



BACK-TO-SCHOOL, BACK TO **BALANCE**

As summer winds down and the school year begins, families often face the challenge of shifting from relaxed schedules to structured routines. This seasonal transition can affect sleep, stress levels, and overall wellness for both parents and students. Taking intentional steps to reestablish balance can help everyone start the school year with more energy, focus and emotional resilience.

Prioritize consistent sleep

As the school year gets underway, consistent sleep schedules become essential for both children and adults. After a summer of later bedtimes, it may take time to get back on track. Prioritizing quality sleep can lead to better concentration, emotional regulation, stronger immune function and improved academic performance. For parents, regular sleep supports better decision-making, patience and overall mental health.

If sleep schedules are still adjusting, begin reinforcing steady bedtimes and wake times now, including on weekends. Help the body's internal clock reset by keeping evening routines calming and predictable. Encourage activities such as reading, dimming the lights and avoiding screens in the hour before bed. A well-rested family is better equipped to handle the physical, emotional and cognitive demands of busy school days and a packed schedule.

Be mindful of screen time

Digital devices are a part of daily life, especially as students use them for homework, research and entertainment. However, excessive screen time, particularly in the hour before bed, can disrupt sleep, reduce physical activity and impact mood and attention spans.

Establish clear expectations for screen use during the school week. Create tech-free zones, such as the dinner table or bedrooms, to encourage family interaction and better rest. Consider using built-in features or apps to manage screen limits and encourage breaks. Modeling balanced screen use as adults can also help children develop healthy habits.



Establish and maintain routines

Routines provide structure, reduce stress and build confidence, especially during transitional periods. Creating a consistent routine helps children know what to expect and helps adults stay organized and less overwhelmed.

Develop a morning checklist to make getting out the door easier and set up an after-school routine that includes time for homework, physical activity and family connection. Even small rituals, like preparing lunch the night before or laying out clothes, can ease decision fatigue and start or end the day more calmly. Involving children in setting the routine also gives them a sense of control and responsibility.

Support mental and emotional wellness

The return to school can bring excitement and anxiety. Children may feel pressure about academics or fitting in socially, while parents may feel the stress of balancing work and family responsibilities. Encourage open communication, check in on emotions regularly and create a supportive home environment where both children and adults can express how they feel.

Build in moments of connection through family meals, evening walks or quick check-ins before bedtime. Practicing mindfulness techniques, journaling or deep breathing exercises can also help manage stress for all ages.

Set the tone for a healthy year

The back-to-school season is a fresh start and an opportunity to build healthier habits as a family. By focusing on sleep, setting screen boundaries, and creating predictable routines, you can ease the transition and support both academic and emotional success. Wellness does not require perfection. It begins with small, consistent steps that promote balance, connection and well-being for the entire household.

