

Help your child cope with back-to-school jitters

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(HealthDay)—Back-to-school season can be a time of stress for many

kids—even in the best of times.

But pandemic fears add to the anxiety many kids will experience with the start of the 2020-2021 [academic year](#), according to David FitzGerald, a child and adolescent psychologist at UConn Health in Farmington, Conn.

"COVID-19's continued presence for this year's back-to-school season will bring with it more challenges than ever before," he said in a university news release. "We need to model calm for the kids at all times, and provide as much structure as possible, especially during these unpredictable times."

FitzGerald said parents need to pay close attention to their children's emotional health and well-being, and give them the support they need for a smooth transition back to class.

Here are some tips to help reduce back-to-school and pandemic-associated anxiety, stress and behavior issues:

- **Keep calm:** Parents need to lead by example. Slow down and give your family extra [time](#) in the morning so you aren't anxious and rushed. Teach kids to take deep breaths to calm themselves.
- **Start a healthy routine:** A nutritious diet, exercise and good sleep are important. Children need a routine and a serene, structured schedule.
- **Keep informed:** Parents need to know what is happening with the COVID-19 virus. Consult trusted health organizations and your local school district. Don't rely on social media alone.
- **Be sensitive and keep kids in the know:** Talk with your child and be tuned-in to their thoughts, concerns and feelings. Answer their questions. Kids should know what you know so there are no surprises that can cause frustration.

- **Stay flexible:** Avoid rigidity. Be aware of your child's expectations.
- **Talk with the teacher:** Communicating with your child's teacher is important during these unusual and challenging times. Avoid pushing your child too hard as it could add more stress.
- **Look for warning signs:** If your [child](#)'s mood or behavior changes, or their sleeping and eating schedule is off, talk it over. If necessary, seek professional help.

More information: For more back-to-school safety tips, visit the [U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

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