

# MINDFUL MINUTE



## Back to School and Your Child's Mental Health

As the summer break has come to an end, and students have returned to the classroom, many shifts will accompany the transition. Some of the most common modifications that families should make during this time are to student/parent sleep cycles, family schedules, and recreation or leisure activities; however, there are many other aspects of life that can be impacted as well. These domains include, but are not limited to: time management, social life, rule adjustment, emotional regulation, and mental focus.

As families navigate these disruptions to normal routines, feelings of stress, anxiety, fear, and separation may arise. Although these feelings are normal, they are also sometimes very difficult to resolve alone. If you begin to feel overwhelmed by, or concerned about your child, please reach out to their school support staff which may include the school counselor or administrator. In addition, you can also reach out to your child's primary care team for guidance. Challenges are often inevitable, especially during this time of the year, but there are options available to help you support your child in the interim.

### CONTACT US:



 [edu-services@ttuhsc.edu](mailto:edu-services@ttuhsc.edu)

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# Easing Back-To-School Anxiety

One of the biggest emotional changes your child may experience, now that they have returned to the classroom, is anxiety.

You can assist with making that emotion less disruptive for them by:

- listening,
- validating their feelings,
- helping them with problem solving,
- providing them with choices,
- creating and implementing new daily routines,
- keeping your own anxiety at bay as best you can,
- limiting screen time,
- and seeking professional help when needed.



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## How to Support Your Child at School

Now that your child has returned to the classroom, the time they spend at home will decrease.

You can close the gap between time spent at home versus at school by:

- joining the parent teacher association
- attending all scheduled parent-teacher conferences
- making yourself available to school staff members
- limiting screen time
- ensuring your child gets enough sleep
- preparing healthy meals
- and rewarding/praising small wins.

## Put it Into Practice

Identifying strategies to help your child is a great start to ensuring your child has an enjoyable and successful school year, but knowing how to implement those strategies is the key to meaningful progression. Some of the actions you can take to prepare your child for the start of the school year, are as follows:

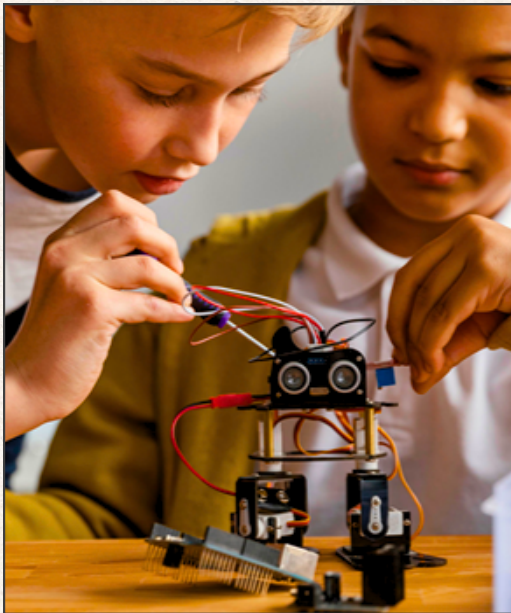
- Begin to make changes to your child's routine early in the school year
  - Practice independent skills with your child, such as packing a backpack, making a lunch, using the bathroom alone, and opening snacks
  - Reward the ability to accomplish tasks independently
  - Incorporate mood boosters into your child's day (watching a funny video, playing a game, positive self-talk)
  - Encourage responsible time management by teaching your child to use a calendar, planner, using a watch, or learning to utilize a clock
  - Teach your child how to communicate with their peers and other adults so that they can learn to self-advocate
  - Model expected behaviors by incorporating some of the same modifications into your own routine
  - Attend open house and/or other activities leading up to the first day of school Create a safe space for open communication at home when your child needs to vent
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## Tips and Tricks: Conversation Starters

After the school day has ended, and your child has returned home, it is not unusual to ask: “How was your day?” And chances are, you receive a shrug or a one word response in return, as opposed to a detailed reply. As an alternative, take some time this month to challenge yourself and ask them the following questions instead:

- “Who did you sit next to or play with today?”
- “What made you feel happy today? Did anything worry you, or make you feel uncomfortable?”
- “What is one goal you have for yourself this year?”
- “Did you meet anyone new today? What are you most excited about this year?”



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## How to Enroll Your Child in TCHATT Services

1. Contact your child's school counselor
2. Ask the school counselor to submit a referral on behalf of your child
3. Reach out to the TTUHSC TCHATT office via [tchat@ttuhsc.edu](mailto:tchat@ttuhsc.edu) for general questions about the referral process
4. Complete required parent/guardian consent forms
5. A TCHATT clinician will contact you to schedule a virtual assessment

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## VOCABULARY BANK

**TCHATT** - Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine

**Clinician** - A healthcare professional typically employed at a skilled nursing facility or clinic

**Referral** - The act of sending or directing someone to a different person, place, or professional for help, information, or services

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# PARENT RESOURCES

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## Helpful Websites

- **PBS Back to School:** <https://www.pbs.org/parents/back-to-school>
- **Managing Back to School Anxiety:** <https://childmind.org/article/back-school-anxiety/>
- **Back to School Tips:** <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/back-to-school-tips.aspx>

## Back-to-School Mental Health Videos

- **Experts Share Back-to-School Tips for Families at Every Level:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lrgtwAZRi4>
- **Resetting routines for kids and smart prepping for parents:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nxLO-34Hig0>
- **Back-to-school nerves vs. anxiety:**  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93cq7Ewpv5U>

## Book Recommendations

- **The Parent's Back to School Handbook: Tips and Advice to Start the School Year Strong (Parent Toolbox)** by Courtney Smalls Hillesheim
- **Managing Back-To-School Anxiety: A Parent's Guide to Helping Our Children Worry Less** by Jessica Hastings-Lesperance
- **The Back-to-School : A Practical Blueprint for Chaos-Free Mornings, Positive Homework Habits, and Confident Kids: Step-by-Step Action Checklists, Routine Hacks, and Weekly Planners for Busy Parents** by Grace Sterling

