



TRIELLO COUNSELLING SERVICES

BACK-TO-SCHOOL



A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD

Every new school year is a fresh beginning , a chance to grow, connect, and thrive together.



TIP 1 MORNING ROUTINES



A CALMER START MEANS A
STRONGER DAY

02

CREATE A CONSISTENT MORNING ROUTINE: A predictable morning routine can help your child feel safe, confident and ready to learn. Knowing what comes next can make transitions easier and support emotional regulation. Routines also benefit parents and the whole family by reducing last-minute decisions, creating shared expectations and helping mornings feel calmer and more organized. Keep it simple and flexible. The goal is not a perfect morning, it is a rhythm that supports your family.

Try:

- Using a short visual checklist
- Giving one direction at a time
- Preparing clothing and bags the night before
- Leaving extra time when possible
- Creating a consistent goodbye routine

Kind reminder, a routine is a supportive rhythm, not a test of your parenting.

PREPARE EMOTIONALLY

Tip 2: Validate Feelings, Open Conversations

FEELINGS ABOUT GOING BACK TO SCHOOL ARE COMPLETELY NORMAL, FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS ALIKE. CREATING SPACE TO TALK MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE.

VALIDATION BUILDS TRUST,
SAFETY AND CONNECTION.

03

Back-to-school feelings can be complicated. Your child may feel excited, worried, sad or overwhelmed, sometimes all at once. Validation helps your child feel heard and makes open conversation more likely. It does not mean agreeing with every behaviour or immediately fixing the problem.

Try saying:

- "I can see this feels hard."
- "It makes sense that you're nervous about something new."
- "Would you like me to listen, help you make a plan, or simply stay close?"

When children feel safe and understood, they are often better able to talk, problem-solve and manage their emotions.

HOW THIS HELPS PARENTS

Listening before reacting can help parents better understand what their child's behaviour is communicating. It may also reduce conflict and make it easier to respond calmly and confidently

HOW THIS SUPPORTS ATTACHMENT

When parents respond with curiosity, comfort and consistency, children learn:

- "My feelings are safe to share."
- "My parent will try to understand me."
- "I can turn to my parent when something feels difficult."

These repeated moments of connection help strengthen trust, emotional safety and the parent-child attachment relationship.



Reference: Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. Serve and Return: Back-and-Forth Exchanges. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/key-concept/serve-and-return/>

Tip 3 for Parents

HOMEWORK STATION



SUPPORT THEIR LEARNING
WITHOUT TAKING OVER.

04

A dedicated homework station gives your child a consistent, calm place to focus. It doesn't need to be elaborate, just a quiet corner with good lighting, the right supplies, and minimal distractions can make a meaningful difference in your child's learning routine.

Invite your child to help choose or organize the space. It does not need to be a separate desk, a clear spot at the kitchen table can work.

HOW THIS HELPS YOUR CHILD

- Supports organization and independence
- Reduces the effort needed to get started
- Creates a predictable learning routine
- Gives the child some choice and ownership

HOW THIS HELPS PARENTS

A simple setup can reduce searching for supplies, repeated reminders and last-minute stress. Parents can focus on offering encouragement instead of monitoring every step.

HOW THIS SUPPORTS THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Research suggests that the quality of parental homework involvement matters more than simply being involved. Calm, autonomy-supportive help is associated with better outcomes than pressure or control.

Try asking:

- "Would you like help getting started, or would you like to try independently first?"
- "Do you want me nearby or would you prefer some quiet space?"

The goal is to support their learning without fully taking over.

SLEEP & SCREENS

Tip 4: Prioritize Rest and Reduce Screen Time

A WELL-RESTED CHILD IS A READY LEARNER. HEALTHY SLEEP HABITS AND MINDFUL SCREEN USE MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR.

Sleep supports attention, learning and emotional regulation. Reducing recreational screen use, especially before bed, can make space for rest, movement and family connection.

HOW THIS HELPS YOUR CHILD

- Supports focus and memory
- Helps regulate emotions
- Makes school-day transitions easier
- Creates time for play, movement and connection

HOW THIS HELPS PARENTS

A predictable screen-free wind-down can reduce bedtime negotiations and give parents time to prepare for the next day, rest or reconnect with their child.

HOW THIS SUPPORTS THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Screen-free moments create more opportunities for conversation, reading, comfort and shared routines. Parents can model healthy limits by putting their own devices away too.

Try:

- Turning off recreational screens one hour before bed
- Keeping devices outside the bedroom
- Choosing a calming activity together
- Creating limits that are realistic for your family
- Making exceptions for schoolwork, communication and accessibility needs



Tip 5: Regulate **YOURSELF FIRST**



YOUR CALM HELPS CREATE
CONNECTION.

06

Back-to-school transitions can be stressful for parents too. Taking a slow breath, lowering your voice or pausing briefly before responding can help you move from reacting to responding. When parents remain calm and emotionally available, children are more likely to feel safe, settle their own nervous systems and communicate what they need. These repeated moments of calm, connection and repair strengthen trust in the parent-child relationship.

When you notice yourself becoming overwhelmed, pause before responding.

Try:

- Taking one slow breath
- Relaxing your jaw and shoulders
- Lowering your voice
- Using fewer words
- Taking a brief, safe pause
- Asking another adult for support

HOW THIS HELPS YOUR CHILD

Children often borrow calm from the adults around them. A regulated response can help your child feel safer and manage their own emotions.

HOW THIS HELPS PARENTS

Pausing creates space to respond intentionally instead of reacting from stress, frustration or urgency.

HOW THIS SUPPORTS THE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

Calm and consistent responses build emotional safety. When mistakes happen, returning to apologize and reconnect teaches children that relationships can be repaired.

