

Navigating school breaks

High school

Resilient children are better able to handle life's ups and downs.

Stick to normal routines

To create a sense of normalcy during school breaks, try to maintain many of your teen's daily routines.

- Encourage your teen to try to keep bedtime and wake time consistent with school days. This will help them get back to their normal routine when the break is over.
- Maintain expectations for chores. A break from school shouldn't mean a break from responsibilities. Whether it's taking out the garbage, walking the dog or cleaning their room, try to be consistent.
- Limit screen time. It's common to ease up on screen-time limits during school breaks, but encourage your teen to prioritize daily activities, such as sleep, mealtimes, physical activity, and interacting with family and friends.

School breaks can be both an exciting and stressful time for families. Here are some tips to help your high schooler build resilience and enjoy school breaks.

Make the most of the break

Make time to unwind and relax. The school year can be stressful, and some kids may need a reminder that it's OK and helpful to take breaks and recharge. Encourage your teen to find ways to relax and unwind. Keep in mind, what's relaxing to one person may not be relaxing to another, so it's important to let your teen figure out what works best for them.

Build independence. Learning new skills can increase your child's confidence. Give your teen a chance to take the lead on planning and cooking a meal, coming up with a family activity, or working on a house project. Remember that part of learning involves making mistakes. Give them plenty of support and encouragement and help them learn throughout the process.

Spend time doing everyday activities together. Invite your child to help with holiday shopping or party planning. Cook a family meal together. Ask for your child's input, and let them problem solve with minimal help.

Practice giving back. Volunteering is a meaningful way to help your teen learn the importance of giving back and develop empathy for others.

- ✓ Prepare or serve meals at a shelter.
- ✓ Assist an organization with wrapping or delivering gifts.
- ✓ Help a neighbor with a task or chore.
- ✓ Ask your teen to donate clothes and items they no longer need.



Empathy is the ability to understand someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation.

Practice coping skills

School breaks can be a relief for some and stressful for others. Either way, it's a great opportunity to encourage your teen, and the entire family, to practice healthy coping skills. Practicing these skills can reduce stress and sometimes even prevent stress from occurring in the first place. Just be sure to practice coping skills before you need them, when everyone is calm.

Be in the moment. Encourage your family to be in the present moment by using your senses to notice what's happening around you (e.g., What do you see? Smell? Hear?).

Get active. Physical activity is a proven stress reducer, and it can be fun! Take a family walk or play a game of basketball together.

Practice gratitude. Showing thanks and gratitude toward others not only helps us feel happier, but it can also be beneficial to our physical wellness. Start simple by asking everyone at dinnertime to share one thing they're grateful for.



Gratitude is the act or feeling of being thankful or showing appreciation.

Getting back on track

After a break, it can be challenging to transition back into "real" life. No matter how hard you try, it's normal—and OK—to get off track during these times.

Help your teen adjust to going back to school:

- Support your teen in planning for the days and weeks ahead. Encourage them to try using a planner to help them stay organized as they get back to school.
- Encourage your teen to get their lunch and backpack ready the night before so that things go smoothly the first morning back.
- Help your teen make a plan to continue doing things they enjoyed over the break. Did they get quality sleep and feel more rested? Did they interact more with friends and family? Help them think through ways they can prioritize doing things they enjoy when school starts back.