



Preparing Your Children to Go Back to School After the Pandemic



While we as parents might be sighing with relief as our children prepare to go back to school, there is a lot to consider as we attempt to regain some normalcy after a year forever marked by a pandemic. Hopefully, our children are looking forward to being with friends, and parents are relieved from the responsibility of supervising distance learning while working from home. We must be prepared for the possibility of apprehension from children, parents, and teachers. In many ways, we as a society have lost sight of what normal even is. We have to retrain our brains to remember life and routines before the global pandemic and prepare our children for the transition back to school without COVID-19 protocols.

We must first of all take care of ourselves. Modeling self-care for our children is one of the best things we can do for them.

We must also be aware and observant of our child's behaviors and how they respond to stress. This involves looking for signs of anxiety or depression. Mental health took a big hit during the pandemic year. Because of this, cases of anxiety may rise as normalcy is sought. Communicate with your child's teachers and coaches to see how they are doing and if there are any needs you might be missing.

Be present and open to frequent discussions. Encourage communication about feelings. Be a good listener and provide gentle and gradual support, without overwhelming your child with too many questions. Some situations may require you to seek out a mentor for your child, someone he or she feel comfortable opening up to. Don't be afraid to seek outside help from a counselor if necessary.

Anticipate challenges. Try to plan ahead as much as possible. Planning ahead alleviates uncertainties and worries and equips our children with the tools they need to gain confidence during this transition.

Encourage your child to continue practicing health and safety precautions, such as washing hands, using sanitizer, not drinking after others, etc.



After a pandemic, where isolation was tremendously increased, it is good to **be proactive about checking on your child's mental health**. Don't just discuss your child's worries and anxieties. Talk about their excitement as well. Pay attention as they talk so you can gain a better understanding of where they are mentally and emotionally. Help your child turn negative thoughts into Scripture promises. Pray for and with your child daily.

Allow time for your child to work through this transition. Keep in mind the time it took to adjust to distance learning, wearing masks, and working from home. Regaining normalcy will take time as well. Our routines might never be what they were pre-pandemic. Have some practice routine runs and schedule discussions. This will be helpful to you and your child. Sleep cycles, meal times, and commutes all need to be taken into consideration. Encourage and help your child set realistic expectations and allow plenty of time to establish a new groove. Model and encourage flexibility. Going back to school will hopefully be an event that begins positive healing for us as a society. As your family transitions, make it a priority to respond with grace and patience and to openly express gratitude to the Lord every step of the way.