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*Counseling services are available for children and families.
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MENTALLY PREPARE KIDS TO GO BACK TO IN-PERSON LEARNING

7 tips to help reduce anxiety about going back to school during a pandemic

Source: The Chicago School of Professional Psychology February 16, 2021 (Click [here](#) for full article)

Los Angeles, Feb. 16, 2021 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- With schools across the country opening for in-person learning for the first time in nearly a year, children will need reassuring and support as they prepare to head back. Licensed clinical psychologist and president of The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Dr. Michele Nealon offers tips to help ease the anxiety.

“After being told they can’t go to school because of the dangers of the pandemic, children are now being told they will be going back, even though COVID-19 is still a threat. Naturally, many of them are going to be confused and anxious,” explained Dr. Nealon. “There are things parents can do to help them cope and set them up for success.”

Dr. Nealon recommends the following steps to help children return to school with confidence.

Take stock of your feelings. Children take their cues from parents. If you’re feeling nervous, take steps to alleviate your fears: Talk to the school system about their plans for a safe opening, cut back on following the news if it makes you anxious, and think about the benefits going back to school will have for your child.

Address your child’s feelings. Let them know that it’s okay to feel what they’re feeling, and answer their questions. Stress that everyone wants to keep them safe. Provide them with useful information, clearly communicating what in-person schooling will be like, the plans the school has in place to keep them safe, and what will be expected of them.

Review and practice the new rules. Explain that there will be new rules to keep everyone safe and practice them – specifically going over what your child is expected to do. Knowing what to expect can ease worries and concerns.

Focus on what your child can control. Reinforce your child’s sense of control by focusing on what they can do to make things easier, like wearing their masks at all times, washing their hands and following the rules of social distancing.

Check in with them about what they’re hearing. Because there is a lot of misinformation being communicated about COVID-19, it’s important to find out what your child has heard and what they believe is true, and correct the misinformation – not just give them the correct facts.

Implement a morning routine and stick to it. Involve your child in planning the morning routine you will use going forward. Having structure helps ease anxiety.

“Once school has started, it’s important that parents check in with their children frequently about how it’s going,” said Dr. Nealon. “We want to make sure they’re coping well and help them process their emotions as we all continue to learn how to live our lives during a pandemic.”