

Back to school, back to planning for kids with autism, ADHD

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(HealthDay)—The start of a new school year isn't always easy, especially

for kids with developmental and behavioral issues, such as autism and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder.

Parents of these [children](#) may also have concerns about what lies ahead for their youngsters.

But keeping a positive outlook is important for a smooth transition, according to Dr. Anson Koshy.

"Starting a new [school](#) year is an exciting time, it can also be a source of anxiety to both parents and children, particularly for families with children with an [autism spectrum disorder](#) (ASD) or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)," Koshy said.

He is assistant professor and developmental pediatrician at McGovern Medical School at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth).

"The sooner children with ASDs have access to evidence-based services and treatment, the more likely they are to progress," he added in a university news release.

Aside from staying positive, Koshy provides the following tips to help children ease back into the school year:

- **Think ahead.** It's a good idea for parents to reach out to their child's [teacher](#). This includes informing them of any recent medical evaluations and diagnoses. The more information teachers have, the more support they will be able to provide. Parents should also make sure teachers are aware of any medications their child is taking.
- **Plan a visit.** Children who are starting a new school should have an opportunity to visit their classroom and meet their

teacher—before classes begin if possible. Visiting before school is in session will allow new students to observe their new surroundings when the classrooms are still empty and quiet. It's also a good idea to take pictures of the school and playground during the visit.

- **Keep a calendar.** Parents should post a calendar at home that marks important dates. This gives children advance warning and time to prepare for these events ahead of time.
- **Stick with what works.** Parents should let their child's teacher know about any strategies or teaching methods that worked well in the past.
- **Establish a routine.** It's a good idea to set more strict boundaries as summer comes to an end to help kids ease back into the school routine. That may include earlier bedtimes, less screen time, or more restrictions on social media or video games.
- **Avoid comparisons.** All children are different. Parents should avoid comparing their child to others.
- **Set priorities.** As the school year begins, be sure children prioritize their schoolwork. Remind students that extracurricular activities may need to be limited if academic issues arise. This may help them stay on track.

"Teachers want every child to be successful, and [parents](#) want to see their children reach their full potential," Koshy said.

"This is a process and change rarely occurs overnight. If the transition into the school year is a little tough for your family or child in the beginning, remind yourself of your child's previous accomplishments. Talk with your child's teacher for a better picture of what they are seeing in the classroom setting," he added.

Parents should be patient about seeking initial evaluations of their child's performance at school, noted Koshy.

"When trying to assess if a child has symptoms of ADHD or if a prescribed ADHD medication is effective in a new academic year, it's helpful to wait until after the first month of school to evaluate how your [child](#) is doing," he said. "This allows for the reality of routines and expectations to set in order to gain a more realistic measurement."

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Mental Health has more about [autism](#) and [ADHD](#).

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