

Navigating school breaks

Middle school

Resilient children are better able to handle life's ups and downs.

Stick to normal routines

To create a sense of normalcy during school breaks, try to maintain most of your child's daily routines.

- Encourage your child to try to keep bedtime and wake time consistent with school days. This will help your child get back to their normal routine when the break is over.
- Maintain expectations for chores. A break from school shouldn't mean a break from responsibilities. Whether it's taking out the garbage, walking the dog or cleaning their room, try to be consistent.
- Set and follow screen-time limits. It's common to ease up on screen-time limits during school breaks, but it's important to prioritize daily activities, such as sleep, mealtimes, physical activity, and interacting with family and friends.

School breaks can be both an exciting and stressful time for families. Here are some tips to help your middle schooler build resilience and enjoy school breaks.

Make the most of the break

Be active together. If you can, spend time being active outside by taking family walks, going on bike rides, or playing a family game of football or kickball. If you're indoors, spend screen-free time with your child by taking on a challenging puzzle or playing cards or board games. You can also get some of your child's energy out by playing a game of charades or doing a yoga video together.

Learn something new together. Try to learn a few words in a new language or work on a project you've wanted to do together. Working on a task or accomplishing a goal with your child is a great way to connect with each other.

Spend time doing everyday activities together. Invite your child to help with holiday shopping or party planning. Cook a family meal together. Ask for your child's input, and let them problem solve with minimal help.

Practice giving back. Volunteering is a meaningful way to help your child learn the importance of giving back and develop empathy for others.

- ✓ Assist an organization with wrapping or delivering gifts.
- ✓ Prepare or serve meals at a shelter.
- ✓ Ask your child to donate items they no longer need, and help them go through their toys, clothes, etc.
- ✓ Help a neighbor with a task or chore.



Empathy is the ability to understand someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person's situation.

Practice coping skills

Children learn how to handle stressful situations by observing how their caregivers—and other adults around them—deal with stress. Holiday breaks are sure to give you some opportunities to model healthy coping skills. Having healthy coping skills readily available can help caregivers and kids keep their cool. Just be sure to practice coping skills before you need them, when everyone is calm.

Practice deep breathing. Take deep-belly breaths, in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Get active. Physical activity is a proven stress reducer, and it can be fun! Put on your favorite songs and have a dance party together.

Practice gratitude. Showing thanks and gratitude toward others not only helps us feel happier, but it can also be beneficial to our physical wellness. Start simple by asking everyone at dinnertime to share one thing they're grateful for.



Gratitude is the act or feeling of being thankful or showing appreciation.

Getting back on track

After a break, it can be challenging to transition back into “real” life. No matter how hard you try, it’s normal—and OK—to get off track during these times.

Help your child adjust to going back to school:

- Acknowledge your child’s feelings (and your own, too!) about the break coming to an end.
- Make a plan to spend quality time together one day after school or over the weekend so you both have something fun to look forward to.
- Encourage your child to get their lunch and backpack ready the night before so that things go smoothly the first morning back.