

# PRESCHOOL

AGES  
2-5

Generally, children in all age groups benefit from a patient approach to parenting that includes an established daily routine, verbal and physical forms of reassurance, opportunity for movement and exercise throughout the day, brain engagement, and minimal exposure to media — especially news or programs that may be stress-inducing.

## SYMPTOMS



## HOW TO HELP



**Fear of being alone; Nightmares**

Provide reassurance with words, physical comfort, and calming bedtime routine. Consider adapting sleep habits for the short term.

**Speech difficulties — including regression in ability, reduced word use**

Encourage other forms of expression with play, reenactment and storytelling.

**Potty Problems — loss of control, bed-wetting and/or constipation**

Limit fluid intake before bed. Encourage bathroom before bedtime. Reinforce daytime bathroom use. Praise child for following bedtime potty routine. Remain supportive.

**Change in appetite**

Allow for a shift in hunger levels, keep meal times consistent, and offer a variety of healthy food options.

**Increase in tantrums, clinging, and/or whining**

Reassure and comfort. Reinforce positive behavior with verbal praise. Allow safe space and outlet for emotional expression, e.g. coloring, playing. Tell child what you want them to do, versus what to stop doing.

**Sleep pattern changes**

Allow for short-term changes in sleep arrangements. Maintain general bedtime routines.



# GRADE SCHOOL

AGES  
6-12

Generally, children in all age groups benefit from a patient approach to parenting that includes an established daily routine, verbal and physical forms of reassurance, opportunity for movement and exercise throughout the day, brain engagement, and minimal exposure to media — especially news or programs that may be stress-inducing.

## SYMPTOMS



## HOW TO HELP



**Aggressive, irritable, whiney**

Patience, tolerance and reassurance. Reward positive behaviors often. Provide safe outlets for emotions via talking, art, and play.

**Sleep disturbance — nightmares, wakeful, hard to fall asleep**

Create a comforting and calming bedtime routine. Get plenty of sleep — 10 hours or more. Encourage at least 30 minutes of physical activity daily.

**Expression of worry, fear or stress**

Follow your child's lead. Encourage questions and sharing. Provide short answers. Help child focus on what they can control, e.g. hand washing, attitude, and fun activities versus what they cannot.

**Change in appetite**

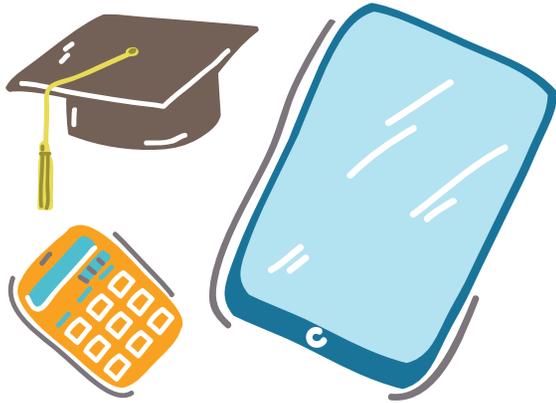
Allow for a shift in hunger levels, keep meal times consistent, and offer a variety of healthy food options.

**Withdrawal and loss of interest**

Address any stigma or discrimination occurring, and clarify misinformation. Encourage play and conversation — set up online play with safe friends.

**Forgetfulness and distracted behavior**

Gently remind, follow routine, have conversations about what's on your child's mind.



# ADOLESCENTS

AGES  
13-18

Teenagers benefit from a patient approach to parenting that includes an established daily routine, verbal and physical forms of reassurance, opportunity for movement and exercise throughout the day, brain engagement, and filtered exposure to media.

## SYMPTOMS



**Agitation and irritability or decrease in energy**

**Physical symptoms — headaches, upset stomach, rashes**

**Isolating from friends and family**

**Change in sleep patterns and/or appetite**

**Ignoring health promotion behaviors**

**Avoiding or skipping school**

## HOW TO HELP



Be patient, tolerant and reassuring. Encourage continuance of routine. Listen and acknowledge feelings.

Encourage verbal and creative outlets of emotions with family and friends. Consult with pediatrician if symptoms become concerning.

Encourage teen to stay in touch with friends. Engage in conversation. Gently place limits on room time to encourage family interaction.

Provide reassurance and offer opportunity to discuss feelings. Encourage exercise and social connection. Maintain structure and meal-time routines.

Encourage conversation with teen about health. Offer choice where possible. Discuss and honor feelings driving behavior. Take “team” approach to assuring positive health outcomes.

Discuss underlying reluctance. Address stigma or discrimination. Break down large tasks into smaller steps. Praise effort as much as outcome. Offer breaks and rewards.



Children with special needs may not process information in the same manner as typically developing children. Their coping responses may also differ. Some children may engage in self-soothing behaviors that offer a sense of control and calm when under stress. Strategies to support children with special needs should be accessible to the child and within their developmental level of ability. Providing increased transition time between activities is also helpful. Understanding that any increase in challenging or difficult behaviors is actually a form of communication related to stress, discomfort, and routine — change is helpful when attempting to address these behaviors.

# CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

ALL AGES

## HOW TO HELP



Offer ready access to comfort and sensory needs.

Present information in small doses and within child's level of understanding.

Make the unpredictable more predictable via use of routines and daily check-ins about plans and expectations. Use visual symbols to promote understanding and review frequently.

Encourage a sense of mastery by focusing on what the child can versus cannot do within the areas of developmentally appropriate play, educational activity, emotional expression and exercise.

Limit unhealthy preoccupations by providing concrete factual information, healthy and creative outlets for worry, setting limits, and through distraction.