CONNECT EARLY

Tip 6: Build Strong Teacher Relationships

REACHING OUT TO YOUR CHILD'S TEACHERS EARLY IN THE SCHOOL YEAR SETS THE FOUNDATION FOR A SUPPORTIVE, COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP THAT BENEFITS EVERYONE.

"STRONG PARTNERSHIPS
HELP CHILDREN FEEL
SUPPORTED."

07

A positive parent-teacher relationship creates consistency between home and school. Share your child's strengths, interests, culture and what helps them when they feel overwhelmed. Regular, respectful communication can help concerns be identified earlier, reduce uncertainty for parents and ensure the child receives more coordinated support.

When children see the important adults in their lives working together, it can strengthen their sense of safety, belonging and connection to school.

WHAT TO SHARE

- Your child's strengths and interests
- What helps your child feel calm and supported
- Important learning, sensory or accessibility needs
- Relevant family, cultural or identity information
- Changes that may affect your child at school

HOW TO WORK TOGETHER

- Introduce yourself early in the school year
- Ask about the teacher's preferred communication method
- Keep communication clear, respectful and collaborative
- Address concerns before they become bigger
- Recognize positive moments—not only difficulties
- Create consistent strategies for home and school



Reference: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning. SEL With Families & Caregivers. <https://casei.org/systemic-implementation/sel-with-families-caregivers/>

Tip 7: Watch for

SIGNS OF STRESS

Children do not always say, "I feel stressed." Stress may appear as irritability, clinginess, avoidance, sleep difficulties, headaches, stomach aches, shutting down or bigger emotional reactions. Noticing these changes early can help parents respond with curiosity rather than punishment. Try asking, "What might be feeling difficult right now?" Recognizing behaviour as communication can reduce conflict and help your child feel safe, understood and supported.

"BEHAVIOUR IS
COMMUNICATION—NOTICE
WHAT YOUR CHILD MAY NEED."

08



CHANGES IN SLEEP

Watch for disruptions in your child's sleep patterns, such as difficulty falling asleep, frequent nightmares, or sleeping much more than usual. These changes can be early signs that your child is feeling overwhelmed or anxious about school.



APPETITE SHIFTS

Noticeable changes in eating habits, such as skipping meals, overeating, or expressing discomfort around food, can signal emotional stress. Pay gentle attention without pressure, and create a calm, supportive mealtime environment.



MOOD CHANGES

Increased irritability, tearfulness, or sudden emotional outbursts may indicate your child is struggling to cope. These mood shifts are often a child's way of communicating that they need more support, reassurance, and connection.



WITHDRAWAL FROM ACTIVITIES

If your child starts pulling away from hobbies, friends, or activities they once loved, this may be a sign of stress or low mood. Gently encourage engagement while respecting their need for space and rest.



SEEKING SUPPORT

If you notice several of these signs persisting over time, reaching out to a school counsellor or mental health professional can make a meaningful difference. Early support helps children feel seen, heard, and empowered to thrive.

Tip 8 for Parents

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF TOO



CARING FOR YOURSELF
SUPPORTS THE WAY YOU CARE
FOR THEM.

09

Back-to-school transitions can be demanding for parents and caregivers. Caring for yourself may mean resting when possible, eating regularly, lowering one expectation, asking for help or taking a few quiet minutes to reset. Supporting your own well-being can help you respond with greater patience and emotional availability. Self-care is not separate from parenting, it helps you create the calm, connected relationship your child needs.

SIMPLE WAYS TO SUPPORT YOURSELF

- Eat and drink regularly
- Rest when opportunities arise
- Lower one unnecessary expectation
- Take a few slow breaths before responding
- Spend time outdoors, in prayer or in ceremony
- Ask a trusted person for practical or emotional support
- Make time for something that helps you feel like yourself
- Seek professional support when stress becomes difficult to manage

FINAL TIP: TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF TOO

Parental stress is connected to children's emotional and behavioural well-being. Caring for yourself can help you remain patient, responsive and emotionally available, qualities that help children feel safe and supported. Self-care does not need to be perfect or time-consuming.

Taking care of yourself is not separate from caring for your child. Your well-being helps shape the emotional environment in which your child grows.

References:

Ribas, L. H., et al. (2024). The role of parental stress on emotional and behavioural problems in offspring: A systematic review with meta-analysis. *Jornal de Pediatria*.

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. Three Principles to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families.
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/report/three-principles-to-improve-outcomes-for-children-and-families/>



TRIELLO COUNSELLING SERVICES

SUPPORT FOR YOUR FAMILY CAN START HERE

Back-to-school transitions can bring stress, anxiety, emotional changes and challenges for the whole family. You do not have to navigate them alone.

Triello Counselling Services provides trauma-informed, culturally sensitive virtual psychotherapy across Ontario.

WE SUPPORT:

- Children, youth and adults
- Parenting and family challenges
- Anxiety and emotional regulation
- School-related stress and transitions
- Trauma and intergenerational trauma
- Couples and family relationships
- Perinatal and postpartum mental health

Our virtual services make mental health support more accessible to individuals and families throughout Ontario!

Direct billing through Canada Life and Sun Life may be available, depending on your individual insurance plan. NIHB and IRS RHSP funding may also be available for eligible clients.



**BOOK A FREE
15-MINUTE
CONSULTATION**

***Need extra support this back-to-school season?
We are here to help your family thrive.***

Reach out today to book a consultation.

www.triellocounsellingservices.com

info@triellocounsellingservices.com

613-209-2191

Instagram: @triello.counselling.services

Referral Form

