

# Dealing with Anxiety and Uncertainty

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## Managing Anxiety

Returning to school after summer break, even in the absence of a pandemic, can cause children and adolescents to become anxious. If you feel that your child is displaying an increase in anxiety surrounding school attendance, whether in person or online, you can help them cope with these feelings in a healthy, effective manner by utilizing a few strategies at home.

Talk About It- Talk to your child about their feelings, worries and fears. Discuss their concerns in a positive manner, acknowledging that what they are feeling is real.

Reassurance- Let them know that their teachers will be there to help and they can ask for help any time they are feeling anxious or overwhelmed.

Teach Basic Coping Skills- Let them know it is ok to feel anxious at times throughout the day. Teach them basic coping/calming strategies that they can do “on the spot”, anywhere. Taking slow, deep breaths- breathing in through the nose and out through the mouth; counting in their head to a certain number; making positive statements to themselves, such as, “I am ok. I can do this.”, etc.

## Dealing with Uncertainty

The uncertainty that the pandemic has brought to our lives is stressful for everyone, adults and children alike. Discussing the school’s plans for returning with your child can help them understand what to expect including the alternative plans should they need to change the format. Your being realistic, calm, and accepting is important for your child to learn to cope with uncertainty in a positive, healthy manner. As parents, we can use this situation to model flexibility and coping strategies for times of uncertainty. Children are resilient by nature but we can assist them with further developing important life skills through our reactions and behaviors during times of uncertainty. Don’t overly focus on the things we cannot control. Discuss the things they can control, such as their own behaviors and choices while at home as well as at school. Your child can wash their hands properly, pick out an outfit to wear or wear their mask appropriately. Reassure your child that if anything does change, you will work with them and their teachers in order to figure it out together, as a team.

## A Successful School Year

With practice, encouragement, and support, your child will become comfortable with new routines and learn to adjust to change in a healthy manner. You can help your child with adjusting to change and developing healthy, safe habits by:

Being Positive- point out when they are displaying safe/healthy behaviors and praise them for it

Consistently Correct- gently and calmly remind them when they need to adjust their behaviors/choices (e.g., straighten your mask so it covers mouth and nose, use appropriate hand washing techniques, etc).

Model Behaviors- model the behaviors you expect of your child- model healthy techniques for coughing, sneezing, hand-washing, etc.

Being Creative- use videos, role playing, social stories or picture schedules for younger children or children who may need a little more explanation.

For additional ideas on how you can help your child develop healthy, safe habits throughout the school year visit these resources:

[Children and Anxiety](#) – Anxiety & Depression Association of America (ADAA) provides expert tips and resources for managing anxiety associated with the Coronavirus pandemic.