

Building Resilience Over Summer Break

Middle school

STRONG⁴LIFE



Children's
Healthcare of Atlanta

Resilient kids and teens 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 disappointed 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.

Following 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:



Communication

Kids this age often experience many intense emotions, and they're still learning how to express themselves in healthy ways. One way you can help is by creating a daily routine for communication. This can help your child learn that it's OK and normal to feel whatever they feel and share it with others.

- **Start the conversation by asking open-ended questions**, such as “How are you feeling today?” or “What’s been the best part of your day so far?”
- **Active listening** means giving someone your full attention when they’re talking to you. It communicates that you’re engaged and listening, and that you care about what they’re saying. Make eye contact, put away any distractions and listen to understand.
- **Normalize and validate their feelings.** Let your child know you understand by repeating back exactly what you hear, without dismissing, minimizing, judging or interpreting. Reassure them that their feelings are normal and OK.



Sleep

It's common for sleep routines to change over the summer with more relaxed schedules, but getting quality sleep is important for the body and mind all year long. And being consistent over the summer can make it easier to transition back to school. Encourage your child to maintain consistent sleep habits, even during busy summer days or when you're away from home.

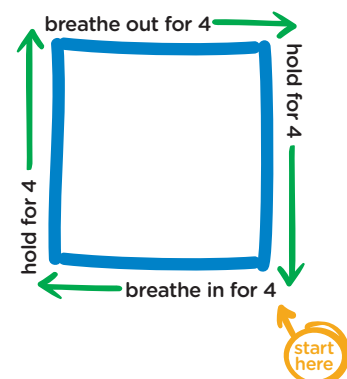
- Support your child in maintaining consistent sleep and wake times.
- Remind them to power down devices at least an hour before bed, and keep screens out of the bedroom.
- Encourage them to practice calming activities before bed, such as reading, journaling or listening to music.



Coping skills

Coping skills are things we can do to feel better and help us manage stress. Use extra downtime during the summer to practice coping skills with your child, such as deep breathing. This coping skill involves inhaling slowly through the nose and exhaling slowly through the mouth. Deep breathing can 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.

Square breathing is one way to practice deep breathing. Encourage your child to trace around the square while following the prompts.



Nutrition

When schedules and activities change, it's common for eating habits to change as well. To prepare, try to have quick and healthy snacks available, such as fruit, nuts, string cheese and yogurt. It's also important to make sure your child is drinking enough water to stay hydrated. Adding fruit to water and freezing it in ice trays is a fun way to help make water (instead of a sugary drinks) more appealing. Encourage your child to try out different combinations of fruit and water to see what they enjoy best.

Screen time

With less structure and more downtime, kids may spend more time on screens over the summer. Try to set limits on screen time and encourage balance so your child is getting plenty of physical activity, rest, and time connecting with friends and family. Although it may be challenging to limit screen time as much as you'd like, try to be consistent with expectations for mealtimes, family activities and turning off all electronics at least an hour before bed.

Learning through activities

There are lots of ways your child can learn when they're out of school. Here are some tips for how to make learning more fun through everyday activities:

Cook

Practice math skills by encouraging your child to adjust the amounts of ingredients in a recipe based on what you need and what you have available.

Do chores

Let your child help with tasks, such as meal planning or fixing things that are broken. This can encourage them to think critically and problem-solve.

Read

Reading over the summer is a great way for your child to build their vocabulary and explore new interests. Head to the library to check out new books that interest your child.

Garden

Use gardening projects to help your child learn about science. Whether you use indoor or outdoor plants, encourage them to choose the type of seed to plant and figure out what it needs to grow.

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.

