

# Returning to School: Helping Kids Adjust and Adapt

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This has been a challenging year for many children, adolescents and families. In much of the country, schools and businesses are now gradually starting to reopen. Here are a few tips for parents to help their kids adjust and adapt:

1. Don't try and rush back to a full "pre-pandemic" schedule right away. Let kids resume activities at a gradual pace.
2. Some kids may be eager to return to school full-time, while others may be more anxious and hesitant. It may also take time to adjust to more rigorous academic schedules and expectations.
3. Help kids modify their sleep schedules so they can get up in time for school.
4. Accept that the "new normal" is not yet predictable. Anticipate disruptions as school policies and schedules evolve.
5. Continue to follow current CDC guidelines with respect to masks and social distancing.
6. Talk to your kids. Ask them about their concerns and worries. Acknowledge their fears and answer questions honestly, using words and language they can understand.
7. Help kids regain a sense of control. Give them choices where there are choices.
8. Try and develop a consistent routine and schedule. Kids are reassured by structure and predictability.
9. Start making future plans (e.g., vacations, holiday celebrations, visits to relatives, etc.).
10. Watch for signs of stress including changes in mood, sleep or appetite. Talk to your child's pediatrician, family doctor, or school counselor. If problems persist, ask for a referral to a trained and qualified mental health professional.

Fortunately, most kids are quite resilient. They'll be happy to be back at school, seeing friends and playing outside. However, by providing thoughtful attention and support, we can help them adjust, adapt and successfully cope with the current and ongoing challenges they face.

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