

A MESSAGE FROM “DR. DEB”

Back to School for Our ADHD Families

Often, preparing for the beginning of the school year can be stressful. In late August until after Labor Day, all families are managing transition. Parents are recognizing that sleep schedules need to be tightened and shopping for school supplies and clothing needs to happen. Families are recognizing it is time to say goodbye to the warmth and vacation that Summer provides.

Often, parents of ADHD diagnosed children, experience a harder transition back to school.

Children and adults with emotional regulation and executive function challenges require more calm and more time to process change. Leaving summer to return to school is difficult and can be full of upheaval for the entire family. Kids with different wiring can resist participating in prep for school at every corner. With every task, depending on age, different behaviors may manifest. Your son/daughter may throw a temper tantrum right before bedtime or delay getting in the car for school shopping. Kids can readily create conflict when experiencing extreme anxiety and feeling overwhelmed by the concept of entering a new year of school.



How may parents help our children get through this stressful time? The calmer and more mindful we can be to separate from our own unrealistic expectations, the easier it will be for our kids. Tasks need to be externalized over a period of time for our children to absorb and prepare. Larger tasks need to be broken down into smaller steps to be accomplished in shorter increments. Activities should be framed as fun and sometimes with rewards. School should be talked about in positive ways.

After all, this is a time when all blackboards and computer screens are blank to be filled with beginnings. Our children will have adventures and opportunities to explore and discover. These years can set the path for lifelong learning in the creative ways that people with ADHD wiring often exhibit.

Lastly, ADHD families often require extra support. Parents can benefit from SEPTA and CHADD. Their children can get individual accommodations through special ed programs at school.

At the beginning of the year, parents must be smart advocates by quickly getting to know everybody who is getting to know your son/daughter, starting with the bus drive and of course, the teacher/s. The special ed school psychologist can be a blessing, offering you as parents, support, as well as helping your child negotiate the new year feeling more secure, happier and ready to learn.

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