

Beating the Back-to-School Blues

Written by Sara Goodwin
Monday, 27 July 2015 13:47 -



As a parent, you probably have one of two types of children when back-to-school season approaches: the kid eager to break out new pencils and learn, or the one moping that there's only a few days left of summer. If you have the latter on your hands, or if you just want more tips to further smoothen the transition of going back to the classroom, Phoenix executive director for [Girls on the Run](#) Meagan Kukowski has some tips.



Establish expectations and a plan for the year

You know the saying: failing to plan is planning to fail. This is exceptionally true when it comes to kids and their routines. "Spelling out [their daily routine] in advance can make your child more comfortable and help to prevent any anxiety and disagreements as things get busy," Kukowski says.

Some questions to start with are when your child gets home from school should they start their homework right away or are they allowed some free time to watch a TV show or read a book before getting back to schoolwork? What about transportation—will they walk, take the bus or will you pick them up? Consult with your children and let them be apart of the decision-making process. "The more kids have ownership in creating a routine for themselves and helping to set those expectations, the more likely they are to follow it," Kukowski says.



Meal plan before things get any crazier

"Be prepared to pack a breakfast, a lunch, an afterschool snack. And let the kids help you come up with healthy menus," Kukowski says.

Proper nutrition is important, so help your kids make healthy choices and include them as part of the lunch-packing process or allow them to pick out their own snack.

"Super foods for a super kid equals a super season or a super school year," Kukowski says.



Make sure they're mentally ready

If your kids are anxious about the new school year, tell them a positive story about your childhood days, or point out a time when they had a really good day at school and remind them that they'll come again soon. Go over the positive aspects of going back to school: how it'll be fun, they'll get to see old friends and be able to make new ones.

"In one of our key Girls on the Run lessons, we teach girls that their special and unique shining stars," Kukowski says. "And even though dark

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clouds may begin to block their light from time to time, we really try to inspire the girls to take a deep breath and see the positives despite any overcast nights."

Give positive reinforcement, whether it's nice notes in their lunchbox or helping them positively visualize how their first day of school will go the night before.



Help them build supportive connections by taking part in extracurricular activities

"At Girls on the Run, we believe it's important to nurture our physical, emotional and spiritual health for full body wellness," Kukowski says. Teach your kids to build relationships with people who will help them be their best. Take advantage of meet the teacher night, open house and extracurricular activities to foster these kinds of relationships.

Not only do these activities help build supportive connections, but these activities "can jumpstart a positive attitude about school by promoting confidence and optimism—helping them feel connected," Kukowski says.

One unique after school program is Kukowski's organization, Girls on the Run. It's a 10-week program that girls in third through eighth grade attend twice a week for 90 minutes. The program focuses on personal development, making connections with others and how they connect with and shape the world at large, all while training for a 5K. "What's neat about the program is that they're never out there running just to run," Kukowski says. "They're always running using an activity that reinforces the lesson for that day...They're always using their minds to reflect on the lesson for the day."