



Reece School - Back to School 2020-2021

Preparing Your Child for the New School Year during COVID-19

Managing Children's Reactions and Anxiety about School:

- **Be a role model** - Children will react to and follow your reactions; remember that children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events.
- **Help children anticipate what will be different** from previous years by describing the differences, while reminding them of their ability to adapt to changes as they did when school initially closed.
- **Underscore what will be the same next year:** they will see the same staff greeting them in the building, they will see their friends, and the school schedule and activities will be the same.
- **Prepare your child for the reality that things may change** and they may switch from learning in school to remote learning at any point during the year, while emphasizing that these changes happen to keep everyone safe.
- **Focus on the positive** while acknowledging that things are strange and challenging.
 - Celebrate having more time to spend as a family
 - Make it as fun as possible, do family projects, connect with nature and get exercise together
 - Offer lots of love and affection
- **Limit exposure to media and adult conversations** in your home or while your children may be listening (even if you don't think they are listening).
 - Don't keep them in the dark about what is going on, but do limit what they hear to what you decide to tell them; hiding things from them will only increase anxiety because children often can sense that something is going on or might overhear conversations and may start thinking things are worse than they actually are if they are not being told directly.
 - Avoid making negative comments about the school's options, your child's remote or in person learning experience, or specific teachers, this will only increase anxiety,

negative feelings, and may make students more resistant and less engaged in school and the platforms offered.

- **Be aware of how you talk about COVID** - your discussions can increase or decrease your children's fear.
 - If children become afraid, it is important to remind them that your family is healthy (if this is the case) and you are going to do everything within your power to keep loved ones safe and well. Carefully listen or have them draw or write out their thoughts and feelings and respond with truth and reassurance.
 - If your family has been directly impacted by COVID-19 it is important to acknowledge this. Talk about how doctors and nurses can help ill family members and ways that kids can reach out (e.g., phone calls, handmade cards).
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How to Answer Your Children's Questions:

- **Let your children's questions guide you.**
 - **Answer truthfully using age appropriate language and explanations**, but don't offer unnecessary details or facts.
 - **Be honest and accurate**
 - Correct misinformation - children often imagine situations worse than reality, so offering developmentally appropriate facts can reduce fears.
 - Children are often most concerned about their own health so be sure to remind them that children usually have mild symptoms like coughing or a fever, similar other times they have been sick, but that they could pass it to others so they need to let their grownup and/or teachers know if they are not feeling well.
 - **If you do not have a ready answer it is ok to take some time to think about the question or get guidance.** Just be sure to get back to them once you have an answer. It is also ok to say that you do not know!
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Incorporate Positive Behavior Supports at Home During Remote Learning:

- **Set Routines:** Children thrive with routines and structure. When schools are not in session, students have fewer predictable routines and this can increase anxiety and challenging behaviors. It is helpful if these routines are similar to what students are already familiar with from school. Posting a visual schedule in a central place for all to see can be beneficial and can support prosocial behavior and prevent challenging behaviors.
 - Your children's home schedule should include a morning check in to review the schedule, mealtimes, a balance of seated activities and movement breaks, and opportunities for social connections with friends and family.
 - **Create Home Expectations:** At school we practice school-wide expectations including "Reece-spect Myself, Reece-spect Others, and Reece-spect the Environment." These behaviors can be
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adapted for the home setting. An example of Reece-spectful expectations for school and remote learning are below, though these need to be modified depending on the age and learning needs of each student:

Reece-spect Expectations	Remote	Classroom/Hybrid	COVID Safety
Reece-spect Myself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Check google Classroom each day · Attend class on time · Complete work · Put away distractions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Complete my work · Keep a calm and safe body · Make safe choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Wash my hands · Stay home if I'm sick
Reece-spect Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Stay in a private and quiet area · Use headphones · Use kind words and actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Follow directions the first time · Ask permission to leave an area or classroom · Use kind words and actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Wear a mask · Go to the bathroom at scheduled times
Reece-spect the Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Keep my computer charged · Take care of my computer · Keep personal information and passwords private and safe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Use school materials safely · Keep my area clean and materials organized · Keep track of my belongings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Stay 6 feet apart · Stay in my area · Go to the nurse if I don't feel well

- **Teach, Remind, and Reward Expected Behaviors with Positive Feedback:** A critical part of a Positive Behavior Support approach is the recognition that we need to teach children “what to do” and not simply “what not to do.”
 - **Teach:** It is important to teach expectations and be specific with what we expect in every situation. If a child is doing something that does not meet the expectation, think about what you want them to do instead and focus on describing what those behaviors look like as opposed to correcting the behavior or questioning why the child is doing something unacceptable. For example, if a child is using inappropriate language, focus on describing and demonstrating what kind language sounds like and role play a few examples.
 - **Remind:** At the start of each day, remind your child what the expectations are using positive language (consistent with the Reece-spectful expectations); avoid stating expectations with “NO” in front of them and instead replace with “DO” (e.g., instead of saying “No playing during class,” say, “Do your best to focus on the teacher and put away anything that might distract you.”)
 - **Reward Expected Behaviors:** Rewards can be positive statements using specific descriptive praise such as “Awesome handwashing! Thanks for keeping our family safe!” In addition, at school we have earning times when students take breaks to play games/activities of their choice and end of the week activities or tangible rewards (e.g., the Reece School Store). It might be helpful for students to work toward smaller “earns” at home such as a special activity they can play if they achieved their expectations or a goal for the day. It may also be helpful to have an end of the week “bigger earn” that your child is working toward throughout the week and can get on Fridays or over the weekend. Your child’s team and counselors can help you develop a plan that is consistent with what works well when they are in school.

