

Change Champions

Supporting children with change and transitions

Most kids (and parents!) thrive with routine. So, what do we do when that routine is thrown off? Every year during summer break, families are faced with months of unstructured time. The good news is that there are things you can do to ease the stress and chaos of the summer break, while building resilience along the way.

Help children, teens, and young adults actively participate in the transitions of summer with these strategies:

Start off with a family meeting.

Discuss expectations, set limits, and update the family calendar. Reflect on the past year and identify any new activities. Involving kids in the planning process will help them feel more excited about the summer break.

Foster independence and responsibility.

Assign age-appropriate chores, encourage kids to manage their own schedules and routines. Encourage older children to find appropriate employment. Help young adults getting ready to transition to college by learning independent living skills. Building responsibility prepares kids for future challenges and increases self-confidence.

Get involved in community service.

Your child, or the whole family, can volunteer at local organizations, participate in fundraising events, or help with community clean-up projects. Community service promotes empathy, social responsibility, and personal growth.



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Set healthy routines.

Encourage kids to maintain regular sleep schedules, eat nutritious meals, and engage in movement. Support continued connection with friends through playdates, outings, or virtual interactions. Balancing leisure time with healthy habits promotes overall well-being, and staying connected to peers prevents isolation and prepares kids for a smoother transition back to school.

Get support

- If your child is having a hard time managing feelings, changes, and separation, or has a big transition coming up and lacks confidence, consider scheduling a therapy session for them.
- If your family is experiencing conflict due to change, family therapy may be helpful.

A Special-Needs Perspective:

Children with special needs may face more challenges with change and transitions.

For some children affected by disabilities, long gaps in services can result in a regression of skills. Speak to your school system to see what services may be available to help maintain skill levels and progress.

Provide time for transitions. Because unexpected changes can be challenging and overwhelming, it's important to provide transition warnings, like verbal cues, or set time limits. Transition warnings help reduce stress and anxiety.

Set expectations. Share what the activity will look like, who will be there, how to behave, and what to do when a break is needed. Practicing these skills before attending the activity will help build confidence.

Returning to school

Here are some strategies to help with transitioning back to school.

Re-establish routines. Adjust sleep schedules to match school hours, reintroduce regular meal times, and establish a consistent homework routine.

Re-establishing these routines helps children and teens readjust to the structure of the school day.

Practice skills. For children just starting school, have them practice opening their snack and lunch items to see what needs to be worked on and to determine if they'll need extra support from the teacher. Ask to take a tour of the campus to reduce first-day anxieties.

Encourage organization. Start organizing school supplies, backpacks, and workspaces. Being organized reduces stress and promotes productivity.

Promote communication. Encourage your child to share their feelings or concerns and validate their feelings. Let them know that you're there to support and listen.

Collaborate with teachers. Reach out to your child's teachers and share any relevant information about your child's summer experiences or any concerns. A positive relationship with teachers creates a supportive network that can help your child or teen transition smoothly.

Foster a positive mindset. Talk about the exciting aspects of the new school year. Emphasize that challenges and fears about change are normal and reinforce that they have the ability to get through them.

Need reminders on how to handle change? Use these [reflection cards](#) for self-check-ins and to help your child practice flexible thinking.

Worried your child may need more support through transitions?

Your child or family may benefit from therapy if you answer "yes" to any of these questions.

Does your child:

- Show signs of consistent separation anxiety?
- Show excessive worry about the future or think bad things will happen?
- Refuse to go or have a hard time going to school, social events, or new situations?
- Show signs of depression or anxiety?

You may benefit from parent coaching if you:

- Want to help your child increase flexible thinking
- Are looking for ways to support your child's emotions

Consider coaching if you'd like to learn how to help your children handle their emotions, develop healthy behaviors, and navigate challenging situations.

Spring Health is here to support you. [Sign in](#) to schedule a session, or meet with a Care Navigator to see which option is right for you.