

Going Back to School

High School



Communicating with your teen

Whether your teen is just starting as a freshman, entering their final year or somewhere in between, high school can be stressful. Here are some tips for staying connected and communicating with your teen.

Strategy	Try saying	Instead of
Ask open-ended questions, and listen to your teen without interrupting.	“How are you feeling about the start of the school year?”	“I bet you’re feeling nervous going into this year.”
Validate their feelings. Let your teen know that you understand what they said—by repeating back what you heard, without judgment—and that it’s normal to feel that way.	“It sounds like you’re feeling worried. It’s completely normal to feel that way.”	“There’s nothing to worry about. You’ll be fine!”
Normalize and model healthy coping skills. Help your teen understand that we all need to practice healthy coping skills by modeling positive ways you handle stress and encouraging them to practice as well.	“I’m feeling overwhelmed about work. I’d love to play basketball to let go of some stress. Want to play?”	“Life is stressful and busy, but there’s nothing we can do about that.”

Promoting academic success

Creating strong study and organizational habits can boost your teen’s confidence.

- ✓ Encourage your teen to keep an agenda or calendar of their tasks to stay organized and to be aware of upcoming deadlines and tests.
- ✓ Help your teen find a quiet space to study, and remove distractions (such as the TV, phone, etc.).
- ✓ Encourage your teen to take regular breaks when studying. Sitting for too long can make them feel tired and impact their focus.



Teens 13 and up typically need 8 to 10 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period.

Practicing healthy habits

Practicing healthy habits helps support your teen's mind and body while positively impacting their mood, focus and behavior.



Nutrition. Drink water, and eat three balanced meals and two to three snacks at consistent times each day.



Sleep. Turn off digital screens and electronic devices an hour before bedtime, and keep devices out of the bedroom to get quality rest. (Have your teen use a traditional alarm clock.)



Physical activity. Encourage your teen to incorporate movement into the day by going on walks or runs, stretching, riding a bike, or putting on music and dancing.



Coping. Whether it's journaling, listening to music or deep breathing, regularly practicing healthy coping skills can help reduce (and sometimes prevent) stress.



Balance. Encourage your teen to explore a variety of interests, so they do not feel as though their identity is only defined by their success in school, sports, etc.



Coping skills are tools we can use to manage feelings and handle stress.



Downtime. Leave plenty of free time to unwind, be creative, and connect with family and friends.

Building independence

Let your teen try on their own. You may want to help fix things for your teen, but they need to practice solving their problems now to have the confidence to do it on their own later.

Offer support, when needed. When your teen asks for help, try asking them, "How do you think you can fix that problem?" and then offering support, as needed.

Understand that mistakes are OK. Mistakes can be challenging, but learning from them builds confidence and helps teens learn how to do things differently in the future.