



# Is your child experiencing back-to-school anxiety?

**For many children and families, the thought of returning back to school during a pandemic can create anxiety.**

There are unprecedented challenges that families are facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Parents must make difficult decisions on whether to enroll their children in virtual classes or send them back to campus. Children who will be returning to school on campus will have unique challenges such as acclimating to changes in their physical surroundings, wearing masks and practicing social distancing guidelines.

## **How can parents reduce anxiety for children returning to campus?**

**Talk to your child about COVID-19 safety measures.** Reassure children that safety measures are put in place to keep everyone healthy and safe. Teach your child proper handwashing skills and how to practice social distancing. Send them to school with plenty of hand sanitizer and masks if they are required. This will help your child feel prepared and more in control.

**Focus on the positive.** Remind your children that they will be able to see their friends and teachers at school. Emphasize the exciting prospect of learning new things this year.

**Ask your child how he/she is feeling.** It is important to reassure children that it is healthy to talk about their emotions and worries. It is important for parents to help them manage their feelings and teach communication skills. If your child is struggling emotionally, listen to their concerns.

**Help your child stay connected to their friends.** Social interaction is important for children. Consider setting up video calls for your child to interact with friends who are not back at school. If you feel comfortable, you could consider scheduling outdoor activities where social distancing can be practiced.

**Start getting your child on his/her school sleep schedule.** Sleep is extremely important for physical and cognitive growth in children. It is a good idea to start transitioning your child back to a school sleep schedule early so there is less of an adjustment when school starts back.

**Take care of your own mental health.** Children tend to take their emotional cues from key adults in their lives. If you are experiencing anxiety about your child returning back to school, it is important that you address it. Parents should focus on healthy coping mechanisms and their own mental well-being as an example to their children. We are all in this together!

**If you or your child are experiencing anxiety and need emotional support, you can receive FREE 24-Hour Emotional Support through Peace River Center's Crisis Line (863)519-3744 or Toll Free at (800)627-5906.**