

North Shore Center LLC

September 2019 Newsletter



Back To School

“Quick, it’s the first day of school! Grab the lunches, wake the kids, it’s already 7:20... we’re going to be late.” Whether one is starting school for the first time or simply returning from the summer, stress seems to be a common reaction of the back to school craze. Maybe it is the long summer of relaxation. Maybe it is the parents worrying about their child's first experience in a classroom or how their 17-year-old will wake up before noon. Maybe it is the students who are concerned with their ability to balance

school and the job they took on this summer. Maybe it is the teachers who worry about the new children in the classroom, and if their teaching skills are good enough to help these kids learn. Regardless of one’s age or role in the community, the stresses that they take on before the start of school can be enormous. However, there may be a way to manage the chaos of this 2019 school year!

Parents’ Stressors

Care.com completed a survey of 1,000 parents ranking their top stressors when preparing for this school year. The top four stressors for moms and dads are getting the kids to wake up earlier, school supply spending, managing time with school traffic, and making sure to spend enough time with the kids. Parents tend to be overlooked when it comes to back-to-school anxiety. An article by the *HuffPost* states, “According to Dr. Josh Kaplow, clinical psychologist, it’s normal to experience some degree of back-to-school anxiety, regardless of how long it’s been since you were a student.” The memories that parents have from their own back to school experiences can be the

reason why their fears are often inadvertently projected onto their kids' experiences. A few helpful tips to remember during this time, given to us by the *HuffPost*:

- Give yourself time to transition from the summer to the new school year
- Check-in with yourself daily -- ask yourself the hard questions "Why am I feeling stressed?"
- Take 5 to 10 minutes out of your day to meditate or practice relaxation strategies

Teachers' Stressors

Parents aren't the only adults who can suffer from back to school anxiety. Teachers are so important when it comes to the beginning of the school year. They are the trusted carers who hold down the fort for 8 to 10 hours each day. But, they can be just as stressed about the school year as children can be. Their stressors usually come from:

- Putting their classroom together
- Implementing new rules and procedures
- Dealing with children with behavioral issues

How to cope with this stress:

- Establish a routine
- Get daily exercise
- Make sure to prioritize your health

Your health is too important to let the school year take over. Make sure you are taking time for yourself. Be able to separate work and home, if you can. If you work from home, be sure to take a day to not be surrounded by your work. Take care of you!

Students' Stressors

KidsHealth conducted a survey on back-to-school worries and received responses from about 600 teenage students. Nearly one-third of the teens reported schoolwork and another one-third rated social concerns as the main contributors to their back-to-school stress. The survey also found that about one-fourth of the respondents stated appearance as the main reason for their back-to-school nerves (KidsHealth, 2019). The teenage years of school usually indicate the switch from grade school to middle school or middle school to high school. During this time, classes and schoolwork become more academically challenging, friend groups go through changes, and one's appearance becomes more important to them and their peers.

New schools mean a change in the environment, teachers, and friends. A fresh start can often be exciting for some kids, but it can also create insecurities. For example, teens seem to worry about fitting in, finding the right friends, and whether or not they will be bullied. As a teen, one's

social life becomes a big part of their school life. Especially in high school, when kids start using social media and “being popular” becomes more important than before. Therefore, fitting in and making quality friendships are some of the biggest concerns for teens as they head back to school. Schoolwork is another concern that affects teens. Freshmen in high school may worry that the new subjects, teachers, and the general environment of high school will be more academically challenging than their past school years. This can lead to worries about time management and study skills. However, this not only affects teens who are entering new school systems. Juniors and seniors in high school may be juggling school, a job, and sports. Also, with the start of AP class opportunities, they may be worried about an increase in their homework loads and the overall difficulty of their classes.

Overall, teens of all ages are worried about going back to school for multiple different reasons. However, these reasons seem to generally concerned with academics and one’s social life and appearance. Kidshealth states that the best thing teens can do to overcome their worries is to face them dead on. With support from others and the right balance of studying and socializing, teens have been shown to have enjoyable school years.

Building a Routine to Manage the Stress!

KidsHealth, Children's Hospital of Colorado, and Psych2Go have all posted about the important role routines play in stress management. Psych2Go also posted a video about how to build a routine:

- Make a lunch, set out clothes, and pack a bag the night before
 - This allows you to sleep in a little longer, especially if you are not a morning person
- Decide what time of day you function best and take advantage of it; One should do their work at the time they have the most energy for
 - Taking advantage of the time where you are most focused helps you to get the most done. However, it is recommended that the most stressful things one has to do are completed first (usually in the morning).
- Take time to relax before bed
 - If one works up until the last second, they can increase their chances of sleep problems and reduce their abilities to sleep
- Set a bedtime and stick to it!

- Going to bed at the same time each night will promote good routine building within itself and reduces sleepiness to ensure one will be functional the next day

In addition to a routine, both KidsHealth and Children's recommend leaning on strong support systems in times of stress. Children's Colorado provides parents with the information needed to be a good support system. They say parents should:

- Talk about their kids' worries with them
- Stay positive about school and the new year
- Stay involved throughout the year. Ask the kids questions about their school day, the people, the classes, and homework

Wrapping It Up...

Overall, proper routine building can reduce stress and promote well being. It is important to plan for homework, take breaks, set bedtimes, and have fun. Finding a balance can be difficult, but once it is necessary to develop that balance into a routine. Having a planned routine makes keeping the balance between work and fun relatively easy to stick to. Whether one is planning a routine for themselves, their child, or both it is important that they stay positive, get organized, and budget more time than what is necessary for each task. They should remember to leave time for relaxing each day and to avoid overbooking themselves and their families. In addition to building a solid routine, one can make it through an intense school year by seeking support. Students can reach out to friends, teachers, and parents for the helping hand they need. Teachers and parents can provide the helping hand these students need while leaning on their families, friends, and outside sources for support. Overall, it shows that a supportive environment and a healthy daily routine should help to reduce the stress of this 2019-2020 school year!

Resources Used:

1. <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/school-stress.html?WT.ac=ctg#catschool>
2. <https://childrenscolorado.org/conditions-and-advice/parenting/parenting-articles/back-to-school-stress/>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B5xwHf6h-6k&vl=en>

4. <https://www.care.com/c/stories/15435/back-to-school-stress-for-parents/>
5. <https://www.teachhub.com/how-teachers-can-cope-back-school-anxiety>
6. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/back-to-school-adults_n_59a720cae4b010ca2899f298