

Experts Say a Little Prep and Regular Check-Ins Can Ease Worries Around Uncertain School Year

Survey finds parents nearly as concerned about emotional health as physical health as kids head back to school

Nationwide Children's Hospital

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NEWS PACKAGE

SUGGESTED TEASE	<p>THE UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR WILL COME WITH NEVER BEFORE SEEN CHALLENGES AND A NEW SURVEY FINDS PARENTS ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE IMPACT IT MAY HAVE ON THEIR CHILDREN.</p> <p>HOW YOU CAN MAKE THE UNCERTAINTIES A LITTLE EASIER ON THE WHOLE FAMILY, COMING UP.</p>
ANCHOR LEAD	<p>THERE WILL BE A LOT OF CHANGES AND CHALLENGES AS STUDENTS BEGIN THE NEW SCHOOL YEAR. WHETHER LEARNING IS IN-PERSON OR VIRTUAL, PARENTS AND STUDENTS WILL HAVE TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS AS THE NATION CONTINUES TO BATTLE THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.</p> <p>UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THIS NEW SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT CAN CAUSE FEAR AND ANXIETY AND CAN EVEN HAVE LONG-TERM EFFECTS ON CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH IF NOT ADDRESSED.</p> <p>BARB CONSIGLIO HAS MORE ON HOW PARENTS CAN HELP EASE CONCERNS FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR CHILDREN.</p>
<p>(PACKAGE START) ----- CG: Courtesy: Nationwide Children's Hospital :00 - :03 Shots of family preparing for school</p>	<p>(Nats - Sound) :02</p> <p>IT'S BACK TO SCHOOL TIME IN THE KIRURA HOUSEHOLD, BUT ALTHOUGH THEIR SCHOOL PLANS TO RETURN TO IN-PERSON LEARNING, THIS YEAR CERTAINLY FEELS DIFFERENT. :04</p>
<p>CG: Kelly Kirura Mom</p> <p>Shots of family preparing for school</p>	<p><i>"A word that a lot of us have been using that is that word: fluid. Like this whole situation is fluid." :06</i></p> <p>ACCORDING TO A NATIONAL SURVEY BY NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL- NINETY PERCENT OF PARENTS HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT THE UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR – WITH NEARLY TWO</p>

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<p>Graphic: Parent Concerns Over Upcoming School year -Emotional Health - 36% -Exposure to Germs - 37% -Brining COVID-19 Home - 44%</p>	<p>IN FIVE WORRYING ABOUT THEIR CHILDREN'S EMOTIONAL HEALTH. A SIMILAR RATE TO CONCERNS ABOUT PHYSICAL HEALTH SUCH AS EXPOSURE TO GERMS AND THE RISK OF BRINGING THE COVID-19 VIRUS HOME. :22</p>
<p>CG: Parker Huston, PhD Nationwide Children's Hospital</p>	<p>"It will be hard at certain ages for them to understand, 'Why can't I hug my friends I used to? Why do I have to sit far away from them? Why do I have to wear this mask when I'm trying to learn?'" :11</p>
<p>Shots of parent talking to child</p>	<p>BEHAVIORAL HEALTH EXPERTS SAY PARENTS DON'T HAVE TO PRETEND TO HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS, BUT INSTEAD SHOULD REASSURE THEIR CHILDREN NO MATTER WHAT CHANGES THEY WILL WORK THROUGH IT TOGETHER. :10</p>
<p>CG: Samanta Boddapati, PhD Nationwide Children's Hospital</p>	<p><i>"That's telling our children, it's OK if we're having some distress around some of these unknowns and helping children communicate with other people when they might need help."</i> :10</p>
<p>Shots of parent talking to child</p>	<p>HAVING THESE VITAL CONVERSATIONS EARLY WILL ULTIMATELY HELP IDENTIFY SOURCES OF ANXIETY BEFORE IT AFFECTS THEIR MENTAL HEALTH. :07</p>
<p>Parker Huston (CG'd earlier)</p>	<p><i>"Don't wait until the first day of school to say, "Oh, by the way, here's your mask and you have to wear it. And other people are going to be wearing it too."</i> :08</p>
<p>Shot of child putting on backpack</p> <p>Shots of parent and child wearing masks, walking out of house to bus stop</p>	<p>NO MATTER WHAT THE SCHOOL YEAR LOOKS LIKE FOR YOU – BUILD EXCITEMENT FOR YOUR CHILD. ASK WHAT THEY'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO AND PRACTICE WEARING A MASK AND WALKING TO THE BUS STOP. :07</p>
<p>Samanta Boddapati (CG'd earlier)</p>	<p><i>"Also things like meal times, bedtimes and even the amount of downtime or unstructured time that's allowed within the home."</i> :09</p>
<p>Shots of parents and child</p>	<p>AND WHILE THE KIRURA FAMILY IS PREPARED TO TACKLE WHATEVER THE SCHOOL YEAR BRINGS, GRACE CAN'T WAIT FOR THAT FIRST DAY BACK IN THE CLASSROOM. :06</p>
<p>CG: Grace Kirura Incoming 3rd grader</p>	<p><i>I'm most excited to go back to school to be with my friends and my teacher, and to have lunch with them and stuff like that.</i> :10</p>

