Starting a new school year is a stressful time under the best of circumstances, let alone during a pandemic. Some of the best ways to support our children through another transition is to engage in open communication and role model healthy behaviors.

Keep Talking

Listen
Give your child the gift of your ears! Provide a space for your child to talk with you about their questions and concerns about what school will look like. Encourage your child to vocalize their thoughts and feelings by checking in with them regularly. Remain calm, understanding that their feelings can change often. Let your child’s questions guide your conversations.

Be honest
Prepare your child for changes they could face when starting school this fall, such as face mask requirements, distanced seating or eating places, and hybrid schedules. Reassure them that these measures are in place to keep everyone healthy. Talk to them about the positives of attending school – however that looks – emphasizing the importance of flexibility. Help your child identify strategies to remain healthy, which can provide a sense of control and reduce feelings of anxiety.

Tips

☑ Find out as much as you can about what the school has planned so you can prepare your kids—and yourself.
☑ Outline, as best as you can, what their new daily routine will be, and how drop off and pick up will go.
☑ Talk to your child about safety changes they will experience, such as potentially wearing face masks all day, just like their teachers, as well as social distancing measures inside and outside of the classroom.
☑ Enjoying mindfulness activities, making sure you’re eating right, getting enough rest, and enjoying the fresh air outside together whenever possible.
☑ Practice washing your hands together and applying hand sanitizer as this will be an even bigger part of their daily routine.
☑ Add a family photo or a small special object to your child’s backpack so they can have to keep calm when they’re away from home.
☑ Remind your child (and yourself!), their school will do everything it can to keep everyone safe.
Children often take emotional cues from key adults in their lives, and times like these provide great opportunity to role model problem-solving, flexibility, positivity, and compassion for self and others. Let your child know that everyone is facing these struggles and remaining kind and patient will provide cushion on a rocky road. Be aware of how you are talking about the pandemic to others when your child is around. Voice that it’s ok to feel overwhelmed at times. Teaching your child positive coping measures such as talking about fears and identifying emotions as they arise can help them gain a sense of understanding and reduce anxiety.

Remaining connected to your child’s school, being aware of available resources, and communicating any concerns can ensure that you are prepared to make educated decisions for your child’s safety and wellbeing. Through flexible planning, navigating uncertain roads will be something you and your family are ready for, and don’t forget - lots of love and affection goes a long way!

Sources:
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