

Mindful Minute

A Mental Health Resource for Parents

Helping Kids Manage School Stress

As the school year winds down, many children feel a mix of excitement and pressure. Final projects, tests, and busy schedules can leave them overwhelmed or burned out. Parents play a powerful role in helping kids navigate this stressful stretch with calm, confidence, and healthy habits.

Recognize Signs of Burnout

Kids may not always say they're stressed, but you might notice irritability, trouble sleeping, procrastination, or lower motivation. Normalize these feelings—remind them that many students feel this way and that stress can be managed with the right tools.



Reframe Negative Thoughts

One of the most effective ways to reduce stress is teaching children how to shift unhelpful thinking.

- **Name the thought:** Help them identify phrases like *"I'll never finish"* or *"I'm bad at math."*
- **Challenge it:** Ask, *"What evidence do you have?"* or *"What's a more balanced way to look at this?"*
- **Reframe it:** Encourage alternatives such as *"This is a lot, but I can break it into steps"* or *"I've handled tough assignments before."* This approach builds resilience and helps kids see challenges as manageable rather than overwhelming.

Build Time-Management Skills

End-of-year workloads often feel heavier simply because everything hits at once. You can help your child regain a sense of control with simple planning habits:

- **Use a visual schedule:** A weekly planner or whiteboard helps kids see what's due and when.
- **Prioritize tasks:** Sort assignments into "must do," "should do," and "can wait."
- **Break big projects into chunks:** Celebrate each completed step to boost motivation.
- **Create consistent routines:** Homework time, breaks, and screen use are easier when predictable.

Support Healthy Balance

Kids handle stress better when they feel emotionally grounded and physically recharged.

- Encourage short movement breaks every 30–45 minutes.
- Protect sleep by winding down early and minimizing late-night work.
- Promote small moments of joy—playing outside, reading for fun, or connecting with friends.



Stay Connected

The most reassuring message you can send is that your child is not alone. Check in daily with a simple question like, “What feels hardest today?” Listen without immediately trying to fix the problem. Sometimes being heard is enough to ease stress.

With steady support, practical tools, and a little perspective, kids can finish the school year feeling capable, confident, and proud of their hard work.



Self Care

As wonderful as the springtime is, it can bring with it additional stressors as a parent. You are trying to balance the final push to the end of the school year, contemplating summer plans like vacations or childcare, “spring cleaning,” the list goes on!

When we feel stressed, it can be easier for us to be a lot harder on ourselves, feeling like we are simultaneously not doing enough and doing too much for ourselves and our children.

Schedule Intentional Time

Too often we feel like self-care needs to take a full day, but in reality, it can take only a few minutes. A few ideas for quick self-care are finding times during your day for micro resets by practicing a few minutes of silence or deep breathing while kids are occupied. Shifting your mindset from “self-care is a luxury” to “self-care is a requirement” can help prevent burnout.

Scheduling short, non-negotiable breaks like taking a quick walk, listening to a favorite podcast or playlist, or sending a text a loved one can help you reset your body and mind. It also helps model effective self-care to your kids. You could even do these strategies with your kids to build their self-care toolkit.



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Communication Activity: Helping Kids Open Up About School Stress

This simple, 10-minute activity helps parents create space for honest conversations, teach reframing skills, and guide kids through time-management challenges.

1. Set the Stage (2 minutes)

Choose a calm moment—during a car ride, snack time, or bedtime routine. Begin with a gentle, open question:

- *“How has school been feeling for you lately?”*
 - Focus on listening rather than fixing.

2. Name the Stress (3 minutes)

Invite your child to share one thing that feels overwhelming. Reflect back what you hear:

- *“It sounds like the project deadline feels really big.”*
 - This helps them feel understood and reduces emotional intensity.

3. Reframe Together (3 minutes)

Help them identify any unhelpful thoughts. Ask:

- *“What are you telling yourself about this?”*
- *“Is there another way to look at it?”*
 - Guide them in creating a balanced reframe like, “I can handle this if I break it down.”

4. Plan the Next Step (2 minutes)

Work with your child to pick one small task they can do today—organizing materials, starting the first paragraph, or setting a study timer. Small wins build momentum.

5. Close with Support

End with:

- *“I’m here to help you through this. We’ll take it one step at a time.”*

This activity strengthens connection, builds coping skills, and helps kids feel capable during a busy season.

Family Bonding Activity

During the time of stress and the final push to the end of the school year, there are small ways in which you can stay bonded as a family. Having intentional family check-in time, whether it’s on the car ride home or at dinner, can offer connection. An example of a check in activity could be everyone sharing a:

- **Rose**- Something good that happened
- **Bud**- Something they are looking forward to
- **Thorn**- Something challenging from the day

Movement hours as a family can provide stress relief and a fun way to connect. Going on a family walk, family yoga, or other forms of physical activity are great for our bodies and minds, and a great way to connect side-by-side.



Helpful Resources

Please scan the QR code to explore a variety of mental health articles and videos.