

BACK-TO-SCHOOL EDITION

INSIDE THIS EDITION:

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- UNDERSTANDING AFTER-SCHOOL MELTDOWNS
- SUPPORTING SUCCESS THROUGH THERAPY
- BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS AND SOCIAL CONFIDENCE
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- WONDERMENT REMINDER
- A NEW SCHOOL YEAR. NEW OPPORTUNITIES. MORE REASONS TO WONDER.



BACK TO SCHOOL WITHOUT THE OVERWHELM

Returning to school means adjusting to earlier mornings, longer periods of attention, busier environments, increased social demands, and new expectations.

Even children who are excited about school may need extra support during the first several weeks.

You can make the transition easier by reintroducing routines gradually. Keep wake-up times, meals, homework, and bedtime as predictable as possible. Visual schedules, written checklists, timers, and simple reminders can help children understand what needs to happen without relying on repeated verbal directions.

Prepare as much as possible the evening before. Lay out clothing, pack backpacks, fill water bottles, and decide on breakfast.

Reducing the number of morning decisions can help both children and adults begin the day more calmly. Children may also benefit from talking through what their school day will look like. Review how they will arrive, where they will go, who they can ask for help, and what will happen at the end of the day. For younger children, drawing pictures or acting out the routine can make the information easier to understand.

Most importantly, expect an adjustment period. Increased tiredness, irritability, emotional outbursts, and difficulty completing tasks are common when children return to school. Consistency, connection, and realistic expectations can make this transition much more manageable.

WHY DOES MY CHILD FALL APART AFTER SCHOOL?

Some children work incredibly hard to manage their emotions and behavior throughout the school day. They follow directions, tolerate noise, interact with peers, complete assignments, and adjust to frequent transitions. When they finally reach the safety of home, all the emotions and stress they have been holding inside may come pouring out.

This experience is sometimes called “after-school restraint collapse.” It may look like crying, yelling, arguing, refusing simple requests, fighting with siblings, becoming unusually silly, or completely shutting down. These behaviors do not necessarily mean that your child had a bad day or is intentionally misbehaving. They may simply be physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausted.

Try creating a low-demand transition between school and home. Offer a snack, water, quiet time, movement, outdoor play, or a preferred sensory activity before asking about homework or chores. Some children want to talk immediately, while others need time before they can answer questions.

It can also help to limit unnecessary decisions. Instead of asking, “What do you want to do?” offer two manageable choices, such as, “Would you like to swing outside or relax in your room?”

A child who has held it together all day may need connection before correction. A calm welcome, predictable routine, and time to regulate can make the rest of the evening go much more smoothly.

MORNING AND EVENING ROUTINES

Creating Routines Children Can Actually Follow

Morning and evening routines often become stressful when children are expected to remember several steps, shift attention quickly, and complete non-preferred tasks without support. Difficulties with attention, executive functioning, sensory processing, or emotional regulation can make an ordinary routine feel overwhelming.

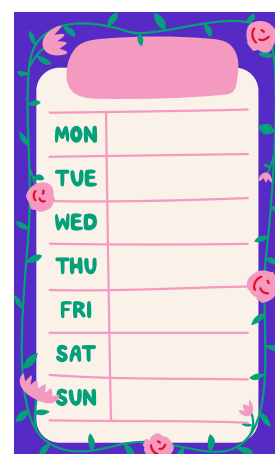
Begin by breaking the routine into small, specific steps. “Get ready for school” may be too broad. A clearer checklist might include:

1. Get dressed.
2. Eat breakfast.
3. Brush teeth.
4. Put lunch in backpack.
5. Put on shoes and coat.
6. Wait by the door.

Use pictures for children who are not yet reading independently. Place the routine where it will be used rather than expecting the child to remember it. A bathroom checklist can support hygiene, while a list near the door can help with backpacks, shoes, and coats.

Try giving one direction at a time and allowing enough processing time before repeating it. Timers, music, and “first-then” language can also help: “First brush your teeth, then you can choose the music in the car.”

Practice routines when everyone is calm—not only when you are rushing out the door. Children develop independence through repetition, encouragement, and supports that gradually decrease as their skills improve.



SUPPORTING SUCCESS THROUGH THERAPY

Therapy isn't about making children behave like everyone else.

At Wonderment, we focus on helping children build meaningful skills that increase independence, communication, confidence, safety, and participation in everyday life.

Therapy may help children practice skills such as:

- *Communicating wants and needs*
- *Following directions*
- *Managing transitions*
- *Tolerating changes*
- *Developing coping strategies*
- *Increasing independence*
- *Building social skills*
- *Developing play skills*
- *Learning safety skills*
- *Completing daily living routines*
- *Identifying and communicating emotions*

The goal isn't perfection.

The goal is progress.

And progress may look different for every child. 🌱

BUILDING FRIENDSHIP & SOCIAL CONNECTION

Making friends can be exciting—and challenging.

