

Back To School: A Child's Success Starts With A Good Night's Sleep



Help your children get a good night's sleep with these tips

(BPT) - It's hard to believe another school year is already here. After a fun summer of outdoor activities, vacations and plenty of late nights, it's time to get your family back into a routine - specifically a regular bedtime routine. While sleep is important for adults, it's even more important for growing children and affects their performance in school, sports and family life.

Sleep is at the center of a healthy lifestyle. Although diet and exercise are generally what come to mind first when thinking about health, proper sleep is essential to realizing the benefits of a healthy diet and exercise routine.

"Living a healthy lifestyle has become a topic of particular importance to me and my family," says actress, author and TV host Alison Sweeney. "As an ambassador for Sleep Number for the past two years, I've learned just how important sleep is to our overall health, well-being and performance."

Children who followed bedtime rules averaged an hour more of sleep a night, helping them concentrate and perform better in school, according to a 2014 study by the National Sleep Foundation. Here are a few ways you can help stop the stall at bedtime:

- * Keep a bedtime routine for your kids, even on the weekends.
- * One hour before it's time to go to bed, put all electronics away to help their bodies wind down. Use that time to spend together as a family, possibly reading before bed.
- * Try tracking your kids' sleep and help them monitor their daily activities to see how these affect their rest.
- * Most importantly, try to keep bedtime a fun experience! Avoid using "Go to your room" and an early bedtime as punishments, as this equates bedtime to a negative.

Kids need much more sleep than most people realize, and the quality of sleep is equally as important as the quantity.

Most Americans think kids need only nine hours of sleep each night, according to a recent survey by Wakefield Research. While eight or more hours are ideal for an adult, the recommended amount for children 5 to 11 years old is actually 10-11 hours per night.

"Recently, my kids began sleeping on the new SleepIQ Kids bed from Sleep Number, a smart bed for smart kids," says Sweeney. "I love how the SleepIQ technology allows me to know not just how long my kids slept, but how well they slept. And if they aren't sleeping well, it tells me and we can make changes. As they continue to grow, the bed gives me the ability to adjust the firmness to keep up with their changing comfort needs."

Many parents know the difficulties that come with trying to get children to go to sleep. You've probably heard the common excuses such as, "I have a stuffy nose" or "there are monsters under my bed" as a way to stay up just a little longer. With the SleepIQ Kids bed, however, those excuses are something of the past, because it includes multiple smart features, including a head tilt for reading or comforting stuffy heads, under-bed lighting and even a monster detector.

Back to school is the perfect time to start practicing healthy sleep habits for the whole family. A successful day starts with a good night's sleep, so help your little ones get to sleep tonight so they can take on the world tomorrow.

More Back-to-School tips on page 12

Six Ways To Help Your Little One Fall Into A New Autumn Routine

(BPT) - Back-to-school time isn't just for the backpack-and-pencil-box crowd. With the season's new routines, it can also be a challenge for babies, toddlers and even parents.

Whether your child is graduating from the infant room to the toddler room, starting a new tumbling class or stepping into school for the very first time, change is a big deal for little ones. Here are six ways to make for an easier transition in the months and years to come.

1. Know that change is good. Great, even.

Leaves aren't the only things changing this fall. Summer vacations are over, picnics in the park become more rare and days are filled with new friends, places and expectations.

Change can be stressful at any age, but it can be especially difficult for babies and young children who thrive on predictable routines and have a hard time understanding why things are different. Fortunately, new environments pique kids' curiosity, invite problem-solving, teach resilience and foster flexibility. All of these are key factors for success in school, not to mention life.

2. Be a super-model.

You are your child's first teacher, and they'll look to you for how to respond in new situations. "Most parents are nervous about leaving their child in an unfamiliar setting," says Linda Hassan-Anderson, vice president of Education at KinderCare Learning Centers, a national early childhood education leader. "Since they get their cues from you, the more you model confidence, the more comfortable your child will be."

Hassan-Anderson also recommends bringing your child in before daycare or preschool starts to become familiar with the classroom while it's quiet. There, you can support the teacher as she helps your child find their cubby, and reinforce that everything is going to be just fine. And don't be afraid to ask the teacher for guidance and updates about how your child is adjusting.

