NAVIGATING BACK-TO-SCHOOL CHALLENGES

Presented by
Cigna Employee Assistance Program
SEMINAR GOALS

- Discuss impact of the pandemic on the back-to-school transition
- Get tips that can help you and your child navigate with resilience
- Review strategies for managing various learning scenarios
- Understand how stress affects children and when to get more help
- Know the benefits of your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
All the “normal” jitters, plus…
- Concerns about safety
- Worries about falling behind
- Scheduling challenges
- Uncertainty about the future
NAVIGATING WITH RESILIENCE: MASTERING EMOTIONAL ABCS

Ambiguity

Uncertainty makes us uncomfortable; practice accepting not knowing.

“Bumps”

Recognize that you can’t control all outcomes; permit imperfection.

Change

Remember how you’ve managed in the past, but try to stay in the present.
Kids look to us for cues on how they should think, feel, and react to a situation. Try to keep calm, confident, and positive, even if that’s not exactly how you feel.
CLASSROOM LEARNING

CHALLENGES
• Safety concerns
• Upended norms
• Quarantine impacts

STRATEGIES
• Establish good, open communication with teacher, administration, counselor, nurse
• Prepare your child for how the school / staff will look and what might feel different
• Talk about and practice hygiene safety in an empowering way

What your child needs most…
To feel safe, secure, and ready to learn.
DISTANCED LEARNING

CHALLENGES
• Technology
• Focus and motivation
• Feeling isolated

STRATEGIES
• Get technology resources set up in advance
• Design a predictable, but varied, day
• Build in classic motivators: goal-setting, accountability, incentives, and fun!
• Consider “safe” ways to interact with friends

What your child needs most...
Tools and an environment that supports learning.
BLENDED OR HYBRID LEARNING

CHALLENGES
• Disrupted routines
• Scheduling and logistics
• All previously cited challenges

STRATEGIES
• Talk positively about both methods
• Use bridging routines for consistency
• Be prepared for disruption in friendships
• Call in reinforcements

What your child needs most...
Help navigating a changing structure.
The Parenting Balancing Act

Parent, employee, teacher

- Talk with your manager and explore all flexibilities now
- Get up to speed on resources and options for support
- Get everyone organized
- Expect and encourage your child to “own” their learning

As much as you are able, have back-up plans for your back-up plans.
BE AWARE OF AND ADDRESS YOUR CHILD’S STRESS

Children are naturally resilient, but…

• Check in casually; be available
• Normalize difficult feelings
• Share ways to de-stress
• Be aware of impact of stress
• Watch for cues that it’s overwhelming

Pre-schoolers
Thumb-sucking, bedwetting, sleep disturbances clinging to parents, loss of appetite, fear of the dark, regression in behavior, withdrawal

Elementary-age
Irritability, aggressiveness, clingingness, nightmares, school avoidance, poor concentration, withdrawal from activities and friends

Teens
Sleeping and eating disturbances, agitation, increase in conflicts, physical complaints, delinquent behavior, poor concentration

(National Association of School Psychologists, 2020)
• Remind yourself that “everyday” learning counts
• Manage your own stress
• Be patient with yourself and with your child
• Know it won’t last forever
**BENEFITS OF THE EAP**

Benefits vary by employer. Please check with your HR for your specific EAP benefits.

- Face-to-face sessions
- Confidential
- Prepaid
- Unlimited telephonic consultation
- Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Household benefit
- Work/life support such as elder care, child care and pet care
- Convenience services
- Financial services
- Legal services
REFERENCES