- **How to Correct and Redirect Unexpected Behavior:** Corrections or redirections should be calm, brief, and provide an opportunity for the child to practice the desired behavior:
 - **Quickly correct or signal the error** (e.g., "That was not respectful.")
 - **Re-state the expected behavior** (e.g., "We speak kindly to each other to show respect.")
 - **Provide an opportunity for positive interaction** (e.g., "Let's try that again. How would you say that in a respectful way?")
 - **Provide the child positive feedback** (e.g., "That was a kind thing to say.")
- **Maintain a 5 to 1 Ratio for Positive to Negative Interactions:** It is easy to get into a habit of correcting, but this could impact children's self-esteem and motivation if it is not paired with positive feedback. The goal is to maintain a ratio of 5 positive interactions or praise statements for every 1 negative interaction or corrective statement.

Model and Promote Emotional Wellness and Resilience:

- **Practice Self-care:** Take breaks from the media, take care of your body by engaging in deep breathing, stretching, exercising, and getting plenty of sleep. Modeling these behaviors will not only help you, but will also help your children by showing them how to cope with stressful situations in a healthy way.
- **Use Books:** Reading books is a useful way to address the many issues children are navigating. This list of books for kids by age and topic will be useful all year long and beyond! ([Link to Bibliotherapy](#))

Additional Resources:

- [Return to School: A Trauma Informed Approach](#): An overview of possible reactions to returning to school in the context of COVID-19 along with a good list of strategies. For parents and teachers.
- [Project Chai: Preparing Parents to Have Their Children Return to School](#): Sample letter from Chai Lifeline. Contains good suggestions for parents in preparing for the possible return to school.
- [Coronavirus Tips & Resources for Parents, Children, Educators & Others](#): A list of ways to manage stress, stay connected and stay engaged during this time. Also contains a list of other resources.
- [Managing Anxiety During Reopening \(Child Mind\)](#): Brief overview of helpful strategies and easy to frame conversations with children.
- [Coping with Social Anxiety During Social Distancing \(Child Mind\)](#): Practical tips and suggestions for parents to support their children's social engagement.
- [A Clinical Perspective on Talking to Kids About Racism \(Child Mind\)](#): Transcript of a conversation which addresses talking to kids of various ages and race. Also includes useful links to other organizations.

- [How To Raise and Anti-Racist Kid \(NYT\)](#)
- [BLM & Sesame Street](#): Sesame Street video on Black Lives Matter protests for younger kids
- [We Are Not Alone](#): Sesame Street video for young kids
- [A Parent's Curated Resource Guide to Social and Emotional Learning | Edutopia](#)
- [CASEL CARES: So Now What? Supporting SEL at Home](#): webinar that provides parenting strategies for SEL and learning during this time
- [Resources for Families During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)
 - [Parent Trapped on Apple Podcasts](#): The coronavirus pandemic has turned families' lives upside down. Parent Trapped is a weekly podcast from Commonsense Media where each week, host Ann Marie Baldonado checks in with authors, educators, and celebrities to bring parents real-world stories and tips.
- [Help Your Family De-Stress During Coronavirus Uncertainty | Commonsense Media](#): An article that offers a great collection of apps and websites for kids and families for mental health, wellness, health focused and movement focused.
- [Helping Families and Children at Home With Learning Differences | WideOpenSchool](#): A series of videos offering expert advice, tips and strategies for helping your child(ren) with learning differences cope and succeed during distance learning and in this unprecedented time.
- [Health Emergencies - Sesame Street in Communities](#): Sesame Street offers resources to help families and children cope during these challenging times.
- [Strategies for parents to help kids with wearing masks](#)
- [GoZen / GoStrengths](#): psychoeducational videos and related activities. Specific modules that are helpful include what is anxiety / fight or flight, resilience, 'thoughtholes,' identification of character strengths.
- **[Mindfulness Apps for home](#)**
 - [Smiling Mind](#) - Children (ages 7+) can use this app as a way to help calm and focus their brains and bodies.
 - [Cosmic Kids](#) - Yoga and mindfulness for kids ages 3+
 - [Calmer You Podcasts for Parents](#) - Self-care for parents
 - [Insight Timer](#) - iPhone and Android
 - [Headspace](#) - iPhone and Android
 - [Simply Being](#) - iPhone and Android
 - [Breathe](#) - iPhone
 - [Breathe2Relax](#) - iPhone and Android
 - [Chakra Chime](#) - iPhone
 - [Calm](#) - iPhone and Android
 - [Mind Yeti](#) - iPhone
 - [Peace Out](#) - Podcast stories for younger kids to help children relax and or to use at bedtime.