

Building Resilience Over Summer Break

Elementary school

STRONG⁴LIFE



Children's
Healthcare of Atlanta

Resilient kids are better able to handle life's ups and downs. Summer breaks can bring up lots of feelings. Some kids may feel excited about the break, while others may feel sad to leave school and their friends. However your child is feeling, you can help them take care of their body and mind—and ultimately build resilience—while enjoying summer break.

Keeping consistent routines

Even though summer break may be less structured than the school year, it's important to maintain some routines so that kids know what to expect. Here are some ways to incorporate routines during summer break:

Identifying and expressing feelings

Kids need your help learning how to identify and express their feelings. Make it a routine to regularly ask your child how they're feeling. If it's helpful, use the feelings faces provided. Then, actively listen to what they share. Let your child know you understand and that it's normal and OK for them to feel whatever they're feeling.



Excited



Frustrated



Disappointed



Worried



Brave



Lonely

Sleep

It's normal for sleep habits to change over the summer, but getting quality sleep is important for kids' bodies and minds all year long. And helping your child keep a consistent bedtime routine during the summer can help make the transition back to school a little smoother. Do your best to maintain sleep and wake times and before-bed routines, such as bathing, brushing teeth, reading books, listening to stories or calming music, coloring, etc.

Nutrition

It's easy for your child's eating habits to change during summer break. Try having quick and healthy snacks on hand, such as fruit, nuts, string cheese and yogurt. It's also important for your child to stay hydrated by drinking plenty of water (instead of sugary drinks). Make drinking water more fun by letting your child pick out a water bottle or use a silly straw.

Screen time

With less structure and more downtime, kids tend to spend more time on screens during summer break. Try setting consistent screen time limits, and encourage your child to get plenty of physical activity, rest, and time to connect with friends and family.

Coping skills

Coping skills are things we can do to help us feel better and manage stress. Use extra downtime during the summer to practice coping skills with your child. Pick one skill to regularly practice together, such as deep breathing.

Deep breathing: This coping skill involves inhaling slowly through the nose and exhaling slowly through the mouth. Deep breathing can help improve our ability to focus and better handle our emotions by lowering our heart rate, allowing our muscles to relax, and calming our mind and body. One technique to help your child practice deep breathing is using balloon breaths.

Think of your belly as a balloon. As you breathe in, let the balloon fill with air, then breathe out and let the balloon deflate.

It's difficult to learn something new when we're anxious, angry or distracted, so try to practice any new coping skills when everyone is calm.

Embracing summer boredom

With more free time, your child may complain about being bored. It's normal to try to prevent boredom by scheduling lots of activities. But overscheduling your child can make it hard for them to slow down, be present, be creative and explore other interests. Encourage your child to accept and even enjoy boredom! Here are some ways to respond when your child says they're bored:

"When I'm bored, I find that I end up having fun because I really get to think about what I want to do. What's one thing you want to do right now?"

"It sounds like you aren't sure what to do right now. I wonder what you'd enjoy doing if you let your mind wander for a moment. What do you think?"

"I can't help you figure it out at this moment, so take a few minutes and see what you can think of. I'm excited to see what you come up with!"

Learning through activities

There are many ways your child can learn outside of school, even in the everyday things you're already doing. Here are some ways to make learning more fun:



Cook

Practice using fractions in recipes, or figure out the best way to divide the meal into the correct number of servings for your family.



Do chores

Let your child help with meal planning and prep, making the bed, folding laundry or taking care of pets. This can encourage them to think critically and problem-solve.



Read

Head to your local library, and encourage your child to check out a new book that interests them.



Garden

Encourage your child to explore the outdoors. You can help them create a fun scavenger hunt, so they can look for different trees, insects, leaves, etc.



Visit museums

Visiting museums can help us learn about people, cultures and experiences different from our own. During and after the visit, talk with your child about what they learned. This can be a helpful way to develop empathy, teach tolerance and build their resilience.

