

## Managing Back-2-School Stress for Kids and Parents

Now that school has been underway for a couple of weeks, many families are still adjusting to the changes in their daily routines. The shift from summer to school life can bring stress and anxiety for both kids and parents. It's normal to experience some bumps during this transition, but recognizing signs of stress and using strategies to manage it can help everyone settle in more smoothly.

### How to Recognize Stress in Kids

Kids don't always say when they're feeling overwhelmed, but their behavior often shows it. Watch for physical symptoms like stomachaches, headaches, or trouble sleeping. Emotional signs such as irritability, anxiety, or mood swings can also point to stress. Some children may withdraw from activities or have changes in appetite or behavior.

### Tips to Reduce Stress

- **Keep a Consistent Routine:**  
Even though school has started, sticking to regular times for waking up, meals, homework, and bedtime helps children feel secure and focused.
- **Keep Communication Open:**  
Encourage your kids to talk about how they're feeling about school. Listen with patience and let them know it's okay to feel nervous or uncertain.
- **Set Up a Homework Space:**  
A quiet, well-lit area dedicated to studying can help kids concentrate and reduce frustration.
- **Limit Screen Time:**  
Too much screen time can increase stress and interfere with sleep. Setting reasonable limits, especially in the evenings, supports better rest.
- **Encourage Physical Activity:**  
Exercise is one of the best natural ways to reduce stress. Activities like walking, biking, playing outside, or joining a sport can boost mood and energy. The CDC recommends that children get at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day to stay healthy and happy.
- **Promote Healthy Eating:**  
Balanced meals and snacks fuel both the body and mind, helping kids stay focused and calm.

- **Support Social Connections:**  
Spending time with friends and participating in activities can help children feel connected and supported.

### Supporting Parents Through the Transition

Parents often feel the pressure of managing their own schedules along with their children's changing routines. It's important to remember that your well-being matters too. Here are some ways parents can find support and reduce stress:

- **Set Realistic Expectations:**  
No one is perfect. Accept that some days will be more challenging than others, and that's okay! Celebrate small victories and progress instead of aiming for perfection.
- **Ask for Help:**  
Reach out to friends, family, or community groups when you need a break or some advice. You are not alone, and many parents are navigating similar challenges.
- **Make Time for Yourself:**  
Even small moments of self-care, like a walk, a hobby, or quiet time, can help recharge your energy and patience.
- **Practice Mindfulness and Stress Management:**  
Simple techniques like deep breathing, meditation, or journaling can reduce anxiety and improve focus.
- **Stay Connected:**  
Building a support network through parent groups, school events, or social media can provide encouragement and helpful tips.
- **Communicate With Your Child's School:**  
If your child is struggling, don't hesitate to talk with teachers or counselors. They can provide resources and support tailored to your child's needs.

### Mental Health Resources

If you or your family need extra support managing stress or mental health concerns, here are some helpful, widely accessible resources:

- **National Mental Health Information Center:**  
Offers information and links to local services: [mentalhealth.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.gov)

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Helpline:  
Confidential, free support and referrals: 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or [samhsa.gov/find-help](http://samhsa.gov/find-help)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:  
Call or text 988 anytime for confidential crisis support: [988lifeline.org](http://988lifeline.org)
- Crisis Text Line:  
Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a trained crisis counselor 24/7
- Local Healthcare Providers and Community Health Clinics:  
Your local doctors, clinics, or mental health providers can offer support and resources tailored to your family's needs.

If you aren't sure where to start, reaching out to your primary care provider or school counselor can be a good first step.

### **Upcoming Class: Freeze-Drying 101**

Interested in learning how to preserve your favorite foods? Join our Freeze-Drying 101 class held every *2nd Monday of the month at 5:30 p.m.* starting September 8<sup>th</sup>! This class will teach you how to use our freeze dryer and explore its many benefits. To register or learn more, contact the USU Extension office in Juab County by either calling at 435-623-3450 or emailing [emma.lopez@usu.edu](mailto:emma.lopez@usu.edu).