

# STRATEGIES for MINDFUL LIVING

Courtesy of UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center

## Tips for Back-to-School 2023

It's that time of year again — time for early wake-ups, the mad rush out the door, carpool lines and homework. For many kids and parents, it's also a time of increased stress, anxiety and worry. Here are some simple tips to make going back to school a little easier.

### TIPS for LITTLE KIDS

For our little ones, the first day of school can bring both excitement and a whole lot of worry. Same goes for their parents. Consider attending a meet-the-teacher night at school and finding the classroom, lunchroom and, most importantly, restroom! Knowing where these places are ahead of time can help ease anxiety about the first day of school. Pre-teaching your littles some of the lingo they'll hear in school may also be beneficial — things like “bus rider,” “car rider” and “afterschool care kid,” for instance.

Some books to read to your littles that may help ease the transition include:

- *Benny the Brave*, by Julie Ann Penn and Darren Penn
- *On the First Day of Kindergarten*, by Tish Rabe and Laura Hughes
- *The Night Before Kindergarten*, by Natasha Wing

### TIPS for BIGGER KIDS

Middle school should really be called the “Dress Code Years.” Before school starts, parents should get very familiar with dress code expectations. Set expectations with your tweens and teens on what is appropriate dress for school and how you, as the parent, will handle calls from the school about violations. It can also be helpful to set expectations for grades and behaviors, along with a bucket list of things the family wants to do during the school year. Setting up bedtime routines and wake-up times in the last few weeks of summer can help regulate kiddos, as well.

### TIPS for BIGGEST KIDS

Once kids reach high school, the rules seem more relaxed, parents are often out of the loop when it comes to communication with the school, and peers' opinions hold more weight than what parents think (and say). Spending quality time with your big kids is still very important. Hearing their ideas about life, friends and the world they're entering can be quite an education for parents. Here are some ways to stay on top of what's important:

- Keep up with your kids' social media accounts.
- Follow the school social media accounts and list serves so you know what's going on at school.
- Get your own access to their electronic grading system (i.e., PowerSchool, Schoology, etc. so you can see their assignments.
- Download the free version of Life360 to “see” where your kids are.
- Set expectations about behaviors and choices *before* they happen.

For all parents, no matter the age of your kids, being proactive rather than reactive to events seems to be the best path forward. Parenting is hard and so is being a school-aged kid. The clinicians of the EACC are ready to help by providing counseling to all employees and members of their immediate households. Also check out our Parenting Toolkit and Parenting Teens Toolkit full of resources and ideas, available online at [uab.edu/codeblaze](http://uab.edu/codeblaze).

