

8 Tips to Stay Calm During Back-to-School Season

Written by Stacia Affelt

It's easy to get lost in the mound of backpacks, school supplies and paper slips that go along with back-to-school season. Staying calm, however, can help us better manage our time, stress and clutter. With the help of parenting and education expert Dr. Michele Borba, we've put together some tips for parents and children to stay organized and keep anxiety levels down during the back-to-school madness.



1. Take a breath. As parents, we tend to focus so much on our children that we forget to manage our own health. What you may not know is that your kids mirror your stress levels. "Take a breath and relax and realize you're a lot more powerful than you realize," Dr. Michele Borba says. She advises moms to pinpoint one major stressor in their life and find a solution for it. If you're always losing your car keys, keep an extra set by the door. If you can't seem to find time to make breakfast in the morning, try preparing it the night before or leaving a basket filled with fruits and healthy bars to grab as you go. Keep your home extra-organized with Home Collection by Post-it Brand, Scotch Brand and Command Brands to plan and display important items and lists.



2. Teach one new skill a week. It's not enough to buy your children their supplies and then send them on their way. "Each week you can sit down and watch your child and you'll see what skill he or she needs," Dr. Borba says. Whether it's time management or organization, the best way to teach your child a new skill is by doing it together through modeling. Teach one new skill a week, and watch your child learn a skill for life. "These are the study skills to maximize performance, achievement and reduce the anxiety," she says.

3. Remove the clutter. The best way to stay organized and prevent clutter is to prepare beforehand. One easy way to do this is by color coordinating your folders, binders, notebooks and Post-it Notes in fun and vibrant colors. For instance, make English class pink and History class yellow. This way, all papers go in the right place and parents can ask their child to pull out their yellow folder when sitting down for homework. Dr. Borba recommends parents set a time once a week to organize their child's clutter-magnet backpack. Another tip she recommends is keeping a basket by the door that acts as a note collector right when kids get home from school. "Things that mommy or daddy should be looking at go in the note collector," she says. The Post-it Study Notebook Kit is a great tool to keep organized as well so that everything stays in one place, she says.



4. Same time, same place. The best way to maximize study/homework time is to do it at the same time and the same place every day. Dr. Borba says the little ones prefer to be closer to you during this time. The older kids require a bit more space, but not too far that they get distracted. "[You] want to set up a place that's organized for your child so it's clutter free and noise free," she says.

5. Manage time. Once you've found a good study place, your kids should take out their organizer or agenda and decide what needs to get done that day. After a couple weeks of this routine, start asking your child how long they think each task will take and having them write it down. Set out an oven timer for 10 or 30 minutes, and when the timer goes off, see if they finished their assignment on time or not. This will help them understand the concept of time. "Children...because they have so much going, they don't know how to manage time," Dr. Borba says. "Time management helps them realize that they can get things done quicker."

6. Do the hard things first. First, lay out each homework/study task on a separate Post-it Note and easily stick it to the wall or desk. Make sure to not only organize each task by how long it will take, but by difficulty as well. Have your child do the hardest item first, which is most likely causing them the most anxiety. "It will reduce the stress and they can get to the easier things later," she says.

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7. Ditch the highlighters. According to new research, highlighters are no longer effective or useful when it comes to retaining information. Dr. Borba recommends staying efficient with Post-it Flags. “Teach your child that as you read, flag the most important thing that’s probably going to be on the test tomorrow,” she says. This will help them focus on the most important items for studying and save the book from wear and tear.

8. Stay connected. In an age where our kids prefer talking over the phone as opposed to in person, it’s important to keep them connected to each other. “When kids these days are over-scheduled and they don’t have time for friends or friendships...one simple little thing you can do is encourage your child at least to get the phone number or email of one friend in each class,” Dr. Borba says. That way, if your kid comes home panicking because they forgot the homework assignment, you can tell them to text their friend and ask. Another study tip she suggests is having your child study with a buddy over Skype or in person. “Usually kids find two different things that they think is important, and now you have two things that are important that are going to be on the test as opposed to one,” Dr. Borba says. Staying connected builds up empathy and performance in children, while keeping their anxiety down.

