

## Tips for Parents: Trim Back-to-School Stress

Your child's class schedule isn't likely to list "stress," but it's there. A new school year typically includes advancement to the next grade and a new class schedule. For many, it also may include a new teacher, new building, new classroom, new classmates, a new locker and a new lunch hour.

In Greensburg, Kansas, for example, after a disastrous tornado struck their town, students also had the added stress of being asked to adjust to temporary quarters while plans for a new school were in the works. Those students also missed classmates whose families had relocated to other communities.

If a military family, children, who have had one or both parents deployed, can be naturally anxious about the absent parent or parents, yet, also concerned about the at-home parent now trying to fulfill a dual role.

Signs of stress may include a short temper; fatigue; letting things pile up; overeating or not eating enough. At the first sign of stress, slow down.

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Take time for yourself, and take stock. Consider these tips:

- Maintain a family calendar, and place it where it can be easily viewed by all concerned.
- Plan to eat together. Turn off the electronics and talk with, rather than to, each other. Reserve touchy topics for later, when you can focus on them with the people involved.
- Accept help, but try also to help others when you sense their needs.
- Set aside downtime for each individual and the family as a unit.

Make downtime a priority to ease personal stress as well as the collective stress in a family. Support for each other in good times and bad nurtures the family by giving each member a strong home base.

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