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<p>Shots of parents and child</p> <p>(PACKAGE END) -----</p> <p>ANCHOR TAG</p>	<p>AT NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, THIS IS BARB CONSIGLIO REPORTING. :03</p> <hr/> <p>YOUNG CHILDREN MAY ALSO FEEL STRESS ABOUT LEAVING THEIR PARENTS AFTER MONTHS TOGETHER AT HOME, SO EXPERTS SAY AVOID EMOTIONAL GOODBYES WHEN THEY HEAD BACK TO SCHOOL TO HELP ASSURE THEM THAN IT'S OK TO SEPARATE.</p> <p>IF YOU NOTICE PERSISTENT BEHAVIORAL CHANGES IN YOUR CHILD SUCH AS WITHDRAWAL, IT MAY BE TIME TO SEEK HELP.</p> <p>EXTENSIVE RESOURCES, FROM CONVERSATION STARTERS TO PEDIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN YOUR AREA, CAN BE FOUND AT ON OUR SLEEVES DOT ORG.</p>
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SOCIAL MEDIA

<p> Share it! Suggested tweet:</p> <p> Suggested post:</p>	<p>The upcoming school year will bring challenges and uncertainty unlike we've ever experienced, but behavioral health experts at @NationwideKids have tips to help the whole family make a smooth transition and cope with whatever changes come their way. https://bit.ly/2WF2aZW.</p> <hr/> <p>A new national survey by Nationwide Children's Hospital finds 90% of parents have concerns about the upcoming school year as questions about safety protocols, mask requirements and whether learning will be virtual or in-person remain up in the air. Behavioral health experts say talking to your kids about these uncertainties and preparing for whatever the new school year brings can help reduce fear and anxiety, even if you don't have all the answers. https://bit.ly/2WF2aZW.</p>
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EXTRA BITES

<p>CG: Parker Huston, PhD Nationwide Children's Hospital</p>	<p>Huston recommends structure to help with at-home learning: <i>"In most school days, depending on the age of the kid, there are structured times and there are more loose and playful times. And if you think about your day like that, if your children are at home learning, that can be really helpful for them."</i> :13</p>
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CG: Parker Huston, PhD
Nationwide Children's Hospital

Huston explains how to talk about unknowns with your child:
"Talking about it early and often to tell them, 'Here's what I know right now. And here's what I don't know right now. And your teachers and your principal are working really hard to come up with a plan that keeps you safe, but also helps you learn this year. And as soon as I know something you'll know it too.'" :17

Huston says avoiding conversations won't shield children from worry:
"They will be exposed to it on social media or the internet. They'll be exposed to it with other friends or other families or other people that they come in contact to. And if they don't understand or don't have a good working definition of what the concepts are, they'll just attach their own meaning. And in many cases they'll make more out of it than it actually is." :21

CG: Samanta Boddapati, PhD
Nationwide Children's Hospital

Boddapati says it's OK for parents to not have all the answers:
"It's OK if they don't have all of the answers. Parents certainly don't have to pretend that they have all of the answers, but one strategy that they can use is to work with their child around discussing some of those unknowns and uncertainties." :19

Boddapati says parents should model healthy coping behavior:
"When we think about parents modeling appropriate coping skills for children, we're actually building the opportunity for children to respond to future unknowns and resilience to respond to some of those future unknowns." :16

Boddapati says contact a mental health professional if there are changes to your child's behavior:
"Ultimately, parents know their children the best and if they are really feeling like their child's behavior is out of character or out of the norm, it's important that they seek out some of those additional resources." :13

CG: Kelly Kirura
Mom

Kelly says she created a routine to help her kids learn at home:
"They were thrown into things that they had never done before, things that were out of their normal schedule, and just creating that balance and that routine from the very beginning allowed to just create that structure that they're used to on a normal basis in the classroom." :19

Kelly explains how getting school supplies has been different:
"We went and got new school supplies. We had to get new backpacks, because they're not allowed to use those normal backpacks this year. They have to use like cinch sacks that are easy to be sanitized and washed." :12

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<p>CG: Kelly Kirura Mom</p>	<p>Kelly lists some precautions their school is prepared to make: <i>“Their desks will be socially distanced. They will be required to wash their hands every hour, and they will no longer be able to use the drinking fountain. They have installed a water bottle fillers for them.” :14</i></p> <hr/> <p>Grace explains how different virtual learning has been: <i>“It’s a lot different because my brother is usually not in the same room as me when I’m learning, and my mom is usually not my teacher.” :11</i></p> <p>Grace explains the challenges of being out of the classroom: <i>“It was harder because usually I can just raise my hand and then she can usually call on me, my teacher, but she can’t call on me. I have to email her or something if I have a question.” :12</i></p>
<p>CG: Grace Kirura Incoming 3rd grader</p>	

References

¹*Find Help, On Our Sleeves*. Online:
<https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/giving/on-our-sleeves/find-help>

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