

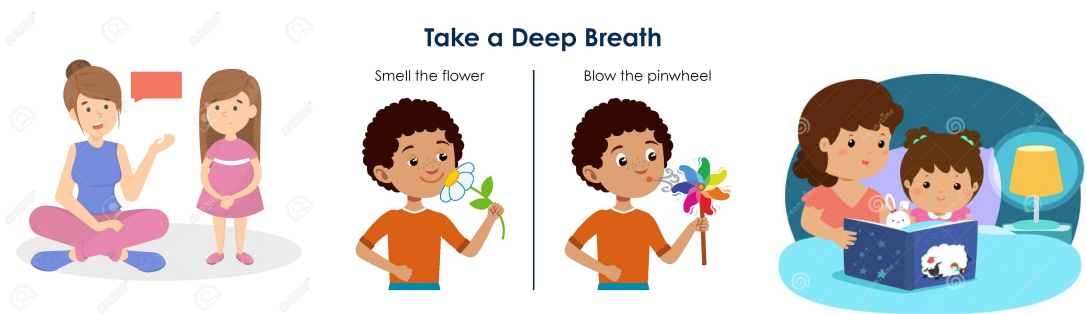
Resource for Families

We're Going Back To School



Going back to school may look differently this year for your children and they may have difficulty coping with changes in their school routines and activities. Going back to school during a pandemic may bring unique challenges for your child depending on their age. Below are some behaviors you may notice and how you may respond.

Reactions	How to Help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of being alone or bad dreams • Speech difficulties • Toileting accidents or changes in developmental skills in children • Physical symptoms such as head and stomach aches in teens • Changes in appetite or sleeping habits • Increase in temper tantrums, whining, clinginess, or irritability • Withdrawal from peers or loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities • Forgetfulness about regular chores or previously learned academic material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patience and tolerance • Reassurance • Encourage expression through play and age-appropriate information and conversation • Stay in touch with friends and family via social media, texts, or phone calls • Continue bedtime routine. Plan calming and comforting activities before bedtime • Maintain regular family routines • Avoid media exposure for young children and limit for teens • Set gentle, but firm limits • Practice relaxation techniques like deep breathing



Take a Deep Breath

Smell the flower

Blow the pinwheel

What if my child is worried about changes in their school routines?

- Provide reassurance that safety measures are in place to keep students and teachers healthy as well as protect more vulnerable members of the community.
- Remind children that they can help prevent germs spreading by washing their hands with soap and coughing/sneezing into their elbow.
- Help children focus on the positives such as seeing their friends and teachers as well as continuing to learn new things.

What if my child is worried about wearing a mask or protective gear during school?

- Children may get upset/frustrated about wearing masks, especially when running/playing.
- Be empathetic. Encourage your children to share worries/emotions related to COVID-19.
- Reassure your children that lots of adults are working hard to keep your family safe, but emphasize that it's important we all follow the recommended measures.
- For younger children, you may consider a DIY mask project that allows them to pick the fabric color and pattern or allows them to decorate their mask.

How can I check to see how my child is coping?

- Their emotions may change regularly. Reassure your children that this is okay. .
- Engage children in creative activities, such as playing or drawing to help them express and communicate difficult feelings such as anger, fear, or sadness in a safe and supportive environment.
- As children often take their emotional cues from the key adults in their lives – including parents and teachers – it is important that adults manage their own emotions and remain calm, listen to children's concerns, speak kindly, and reassure them.

What if my child is feeling anxious?

1. **Normalize their experience.** Help your child name their feelings. This helps to assure them they are not the only one feeling this way and that it is understandable to feel that way.

2. **Look outward.** Remind your child that the safety measures that are in place are to help others and to be part of a larger community. You can also look for other ways to volunteer, help or serve others.

3. **Find distractions.** When you try not to think about something, it can become hard not to. Instead, reflect on the positive things going on in your everyday lives. Share one or two things you are proud of or thankful for at breakfast or dinner each day.

4. **Help yourself and family members relax.** Some ideas include:

- Take deep breaths
- Count
- Go for a walk
- Take a drink of water
- Take a break
- Do a puzzle
- Listen to music
- Draw a picture
- Swing
- Rock
- Read a book
- Give a hug

Resources from: NCTSN.org, NCPMI and unicef.org

If you have concerns for your child that you do not know how to address alone, please reach out to your child's school. There are people there who would love to help.



Mental Health Support Team

