entering middle school. As a parent there are proactive steps you can take to support your child as he or she heads back to school.

- Express interest and enthusiasm about the start of the school year. If you are confident and excited, your child will be too.
- If you have visited your child's school already, you are one step ahead of the game. If not, take a walk around the school with your child and locate his or her classrooms, lunchroom, playground and restrooms. This will help keep your child from feeling lost on the first day.
- Take time to listen to your child and discuss aspects of the new school year that he or she is worried about. Remember to let your child know that it's normal to feel nervous about the start of school. For parents of younger children, suggest that your child take a family photo or special object to school to make his or her surroundings more comfortable.
- Spend time each day talking to your child about what happened in school. Give your child positive feedback about his or her new experiences.
- Praise and encourage your child to become involved with school activities and try new things.
- Attend school functions and stay involved in your child's education. Children whose parents are more involved with their education have higher achievement, are better adjusted and are less likely to drop out of school.
- Make a point to learn about how your child develops not just physically, but socially and emotionally, as well. If you are aware of what's typical behavior and thoughts for your child's stage of life, you will be able to tell more readily when things may not be right.

Anxiety and stress about starting school is normal for a child and usually passes within the first few days or weeks. If your child continues to seem anxious or stressed, it may be time to seek help. Talk to your child's pediatrician about what you can do as a parent. If problems persist, consider a referral to a trained and qualified mental health professional.

Other Resources

National Association for the Education of Young Children.

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Buzzle.com. (2005). Kick Off a Stress-Free School Year. Retrieved July 11, 2006 from <http://www.buzzle.com/editorials/10-21-2003-46772.asp>

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Mizelle, N. (1999). The Transition to High School. Retrieved July 11, 2006 from http://www.tusd.k12.az.us/contents/distinfo/tips/tip1_05_2001.html

Family Education Network. (2005). Moving from Middle to High School. Retrieved July 11, 2006 from <http://school.familyeducation.com/school-readiness/parents-and-teacher/37690.html>

The Public School Parents Network. (2004). Ten Tips to Help Prepare Students for High School. Retrieved July 11, 2006 from <http://www.psparents.net/High%20School.htm>

Magliaro, J. (2005). Kick Off a Stress Free School Year. Retrieved July 11, 2006 from http://www.princetonol.com/back_to_school/article_sylvan03.cfm

NC State University. Recognizing Stress in Children: Helping Children Cope with a Disaster. Retrieved July 18, 2006 from <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/fcs/human/disas1.html>

For More Information:

For help finding treatment, support groups, medication information, help paying for your medications, your local Mental Health America affiliate, and other mental health-related services in your community, please click here to access our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) and Answers. **If you or someone you know is in crisis now**, seek help immediately. Call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach a 24 hour crisis center or dial 911 for immediate assistance.