



## Back to School and Mental Health



### Check-in with how you are feeling:

Are you scared or nervous about who will be on your team? That could be a teacher, a coach, an art teacher or instructor, a school counselor, or even school custodians or bus drivers who can provide support.

**Get involved:** Clubs, arts, or sports offer more opportunities for friends, fun, and support. Do your research before school starts and see what interests you.



### Be prepared:

Know where your classes are and your class schedule, and make sure they are correct. Go to your school's online portal and see if your teacher has set up a supply list. If you are new to the school or need to learn your way around, see if you can get a tour before it starts.

Get all your school supplies and needed clothes early so you won't have to worry about them during the busy first weeks of school.



Have a calendar, whether digital or paper. Put things on your calendar so you have fewer things to remember.

### If you're struggling, who can you talk to?:

School counselors or psychologists are a good start. Many schools are partnering with online therapists to allow counseling from a private setting at school or from home.

If you cannot get help from your school counselor, many pediatricians can refer you to a counselor with the help of your adult family members to set up an appointment. You can also go to [psychologytoday.com](https://www.psychologytoday.com) with your adult family member to find a local therapist.



### Self-Care:

Make sure you are getting sleep and eating well. If you struggle with staying up with your screens, practice good screen hygiene by shutting it down an hour before you go to bed and recharging it in another room.

Balance your time between school, activities, and outside interests. Make sure your energy is not solely focused on school or fun. Create time for both and rest.



## Addressing the Stigma of Mental Health

Physical health is often perceived, discussed, and treated differently from mental health. Take a moment to examine how you perceive mental health, even if you believe you are nonjudgmental.

### Take a minute to think about how you would react if...

Your friend experienced a mental health hospitalization? Would you feel differently if they were hospitalized for a physical illness?

What if your crush told you they started taking anti-depressants? Would your initial reaction be different than if they had told you they started taking medicine for migraines?

*Everyone has personal experiences, views, and biases that influence how they think and feel about mental health. It is important to examine your own. Stigma can make someone with a mental health problem be fearful to ask for help or seek professional treatment.*

**An online survey on Teen Mental Health by the National 4-H Council conducted in May of 2020 found that:**

**82%** of teens want America to talk more openly and honestly about mental health in this country.

**79%** of teens surveyed wish there was a safe space for people in school to talk about mental health.

### You can fight the negative stigma attached to mental health by:

Talking about it openly (talk, text, and tweet about mental health awareness)

Treating mental health like physical health.

Educating yourself and others.

Showing compassion to others.

Choosing your words carefully, such as avoiding using terms like "crazy."

Encourage your friends to seek help if they need it.





## **Self-Care Tips**

Self-care means taking time to do things you enjoy. Usually, self-care involves everyday activities that you find relaxing, fun, or energizing. These activities could be as simple as reading a book or as big as taking a vacation.

Self-care also means taking care of yourself. This means eating regular meals, getting enough sleep, caring for personal hygiene, and anything else that maintains good health.

Make self-care a priority. There will always be other things to do, but keep these from interrupting the time you set aside for self-care. Self-care should be given the same importance as different responsibilities.

Make self-care a habit. Just like eating one apple doesn't eliminate health problems, using self-care just once won't have much effect on reducing stress. Choose activities that you can do often and that you will stick with.

Set boundaries to protect your self-care. You don't need a significant obligation to say "no" to others; self-care is reason enough. Remind yourself that your needs are as important as anyone else's.

Unhealthy activities don't count as self-care. Substance use, over-eating, and other harmful behaviors might hide uncomfortable emotions temporarily, but they cause more problems in the long run.

