

Four ways to help kids overcome back-to-school anxiety

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Heading back to school after a long summer break can be an exciting time for kids and caregivers. But for some students, the anxiousness of heading back to school may be fueled by fears or worry. In this Mayo

Clinic Minute, Dr. Stephen Whiteside, a Mayo Clinic child psychologist, offers four tips on how to help kids overcome back-to-school anxiety.

Many of the things [parents](#) and caregivers can do to help kids with back-to-[school](#) worries are fairly straightforward.

"The first one is staying calm and warm. Realizing that when kids are nervous and worry, they often express that through acting up, being more irritable. Kids usually take those emotions out on their parents because that's the safe place to do so," says Dr. Whiteside.

Some kids might feel overwhelmed at the thought of interacting and reconnecting with peers, which is why Dr. Whiteside suggests parents make efforts to book play dates for kids to reconnect before the new school year.

"Reconnecting with some of the kids they know through school but don't see so much during the summer can be helpful," says Dr. Whiteside.

The main thing to avoid is avoidance: "... deciding that this is too hard for my child, they can't do it. We need to not do this, whether it's go to school, or we need to avoid certain things because it's just too overwhelming for my child—it runs the risk of allowing things to get worse over time," he says.

Finally, making sure kids get good, structured sleep, are eating well, limiting [screen time](#) and emphasizing [physical activities](#) can help [kids](#) feel better.

"When we feel better, fears and worries are easier to manage," says Dr. Whiteside.

One sign of back-to-school anxiety that parents and caregivers may look

out for is their student asking a lot of questions about what may or may not happen. Dr. Whiteside says making a plan can help ease that worry.

"Making it clear that it's perfectly normal to feel nervous about change and a combination of nervous and excited to go back to school. And that we can handle that together by just making a plan and following that where we take some steps to prepare."

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