

Back to School



Believe it or not, it's already time to start preparing your children (and yourself!) to head back to school. Back to school season can be incredibly stressful for kids and parents alike. Stress and anxiety begin to mount as fun summer days fade away and new class schedules, homework, practices, and games start to fill your calendar. An abrupt change in routine can be challenging. Fortunately, you still have some time to mentally prepare your family before that first chilly morning at the bus stop.

State an Intention

Start by setting an intention with your child for the new school year. Ask, "what can you do to make this year your best yet?" It may be as simple as building independence to get ready on their own in the morning or something more aspirational like balancing academic achievement and extracurricular activities by developing and using time management skills effectively. Whatever the intention work closely with them to develop the skills, provide encouragement, and celebrate with them when they are successful. Critical to their success are the specifics of the intention they set. Get curious with them and ask "What do you need from me to succeed?" Then make sure to build in accountability. "What steps will you take to succeed?" "How will you know if the intention you set is working? How will your experience at school be better?" When your child sets an intention, with

your support and encouragement, they will be focused and more confident as they move into the new school year.

Build On Their Strengths

Change can definitely be a trigger. Consider how you felt your first day at a job or on a new team at work. It's ok to acknowledge your child's fear and anxiety, and offer the idea that these feelings subside as you become familiar with what was once 'new'. You may help them to remember a time when this has happened for them in the past and how it felt better over time. This is a great time to focus on your child's innate strengths and which of those they may have used to manage a new situation in the past. Every person has 24 character strengths inside them. You can discover your family's strengths by taking the VIA Character Strengths Survey located on the bottom of this page <https://beechacres.org/natural-strength-parenting>. **Back to school** time is a great opportunity to lean into your child's strengths of **Bravery, Love of Learning, Leadership, and Curiosity**. "It's very brave of you to sign up for a new club this year." "I am excited that you used your Love of Learning to try an honors class this year." Focusing on your child's strengths rather than trying to "fix" something helps them feel valued.

Take a Mindful Moment

Sometimes, despite your best intentions your kid is going to be anxious about going back to school. This is your chance to be fully engaged with them in the moment. Actively listen to their concerns and let them know you are listening. "I hear that you are worried about your first day of school, but you smiled when you talked about seeing your friends again?" Offer them a different way to envision the first day of school. "What would it look like if you spotted a friend and were able to walk in together on the first day?"

If necessary take a moment just to breathe with them. These calming moments can deepen your relationship

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and have a positive effect on their mental health heading into the chaos of back to school.

Take Time For Yourself

Remember this time of year is just as stressful for you as it is for your kids. Back to school shopping, coordinating carpools, rearranging schedules, and doing your regular everyday responsibilities can be overwhelming. Set an intention for yourself to be prepared and ready to help your kids succeed (or at least appear to be prepared!). Lean into your own strengths of **Love, Fairness, Judgment, Leadership, and Perseverance**. Your kids are going to be looking to you for guidance and your tone sets the tone for the family. Take a moment for yourself. Sit outside and take a moment to appreciate the beauty of these final summer days.

Additional Resources:

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/going-to-school/back-to-school/back-to-school-tips-for-parents/>

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/parents-public/back-to-school-tips>
<https://blog.ed.gov/2016/08/9-back-to-school-pro-tips/>

At Beech Acres Parenting Center, we uncover the natural gifts of children by unleashing the power of parents and caregivers. As a contemporary parenting center, BAPC serves over 20,000 people annually through a wide range of services including foster care, adoption, behavioral health support, parent coaching and much more. All of our programs are founded in our Natural Strength Parenting™ framework which enables parents to unlock their own potential by building on their unique strengths. For more information, visit www.beechacres.org.

NATURAL STRENGTH PARENTING™

