

Five Minutes to Thrive

Embracing Change & Bracing for Impact

Change can be hard, whether it's forced upon us, or something we're actively pursuing. Since the onset of COVID-19, we have been in a constant state of flux, going from our daily routines and always being on the go, to sheltering-in-place in our homes. Overnight, work and education transitioned from offices and schools to kitchen tables. Summer's not over yet, but retailers are reminding us that school is around the corner.

Transitions are challenging, especially when they are sprung upon us. Adults can work through change processes in their minds and approach them rationally, but for kiddos it can be more difficult. Their underdeveloped prefrontal cortices and lack of life experience don't allow them to pivot as easily, and plan rationally for the future, which can cause serious frustration.



As we prepare for the back-to-school transition, here are some tips for a smoother experience:

Communication is Key - Help kids understand what will stay the same and what will be different this school year. Will they participate in in-person learning or will their classes be conducted remotely? Will masks be required? Address these questions and concerns well in advance of school starting to allow time for them to feel comfortable. Kids with sensory issues or a disability may not be able to wear a mask; talk with the school's Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) team before heading back.

Normalize Masks - Many schools will mandate wearing masks this fall. Let kids pick out some fun masks so they feel included. Normalize masks by wearing them together around the house or on errands. Remind kids not to trade masks with friends. Younger kids in particular have a harder time recognizing people in masks - adults can put on masks and take them off a few times so that kids recognize they are the same person, mask or not.

Stay Connected - It is tough to stay connected when we are social distancing. Use what you learned during the last school year and build on it. Virtual play dates are a great way to help kids stay connected, and for parents to meet as well.

Review, Prep & Plan - If your child has an IEP, starting the school year can mean even more prep. Review your child's existing IEP so you can address any concerns with the school about how their needs will be met with the COVID procedures in place. Make sure that you are all on the same page before the school year begins.

Celebrate the End of Summer - It's important to mark beginnings and endings. Celebrate the end of summer and the start of the new school year with a staycation or a family party. Celebrating the start of a new school year can signal to kids that school is something to be excited about, not feared.

Adjust Bed Times - In preparation for back-to-school, have kids start going to bed and waking earlier about two weeks prior to the start of school. Target reaching the desired bedtime three nights before school begins.

Remember, we are all in this together. These changes are impacting everyone, as we transition again, we will do it as a team.

Questions? Contact the ART at 363ISRW.363.363ISRW@us.af.mil