

Mental Health Tips for Back to School

(taken from [Dr. Craig Sawchuk](#), *Psychology*, Mayo Clinic)

Question: My teenage son is looking forward to heading back to school this fall, especially after months of remote learning due to COVID-19. Sitting in front of the computer for hours was not easy for him. Do you have any advice for how I can ease the transition for him?

Answer: School is one of the most important places where children learn and grow intellectually, socially and emotionally. And while the desire is strong for children to return to a healthy school environment, the ongoing [COVID-19](#) pandemic has caused a lot of uncertainty and stress for students, teachers and parents alike.

Change can be challenging, and it is important to remember that not every person reacts to change in the same way. Your children clearly recognize that this coming school year will look different than past years, whether they meet in person, online or use a hybrid approach.

The first step to helping your children transition is to keep a healthy mindset and focus on the positive. As schools determine their approaches, students will need varying behavioral health support based on their age and the class format.

Talk with your son about how changes in daily routines can be a challenge for everyone, even adults. Share with him that school administrators and teachers are probably feeling a bit anxious also.

Consider these mental health tips to help manage mental health and ease the transition to the school year:

- **Be aware and supportive.**
Recognize your children's concerns or anxiety and talk about their fears. Be patient as they work through loss of the way things were.
- **Be optimistic.**
Maintain a positive attitude about learning new ways to learn. Encourage your children to see this as an adventure.
- **Practice relaxation and learn new skills to manage stress.**
Explore how relaxation, mindfulness or yoga can calm the mind. Several free classes and mental health apps are online. Many of these skills are portable and can be used anytime, anywhere.
- **Maintain a normal daily routine.**
Aim to wake up and go to bed as close as you can to the same times each day. Stay hydrated, try to keep up with a healthy diet and focus on increasing physical

activity during the day. A healthy body helps maintain a healthy mood and mindset.

- **Lead by example.**

Continue to practice safety measures at home and when out in public, including washing your hands, wearing a face mask and social distancing. Talk to your children about the importance of these measures to keep everyone safe.

- **Stay connected with healthy support in your life.**

While social connections became mostly virtual in the height of the pandemic, it is valuable to spend time with those who care about you. Schedule in time to stay connected to friends and family. Social interaction is important for mental health.

- **Disconnect.**

Remember to disconnect from the news. Spending between 15–30 minutes one to two times a day is usually enough to keep informed but not overwhelmed.

Some people may struggle with more significant mental health difficulties so if you believe your children needs additional resources, please contact the Student Services Department at MAC and speak with one of the counsellors.