Children may need support learning how to:

- *Join a game*
- *Ask someone to play*
- *Take turns*
- *Share materials*
- *Handle hearing “no”*
- *Start and maintain conversations*
- *Recognize when someone needs space*
- *Handle disagreements*
- *Repair a social interaction*
- *Advocate for themselves*

Social skills don't develop simply because we tell children to “go make friends.”

They develop through practice, modeling, support, and meaningful opportunities to connect.

Celebrate the small moments:

A wave. A shared laugh. Asking someone to play. Taking a turn. Saying “hi.”

Those moments matter.



GIVE YOURSELF GRACE TOO!

The backpacks are packed. The schedules are changing. Alarm clocks are going off earlier. Everyone is trying to remember where their shoes, water bottles, lunchboxes, and homework went.

And while we spend a lot of time talking about helping children adjust to a new school year, we also want to talk about something just as important:

Parents and caregivers are adjusting, too.

A new school year means new routines, new schedules, new expectations, new communication from teachers and therapists, and sometimes a whole new level of coordination.

For families supporting a child with autism, ADHD, developmental differences, or other support needs, the transition can involve even more planning, advocacy, appointments, transportation, communication, and emotional energy.

So this school year, we want to remind you:

You don't have to have the perfect morning.

You don't have to remember everything.

You don't have to respond to every message immediately.

You don't have to make every transition go smoothly.

And you definitely don't have to figure everything out on day one.

A FEW WAYS TO GIVE YOURSELF GRACE

1. Lower the pressure.

Not everything needs to be fixed immediately. Some things simply need time.

2. Pick your priorities.

Ask yourself:

“What is most important today?”

Safety? Connection? Getting to school?

Eating? Rest?

Start there.

3. Accept help.

Let someone else make dinner. Ask for help with transportation.

Tell your child's team when you're overwhelmed.

Asking for help is not failing. It's part of building a support system.

4. Expect adjustments.

The first plan doesn't have to be the final plan. If something isn't working, that doesn't mean you failed.

It means you learned something.

5. Celebrate the small wins.

Your child got dressed.

They made it through the school day.

They asked for help.

They tolerated a change.

They recovered from a meltdown.

You made it through the morning.

Those are wins.



THE FIRST 6 WEEKS

What to Watch For:

The beginning of the school year is a BIG adjustment.

Rather than expecting everything to go smoothly immediately, give children time to adjust to new routines, expectations, people, environments, and schedules.

During the first several weeks, families may notice:

- *Increased meltdowns after school*
- *Sleep changes*
- *School refusal*
- *Increased sensory seeking or sensory avoidance*
- *More frequent communication breakdowns*
- *Increased rigidity*
- *Exhaustion after holding it together at school*
- *Changes in eating*
- *Increased need for downtime*
- *Increased emotional sensitivity*

These changes don't automatically mean something is wrong.

They may be signs that a child's nervous system is working hard to adjust.

Most importantly:

A child struggling during the first few weeks doesn't mean the child is failing.

It doesn't mean the family is failing.

And it doesn't necessarily mean the school is failing.

It may simply mean that the support plan needs adjusting.

Maybe the child needs:

- *More visual supports*
- *Additional transition warnings*
- *More opportunities for movement*
- *A quieter space*
- *Additional processing time*
- *More frequent breaks*
- *Different communication supports*
- *More predictable routines*
- *Increased collaboration between home, school, and therapy*

When we change the support, we can change the opportunity for success.



Connection Is an Intervention.

Before we change the behavior, let's connect with the child.

Before we give another direction, let's make sure they understand it.

Before we assume they're refusing, let's ask whether the task is accessible.

Before we expect regulation, let's help create the conditions that make regulation possible.

And before we focus on what a child can't do—
let's notice everything they are learning, trying, communicating, and becoming.

You are not behind.

You are not failing.

You are adjusting.

And sometimes, adjusting takes time.

Here's to a school year filled with growth—not perfection. 🧡

One morning. One transition. One conversation. One small win at a time.

“

Some days, the steps forward are so small only you can see them. Other days, your child moves mountains you once wondered if they could climb. Celebrate both. Every step is part of their journey, and you're right there beside them.

”

JOIN US AS WE GROW

As our new clinic continues to take shape, so does our vision for the future. This new space isn't just about a bigger building—it's about creating more opportunities for children and families to access the care they need, close to home.

To meet the growing needs of our community, we're looking to expand our multidisciplinary team by adding passionate Occupational Therapists/ Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants and Physical Therapists who believe in collaborative, family-centered care. At Wonderment Therapies, you'll work alongside occupational therapists, speech-language pathologists, Board Certified Behavior Analysts, and Registered Behavior Technicians to help children reach meaningful goals in the environments where they learn and thrive.

If you're looking for more than just a job—if you want to be part of building something special from the ground up—we'd love to meet you.

Together, we're building a place where children can grow, families can find hope, and clinicians can make a lasting difference.



COME WORK WITH US!!



WONDERMENT THERAPIES IS GROWING AND WE ARE LOOKING FOR:

- Full-Time/Part-Time
Registered Behavior
Technician
- Full-Time/Part-Time
Physical Therapist



Wonderment
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