



MIRAVISTA
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CENTER

The start of a new academic year can be stressful for students of any age, as well as their parents and trusted adult caregivers.

It is important to give all children the space to talk about their concerns, and to keep those lines of communication open without judgment. It is about making the transition from summer to school fun, and reassuring children it is OK to talk about their feelings. Staying positive as parents helps frame that approach with them.

Paying attention to emotional wellness is also a good reminder that it is as much a factor in daily life as physical wellness and that children, whether they are beginning their formal education or heading off to higher education, need to be prepared mentally to cope with new situations and new stresses.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has a good "Back-To-School Tips" website page for parents, <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/grade-school/school/Pages/Back-to-School-Tips.aspx>, with links to pages for specific ages.

The National Alliance on Mental Illness has an informative page for parents, teachers, and college students as well, <https://www.nami.org/About-NAMI/NAMI-News/2022/NA-MI-Shares-Fall-2022-Back-to-School-Resources>

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry's Facts for Families provides concise and up-to-date information on issues that affect children, teenagers, and their families. https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_Youth/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Home.aspx

To the right are a few take-aways for parents looking to help children in different grade levels be emotionally ready for the start of the new school year.

Back-to-School IDEAS

- ▶ Start shifting bedtime to accommodate earlier wake-up times.
- ▶ Schedule play dates with classmates to help with the back-to-school transition.
- ▶ Got a youngster nervous about starting school for the first time? Consider asking if the child can visit the classroom to see the environment and meet the teacher in advance.
- ▶ Look through some picture books about starting school with the child to help familiarize them with the routine.
- ▶ Role-playing social skills can help with the ritual of meeting new classmates as well as learning how to be comfortable in social situations.

OVER

For elementary school-age children, separation anxiety may occur when children are worried about being separated from caregivers making school drop-off time difficult. Allow them, and you, a little more time.

Middle school can be a difficult time as it comes during a period of social and emotional development when students are becoming more aware of the complexities of relationships and of where they fit in with their classmates. Talk with your child about how they feel they have changed over the summer, how their classmates may have changed and how anxious or eager they are about the start of another school year.

High school means growing independence and more time spent with peers than family. It can also usher in much personal uncertainty, changing friendships, increased peer pressure and high academic expectations. Encourage your high-school bound child to be involved in activities they will enjoy in the coming year and ask what they hope their year ahead will be like. Key is to listen without judgment and to let them know you want to support them in having a good year.

Managing one's time, making decisions on what courses and which friends, meeting expectations, one's own or others, are all part of college life. Parental support remains important, even at a distance, and finding out what mental health services a university has and saying that it is OK to access them if needed could prove especially beneficial to your child.

No matter what school year your child is entering, be aware of any ongoing changes in their behavior and, if needed, discuss them with their pediatrician.



About MiraVista

MiraVista Behavioral Health Center opened in Spring 2021 to address the critical need for additional inpatient and outpatient behavioral health services in Western Massachusetts. Located on the grounds of the former Providence Behavioral Health Hospital in Holyoke, MiraVista offers psychiatric care services for both adults and adolescents, as well as an array of recovery rehabilitation programs including Acute Treatment Services (detox), Clinical Stabilization Services (post-detox), and outpatient services such as the Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP), court-ordered services, and Outpatient Medication Supported Recovery. Mira Vista cares for thousands of individuals from throughout the Western Mass region each year.

Care. Reimagined.

MiraVista Behavioral Health Center was built on the premise of person-centered care. We maintain an organization of thoughtful, empathic, energized team-members committed to creating and maintaining a warm, welcoming, and effective culture of care. Our purpose is to provide compassionate effective, inspiring care for those suffering from emotional distress and substance misuse so they are empowered to lead fulfilling lives.



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