

Preparing children for back-to-school season often means back-to-school shopping, crisp "new school year" haircuts and a return to a school-time routine. For many parents, it also means learning some essential mental health tips to help manage any back-to-school stress and anxiety kids may experience.

Here are five easy mental health tips for back-to-school that will help make the transition back to school easier.

Back-To-School Mental Health Tips

1. **Spend quality time together.** Spending one-on-one time with your child before or after school is a great way to foster essential conversations about their mental and emotional wellbeing. For example, join them doing one of their interests (sports, dance, library, walking, bike-riding, etc.).
2. **Talk to your kids about bullying.** According to the CDC, one in five high school students report being bullied at school and more than one in six say they are bullied electronically. Encourage your child to share with you what their day was like by starting the conversation "So tell me about your day today?" "Anything happen, good or bad?" **Recognize the symptoms of bullying.** Keep an eye out for any of the following symptoms that may be the result of being bullied: sadness, isolation, loss of confidence, bruises, injuries, lost or broken items, declining grades, trouble eating and sleeping, loss or change of friends, and avoiding specific people or situations.
3. **Get back into a reliable routine early.** While it is very tempting to let children stay up late and sleep in during the summer, it is vital to start getting them on a solid routine — particularly a sleep routine — prior to the start of school. As per a 2022 study published in the journal, *The Lancet*, children who got an insufficient amount of sleep experienced more mental health and behavior challenges than their peers who received enough sleep. Less sleep has been found to be linked to stress, depression, anxiety, and aggressive behavior. Children under 5 need approximately 12 hours sleep a night, and 6–12-year-olds needs 10 hours sleep and teens need 8-9 hours a night.
4. **Have family mealtime every day.** Only 30% of U.S. families regularly eat dinner together, despite studies showing that regular family meals are associated with lower rates of depression, and anxiety. It does not matter which meal — it can be breakfast, lunch, a snack, or dessert.
5. **Quality exercise.** Some children live in neighborhoods where it is not safe for them to go play outside, go for a walk, run, or ride their bike. Schools and local parks can be a place where they can safely workout and exercise. Exercise is a critical tool for managing anxiety and depression.