



Back-to-School Mental Health Checklist

A guide for supporting your child's emotional well-being during the transition to school

Before school starts

- ☐ Gradually shift sleep schedule (1-2 weeks before)
- ☐ Practice social scenarios and intros
- ☐ Discuss upcoming changes openly
- ☐ Send welcome email to teacher(s)
- ☐ Plan for lunch, recess, and bus rides
- ☐ Arrange playdates with classmates

When school starts

- ☐ Ask open-ended questions: "What made you smile today?"
- ☐ Introduce "roses and thorns" at dinner (good + not good)
- ☐ Ask about classmates and teachers (easier entry point)
- ☐ Validate feelings without immediately problem-solving
- ☐ Listen during car rides and casual moments

School collaboration

- ☐ Communicate any concerns with teachers early in the school year
- ☐ If needed, request academic testing (in writing)
- ☐ Explore 504 plans for learning support
- ☐ Learn about the school's intervention programs

Social readiness

- ☐ Teach the difference between teasing and bullying
- ☐ Practice problem-solving at home
- ☐ Help identify preferred activities
- ☐ Role-play challenging social situations

Red flags to watch for

- ☐ Frequent stomachaches or headaches
- ☐ Repeated sleep disturbances or bedtime regression
- ☐ Loss of interest in favorite activities
- ☐ Longer, more intense emotional outbursts
- ☐ Avoiding specific subjects or homework
- ☐ Negative self-talk: "I'm stupid." "I'm ugly." "No one likes me."

For support during challenging transitions
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