

Happy New Year



GOING BACK TO SCHOOL AFTER THE HOLIDAYS

GETTING BACK INTO THE SCHOOL ROUTINE

After winter break, many students, especially those who have experienced ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), need time and support to settle back into school rhythms. Some may feel excited to return, while others may feel anxious, dysregulated, or overwhelmed by the shift back to structure. January is a gentle opportunity to rebuild routines that help students feel safe, grounded, and ready to learn.

WHY ROUTINES MATTER FOR KIDS WITH ACES

- Predictability reduces stress and helps students feel secure.
- Consistent rhythms support emotional regulation and focus.
- Shared planning strengthens trust and connection.
- Small steps prevent overwhelm and build confidence.

Quick Tips for a Smooth Transition

1. Re-Establish Sleep Schedules

Kids with ACEs may have disrupted sleep patterns. Gradually shifting bedtime and wake-up times helps their bodies and brains adjust without added stress.

2. Bring Back Morning Structure

A simple, predictable morning routine, breakfast, backpack check, devices charged reduces anxiety and helps students start the day with confidence.

3. Create a Predictable After-School Flow

Students with ACEs often need a decompression period after school. A snack, hydration, and a short break before homework can help them reset and regulate.

4. Review Weekly Schedules Together

Kids with ACEs may worry about surprises. Reviewing the week ahead builds confidence and reduces emotional overload.

Routine Reset Tool: Routine Reset Checklist

This checklist is especially helpful for students with ACEs because it breaks routines into manageable steps and supports independence without pressure.

Morning Routine

- Consistent wake-up time
- Quick breakfast plan
- Backpack + charged devices
- “One thing I want to accomplish today”

After-School Routine

- Snack + hydration
- 20–30 minutes of homework or reading
- Short break (movement, music, or quiet time)
- One responsibility (dishes, trash, pet care)

Evening Routine

- Review tomorrow’s schedule
- Pack backpack + set out clothes
- Limit screens 30–60 minutes before bed
- Bedtime that supports 8–10 hours of sleep

Routine Reset Tool: "One Small Step This Week"

Kids with ACEs often do best with one focus at a time. This tool can help them feel successful without overwhelming.

Choose one focus area

- Sleep schedule
- Homework rhythm
- Screen time boundaries
- Organization (backpack, binder, planner)
- Chores
- After-school responsibilities
- Calming nighttime routine

This week, I will focus on...

Routine Reset Tool: Two-Week Back-to-School Planner

Students with ACEs may struggle with transitions, deadlines, and changes in expectations. This planner helps them see what's coming and reduces emotional overload.

Sections

- School schedule
- Assignments and projects due
- After-school activities
- Transportation
- Meals
- Notes for teachers
- Weekly achievements

Caregiver Tip Box: Supporting Students with ACEs During the Back-to-School Transition

1. Start with Something Small
2. Choose one routine to focus on this week. Small successes build confidence and reduce overwhelm.
3. Keep Routines Predictable
4. Students with ACEs feel safer when they know what to expect. A simple morning and evening rhythm can make the day much easier.
5. Include a Decompression Moment

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Caregiver Tip Box: Supporting Students with ACEs During the Return to School

1. Start Small

Choose one routine to focus on this week. Small wins build confidence and reduce overwhelm.

2. Keep Routines Predictable

Students with ACEs feel safer when they know what to expect. A simple morning and evening rhythm can make the whole day smoother.

3. Build in a Decompression Window

After school, give kids time to reset before homework or chores. A snack, hydration, and 10–15 minutes of quiet or movement can help them regulate.

4. Review the Week Together

Looking ahead at assignments, activities, and transportation helps reduce anxiety about surprises.

5. Use Encouragement, Not Perfection

Kids healing from adversity may struggle with transitions. Celebrate effort, not flawless routines.

6. Stay Connected

A quick check-in, “How was today?” or “What do you need right now?”, strengthens trust and helps kids feel seen and supported.

UPCOMING TRAININGS

[January 6, 2026 @ 8:00 AM Supporting Kids with Back to School Stress](#)

[January 12, 2026 @ 9:30 AM Moving Meditation with Progressive Counting](#)

[January 20, 2026 @ 8:00 AM Brief Introduction to Internal Family Systems](#)

[January 26, 2026 @ 9:30 AM Wellness & Nature](#)

A Message from the GAP Program Director

As we welcome the New Year, the GAP program extends warm wishes to all kinship caregivers and the children you support. We are excited about what 2026 holds and the new resources, connections, and opportunities we have planned to support our kinship families. Your role is vital, and you are not alone—our GAP staff is here to walk alongside you every step of the way. Please don't hesitate to reach out whenever you need guidance, encouragement, or support.

Jennifer Odum, Director