

# Going Back to School

## Middle School

### Supporting your child

Returning to school is a big transition, and every child responds differently. Here are some ways to help support your child:

Strategy	Try saying	Instead of
<b>Listen.</b> Make time each day (even 5 minutes) to check in, ask open-ended questions and listen to your child without interrupting.	<b>“How are you feeling about being back at school?”</b>	“I’m sure you’re happy to be back at school.”
<b>Validate feelings.</b> Let your child know that you understand what they said—by repeating back what you heard, without judgment—and that it’s normal to feel that way.	<b>“It sounds like you feel overwhelmed about going back to school with so many changes and unknowns. It is completely normal to feel that way.”</b>	“You don’t need to worry. It will be fine.”
<b>Model healthy coping skills.</b> Model positive ways you handle stress, and involve your child in practicing healthy coping skills.	<b>“I’m feeling anxious about all the changes I’m experiencing at work. I’d love to go play basketball to let go of some stress. Want to join me?”</b>	“It’s hard, but there’s nothing we can do to change it.”

### Promoting academic success

Creating strong study and organizational habits can boost your child’s confidence.

- ✓ Have your child keep an agenda or calendar of their tasks to stay organized and to be aware of upcoming deadlines and tests.
- ✓ Help your child find a quiet space to study, and remove distractions (such as the TV, phone, etc.).

 **Preteens** ages 11 to 12 typically need 9 to 12 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period.

**Teens** 13 and up typically need 8 to 10 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period.

# Practicing healthy habits

Practicing healthy habits as a family helps support your child's mind and body while positively impacting their mood, focus and behavior.

**Routines.** Knowing what to expect can help create a sense of comfort and security. Try to maintain simple routines to keep things more predictable, such as a consistent bedtime.

**Nutrition.** Drink water, and eat three meals and two to three snacks at consistent times each day.

**Sleep.** Turn off digital screens and electronic devices an hour before bedtime, and keep devices out of the bedroom to get quality rest.

**Activity.** All kids need time to be active, play and have fun. Encourage your child to be active by taking walks, playing games or dancing.

**Balance.** Kids need plenty of unstructured time to explore interests, rest, and connect with family and friends.

# Practicing healthy coping skills

What works one day may not work the next, so encourage your child to practice a variety of different coping skills. There are many skills to choose from, and here are some examples:



Coping skills are tools we can use to manage feelings and handle stress.



## Be active

Go for a <b>walk, run,</b> or <b>bike ride</b>	Do <b>jumping jacks</b>	Put on music and <b>dance</b>
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## Find your calm

Take <b>deep breaths</b>	Listen to <b>music</b>	Tense and <b>relax</b> your muscles
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## Get creative

<b>Draw</b> or <b>paint</b>	Write about your <b>thoughts</b> or <b>feelings</b>	Play an <b>instrument</b>
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## Connect with others

<b>Play a game</b> with a friend or family member	Share your <b>feelings</b> with someone you trust	Play with your <b>pet</b>
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## Shift your mindset

Think of something <b>positive</b>	Focus on one thing you're <b>grateful</b> for	Think about something you're <b>looking forward</b> to
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It is difficult to learn something new when you are upset, angry or distracted. Teach and practice new skills when everyone is calm. Try lots of different options to see which ones work best for your child.