"You're forging a new path," Hassan-Anderson says. "It's nice to have a guide to help lead the way."

3. Make sure extra-curricular doesn't equal extra-stressful.

It's tempting to sign up little Riley for Mommy and Me, Kindermusik and dance, but over-scheduling can mean over-tired and over-stimulated.

"Start with small doses and look for activities you can add after fall routines and schedules are established," suggests Hassan-Anderson. "Involve your child in choosing an activity that he or she is interested in."

Have multiple children? Minimize running around by choosing programs that offer a variety of activities on-site or that siblings can participate in together.

4. Set the stage.

Part of what makes change so anxiety-producing is that big bad beast: the unknown. Letting your child know what to expect at school and with extra-curricular activities can help tame the beast. Describe what a new activity will look like with kid-focused details. Say things to your child, such as, "We usually have a snack at home, but today we're having it in the car because you have Busy Buddies." Highlight anything that's familiar like a friend or setting. Let your child know

where you'll be and how you can be reached. If you dash out to the store during tumbling, return on time. Five minutes is an eternity to a child waiting to be picked up, particularly when their friends start heading home.

5. Don't lose sleep.

Consistency is king for kids, and keeping bedtime the same during vacations and weekends makes for more peaceful mornings and less drama-filled days. An easy trick: plan your day by planning back from bedtime to keep precious sleep a priority. After all, sometimes backwards planning makes for forward thinking.

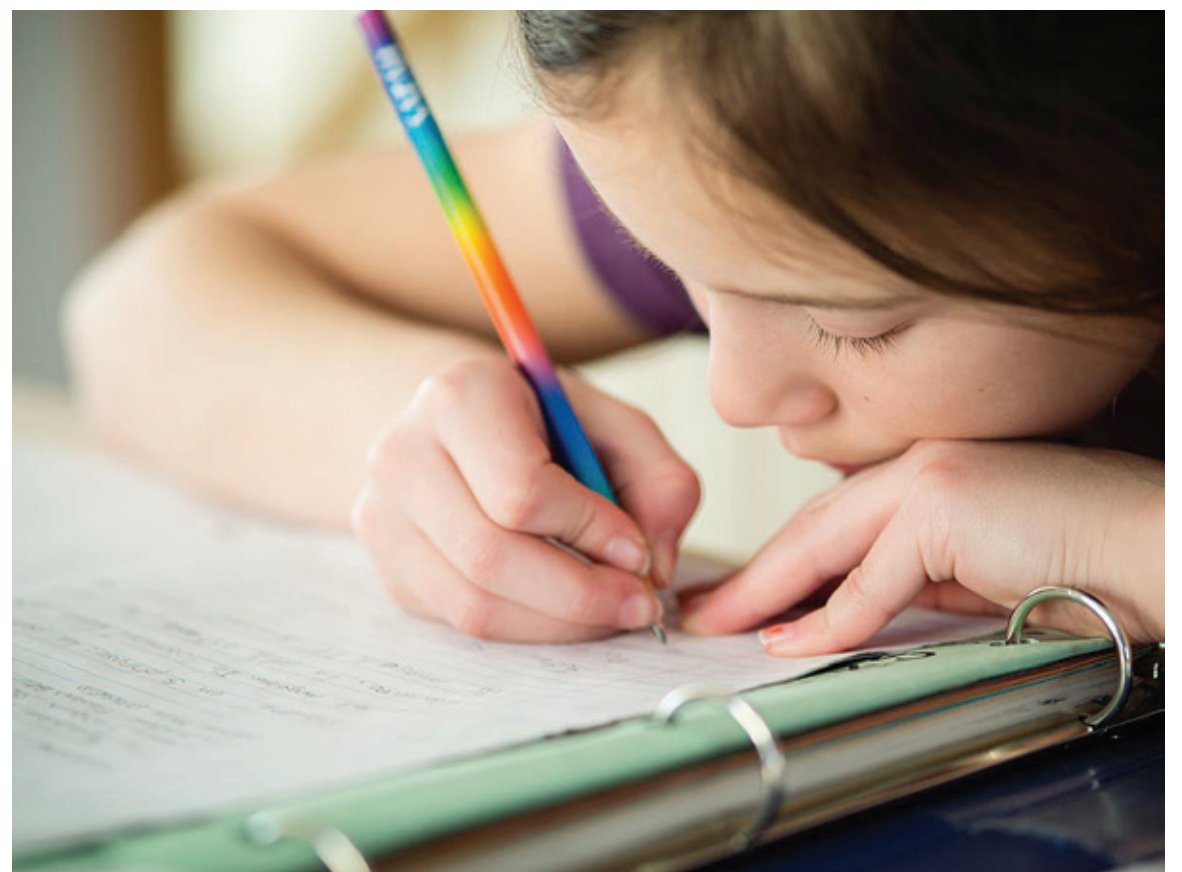
6. Keep talking.

