

Back to School: How to Survive and Thrive

Counseling Partners of Los Angeles



HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD AS SCHOOL STARTS

ABOUT CPLA

The mission of Counseling Partners of Los Angeles is to support at-risk and under-served students living in Los Angeles by providing a low-cost, school-based program that delivers essential counseling and support services students need in order to grow toward their full potential emotionally, intellectually, morally and socially.

»»» *Read More*

The start of the school year can be exciting for some kids and challenging for others. Children who are starting at a new school or coping with a family challenge may find it especially difficult to adjust to a new year. This anxiety usually fades as the school year goes on, but parents can make sure kids start off on a good foot. Read on for key ways parents and caregivers can help their child have a less anxious start to the school year.

Interested in counseling for your child?

CPLA's counseling services are FREE to all students attending one of our partner schools! Reach out to the school principal or your child's teacher. You can also request a CPLA referral form from the school

HOW TO HELP KIDS COPE WITH THEIR WORRIES AND START THE SCHOOL YEAR STRONG

»»» *Check your own worries*

Check in with yourself and see if you have any worries about the start of the year. The pressure to reestablish a routine, help with homework, and plan activities may increase your stress levels. Kids can pick up on emotions and tell when you are stressed, so finding ways to calm yourself if worried may help them stay calm too. Consider modeling stress management and positive coping skills so your child can learn that stress is manageable.

»»» *Listen to your kids*

When your kids open up about being worried, listen seriously. Instead of dismissing their fears, consider validating that the start of the school year can be difficult. If you would like to strengthen their confidence, you can even partner with your child to strategize ways that they can cope with this worry. Please also note that children want to be listened to, not "fixed." Your job is to listen and perhaps help them see they can handle the worries with support. You don't need to expect your kids to be anxious either about the start of the year. Children have different temperaments and life circumstances, so it is best to check in and see where it leads.

»»» *Have a plan for separation issues*

Some kids and teenagers struggle with separation and may need extra support during the hand-off or throughout the day. Talk with your child's teacher or counselor about the issue so the school is aware. Most kids are resilient and are able to bounce back, but having support during the day can be critical. You can also praise brave behavior when you pick up your child. It is helpful to focus on what you want your child to do rather than what they don't do. If your child develops prolonged and consistent separation issues, they should be evaluated by a mental health professional. Consider reaching out to one of your child's teachers for a CPLA counselor referral form for help.



"Witnessing a parent in a state of anxiety can be more than just momentarily unsettling for children.

Kids look to their parents for information about how to interpret ambiguous situations; if a parent seems consistently anxious and fearful, the child will determine that a variety of scenarios are unsafe"

- Brigit Katz



"Skipping school will only increase your child's fears because s/he never gets a chance to find out if his/her worries are valid." - Anxiety Canada

The importance of attending school:

Kids experience:

- Valuable opportunities to develop and practice social skills
- Important chances for success and mastery
- Being acknowledged and praised for talents
- Fostering close friendships with classmates
- Learning basic skills like reading, writing, and mathematics

<https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/coping-with-back-to-school-anxiety/>

<https://childmind.org/article/7-things-to-tell-the-teacher-about-your-child/>

<https://www.onoursleeves.org/mental-wellness-tools-guides/back-to-school/conversation-starters>

»»» School Refusals

School refusal is a pattern of school avoidance that impairs children's functioning. This differs from the occasional resistance to school as school avoidance is more extreme. If a child's refusal to go to school is prolonged and overwhelming, they should be evaluated by a mental health professional. It is important to get them evaluated early as the longer the child is out of school, the harder it is for them to catch up and gain interest in school again.

»»» Talk With your Child's Teacher

No one knows your child better than you. Talk with your child's teacher about their anxiety and worries at the beginning of the school year. This will allow the teacher to better understand your child's needs and set the tone for a partnership for the rest of the year. Some topics to bring up about your child with their teacher: strengths and weaknesses, family issues, health conditions, personality traits, study habits, special interests, learning style, etc.

CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR TALKING ABOUT GOING BACK TO SCHOOL

Find a relaxed time when you can offer your full attention, such as after bath time or at another time, to bring up the topic of going back to school with your child(ren).

Some questions to ask:

1. What is one thing you are looking forward to this new school year?
2. What's one thing you were scared to do last year, but you did it anyway?
3. If there was one thing you could tell your teacher, what would it be?
4. What do you like most about yourself?
5. If you could make a rule for your classroom, what would it be?
6. How can I help you this year?

