



Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula®  
**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES**  
Clint Eastwood Youth Program



# Getting ready to go back to school

OK. Summer break is almost over. You've gotten the school supplies and the new clothes. You're prepared. But something just doesn't feel right. You're not alone. It's called back-to-school stress.

This stress may be especially evident for children who are attending a new school, returning to school after not doing well the previous year, or starting a particularly significant school year such as the end of elementary school or the last year of middle or high school.

Summer is a time associated with vacations, fun, and no school schedule. The prospect of having to get up early, do homework, and keep a schedule is daunting. And when you add taking tests, peer pressure, worries about bullying, worries about being accepted, sexuality, drugs, and hormones, it can become overwhelming.

Many children feel excited about going back to school and being with friends, but even when the return to school is positively anticipated, it can create stress. Parents who feel overwhelmed with getting their kids back into the routine should stop and think about how the child may be feeling.

## Keys to keeping stress under control:

- Be aware of your feelings; just acknowledging the stress may help.
- Start preparing early with small things like purchasing school supplies and getting back into "school-like" schedules (homework, early mornings, etc.)
- Start cutting back on television time. Encourage reading. Review math skills.
- Clean out last year's school stuff.
- Compile any necessary paperwork.
- Talk about the return to school in a positive way, but also listen to any negative discussion about school without defending school.
- Talk about the good times and the not-so-good times of summer.

## Signals that your child may need help:

- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Changes in behavior in relationships
- Increased fighting with family or friends
- Complaints about illness (headaches, stomachaches)
- A return to behaviors displayed when the child was younger
- Irritability, depression, fear, anxiety, worry
- Falling grades and/or problems at school
- Drug or alcohol use

## Stress busters:

- Get as much sleep as possible and try to keep a regular schedule of sleeping and waking.
- Eat regularly and eat a healthy diet (follow the food pyramid).
- Work to manage time by not over-committing or adding too many “extras” to your day
- Cut chaos at home — organize; be prepared by having things ready ahead of time.
- Have fun.
- Relax — listen to music, take hot baths, take a walk, practice deep breathing, practice yoga, exercise.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs. They may mask the stress but actually make the stress worse.
- Talk with someone about your feelings. They may not be able to remove the stress, but talking usually improves things and sometimes increases our ability to see solutions.

## What if this doesn't work?

Stress happens. We can't get away from it. And, actually, we need it to help us accomplish things. The key is balance. We have to find ways to use stress to motivate us, not harm us.

Still, there may be times when the stress is too much. That's when you should consider turning to professionals. Unmanaged stress can be damaging mentally and physically. The effects of too much stress include loss of energy; loss of ambition; increased susceptibility to illness; skin, breathing, or digestive conditions; high blood pressure; heart disease; depression; suicidal feelings.

Make stress-busting activities part of each day. If those strategies aren't working, see a therapist or treatment program for an evaluation.

**This information is brought to you by Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula's  
Clint Eastwood Youth Program, providing a structured program to treat drug  
and alcohol abuse as well as mental health problems.**

**For more information or to schedule a free screening, please call  
(831) 373-0924 or 800-528-8080**



Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula®

**BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES**

Clint Eastwood Youth Program

Hartnell Professional Center, 576 Hartnell Street, Monterey, CA 93940  
clinteastwoodyouthprogram@chomp.org

A private, not-for-profit organization