Spirit of Peace Clinical Counseling

Counselor's Corner

September 2026

Dear Families,

We hope you all had a great summer! As the 2026-2027 school year begins, the shift from summer break back to the rhythms of school can be an adjustment for everyone. This newsletter is here to help ease that transition and set the tone for a great year ahead.

For children and teens, returning to school can bring the excitement of seeing friends, meeting new teachers, and beginning a new grade. For some students the transition may also bring stress or uncertainty as they adjust to new routines and expectations.

NAMI's resources for families highlights ways to connect with your child, build wellness time into daily routines, and engage young people in conversations driven by compassion.

- The 3 C's for Parents and Guardians
    - If your child seems a little different lately, try gently checking in instead of waiting for them to bring it up. Sometimes kids say "I'm fine" even when something is bothering them.
    - It's great to use curiosity and empathy, to fuel connections using questions like "What do you think is behind that?" or "When did you last feel this way?". Also try to stay compassionate so your child feels seen and heard.
- Guide for Working Caregivers
    - A simple routine can help everyone know what to expect, such as using a family calendar, setting aside time for homework, or building in time to reconnect at the end of the day.
    - Build a little time for yourself into the day, even if it's only a few minutes. A walk, music, a favorite podcast, or a quiet cup of coffee can help you reset.
    - Your child can benefit from setting a few realistic goals for the transition back to school, focusing on what feels manageable and adjusting those goals as they settle into the year.

Join us this year as we create monthly newsletters! Each month will have a different mental health topic and resources to support you and your students.

Managing stress

Returning to school often means returning to responsibilities that may have taken a back seat during summer. Homework, busy schedules, extracurricular activities, and high expectations can all add stress as students settle back into the school year.

Some stress is a normal part of adjusting, especially when a child cares about doing well. But when stress begins to feel overwhelming, it can affect mood, sleep, motivation, and behavior. This Article offers practical ways to recognize when your child may be feeling stressed and how to help manage it in a healthy way.

- Signs of stress
    - Avoiding schoolwork, declining grades, trouble making friends, trouble sleeping, irritability or emotional outbursts,and frequent headaches or stomach aches.
- Consider breaks: Breaks can help recharge and improve focus.
- Time management
    - Whether it's a calendar on a wall, or a planner or app, planning ahead helps keep track of assignments and the last minute stress of getting assignments done.
- Tools for Managing Everyday Stress
    - Build routines: encouraging kids to do their homework the same time every day.
    - Encourage organization: Whether it's binders, folders, or digital, they can go a long way to help the child feel calmer and more prepared.
    - Support goal setting: Breaking larger tasks into smaller steps can help make it feel more doable. Like reading the first 10 pages of a 100 page book.

Goal Setting

Dr. Michele Borba, an educational psychologist and recipient of the National Educator Award, offers valuable strategies to help children learn goal-setting and achieve success. She outlines seven key steps:

1. **Define What a Goal Is**: Introduce the concept of a goal by relating it to something your child is passionate about. For example, explain that a football player aims for a touchdown, this is their goal. Clarify that setting a goal involves planning and working toward something specific.
2. **Share Your Own Goals**: Show your children that you have your own dreams and aspirations. Explain that even adults need to work on certain things to achieve their goals, making it a relatable process.
3. **Create a "Dream List" Together:** Help your child compile a list of goals that are within their reach. Discuss these dreams together and consider the skills needed to achieve them. Ask if they might need support to succeed.

4. **Customize Goals for Your Child**: Start with simple, achievable goals for first-time goal-setters. For example, setting a goal to make their bed daily, read a book, brush their teeth without reminders, or get a strike in bowling can be great starting points.
5. **Guide Your Child in Planning Steps to Success:** Encourage your child to think about and outline the steps needed to achieve their goal. Writing down these steps can increase their chances of success, as it helps them focus on what needs to be done.
6. **Track Progress Together**: Use a visible spot, like the refrigerator, to track progress with stickers or stars when your child completes steps toward their goal.
7. **Celebrate Achievements**: When your child reaches their goal, celebrate together as a family to reinforce the joy of accomplishment.



Feel free to reach out if you have any questions or concerns. Have a great month!

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