Keeping the lines of communication open is important now and in the future. Acknowledge your child's feelings. Allow them to express themselves. Help them come up with strategies for handling difficult emotions. And keep younger siblings in the loop. Talking about big brother or sis going to school will help prevent little ones from feeling left behind when that first school bell rings.

Fall is a season of change. And while trees blaze with red and orange and crinkly leaves crunch underfoot, you can help your child navigate their latest life changes with your patience and support. Falling in love with fall has never been easier.

4 Tips For Taming The Back-To-School Stress

Beating the stress of back to school: what you can do to help your anxious student



(BPT) - Do you or your child have the back-to-school blues? If so, you're not the only ones. Saying goodbye to slower summer days can be difficult. For almost three months, you have felt free from the structure of the classroom and the accompanying homework. When the upcoming school year rolls around, it's common to feel some sadness. For children who suffer from anxiety, this stress may be harder to handle, and it may stem from more than just pop quizzes and earlier bedtimes.

These children need extra attention as the new school year draws near. The best thing you can do to prepare your child is to give the gift of your time and attention. Instead of dwelling on things like tests and homework, talk about how to make the transition into the exciting new school year the best it can be.

Lauren Zimet, director of the Early Insights Healthy Foundations Program, is a mother herself and has pinpointed the top four back-to-school tips and tricks to make the transition easier. These tips will help to reduce the stress and tension felt by you and your child, not only for the first weeks of school (the hardest time to adjust) but throughout the year as well.

1. **Connected communication.** Engage in a conversation with your child and ask what he or she is excited and concerned about for the upcoming school year. Give your child the freedom to speak openly and avoid asking too many questions at once. You'll know you are connecting when he starts volunteering information. When you listen to your child, and he can see the genuine interest and attention in your eyes and through your body language, he will feel more comfortable discussing the upcoming year.
2. **Creative calendars.** Planning ahead makes adults feel prepared, which is a huge de-stressor. The same goes for your child. Younger children only need a day or two to look forward to their big day. Older children may benefit from discussing the

year weeks before the first day, especially if those conversations include working on things like organization, planning, prioritizing, and sequencing (those important executive functions of the brain).

3. **Visualize the goal.** Get specific and help your child visualize the first day of school. Have your child tell you or draw out the sequence of the day, from waking up in the morning, to dressing in an outfit chosen the night before, to what she'll be enjoying as her brain-boosting energy breakfast. The more your child can visualize her routine(s), the more she will be at ease when the big day finally arrives.
4. **Load up on brain food.** Breakfast is coined "the most important meal of the day," and rightly so! Food is the fuel for the brain and body, and the quality of the fuel matters. Whatever you choose to give your body and brain each morning will enable you to do a certain level of thinking. American breakfasts are often unbalanced, heavily favoring carbs, which are only a tiny part of the good-breakfast equation. Encourage your child to pick a protein each morning, as well as fruit, veggie, and healthy fat and carb options. From there, complement his or her diet with an omega-3 fatty acid supplement from a reputable fish oil company like Nordic Naturals. Omega-3 fatty acids have been found to help soothe anxious brains as well as support the entire nervous system, so don't miss out on this simple improvement opportunity. Research on omega-3 fatty acids can be found at www.omega-research.com.

The new school year is on its way and while this time of year may cause some children to feel anxious, there are things you can do to help. Employ any of the suggestions above to help your child start feeling more excited about the new school year with each passing day.

