



## **Back to School Preparation**

It's that time again. The time where children ages K-12 are winding down their Summer in preparation to transition back to school. While there is still Summer fun to be had, the looming transition back to school can be a source of stress. Not to worry! There are steps parents and children can take to minimize the amount of stress felt during this time and behaviors that can be targeted to make the transition back a smooth process!

### **Step #1 Practice, Practice, Practice**

It is never too early or too late to practice the act of going to school with your child. Children who may be experiencing anxiety and uncertainty about returning to school often benefit from role playing common scenarios encountered in the classroom, lunchroom, and on the bus. Parents can make this a fun experience by playing school with their children and acting out common classroom activities (Ex: Story time). While many of us adults would prefer not to return to school, this activity makes school fun for children and prepares them for the expectations of the classroom! Parents may even go as far as to incorporate academic workbooks to maintain their child's knowledge about previously learned material. The goal in doing this is not to ensure your child remembers everything they learned the previous year or

to teach them what they will be learning during the upcoming year. Rather, this is a way to expose children to academics because let's face it...they likely have not picked up a pencil majority of summer break!

### **Step #2 A Little Rearranging Goes a Long Way**

Rearranging a child and teen's schedule is beneficial in preparing them for the transition back to school. Imagine waking up at the crack of dawn when you have been sleeping until 11 most days out of the week! Not an easy thing to do. Try gradually having your child and/or teen go to bed earlier and wake up earlier on a regular basis. By doing this gradually, it is unlikely your child will notice significant changes in their routine until closer to the start of school. Then, when the first day of school arrives, your child and/or teen will have become used to falling asleep and waking up at an earlier time.

### **Step #3 Talk it Out**

Open communication is key! Hold conversations with your child and/or teen about their return to school. You may be surprised at how they are feeling and may be able to address some of the fears they may be experiencing. It is also important to begin a discussion about your expectations and any changes in rules that may accompany the start of school (Ex: New curfew for teens; when homework is to be completed, etc.). Talking with your child about how their routine will change helps prepare them for the upcoming transition.

### **Step #4 School Shopping**

If possible, take your child shopping to pick up the basic materials they will need for the start of the school year. Picking out materials ahead of time has the potential to increase your child's excitement and helps them feel prepared come the start of school!

Having to say goodbye to Summer is often a difficult process for kids and teens alike. Let's be honest, it isn't always easy on parents either! Back to the grind of school work, sports, homework, etc. While school is not always something your child looks forward to, school is a fun time that should be celebrated and prepared for. By applying the steps above, your child will have the opportunity to gradually slide into the new year as opposed to diving into the year head first!

Sincerely,

*Megan Flinchbaugh MA, LPC*