

# BACK TO SCHOOL



## Prep Kit

TIPS TO  
HELP CHILDREN  
MENTALLY PREPARE.



Pathstone   
Mental Health



## **Back to School basics and how you can help your kids this fall.**

Getting into the back to the school routine isn't always an easy feat for kids and families. In September we face more than a handful of emotional adjustments to getting back to school. All students will have to adjust for the coming school year, and those who already struggle with mental health issues may need some extra support behind them.

### **Expand their social circle.**

If your kids haven't been interacting as much with others face-to-face you may want to plan a few outings. This will help your child/youth become more confident about the in-person socialization that will happen and will give them a chance to catch up on some of the social development they may have missed. Some examples of socialized outings may be, eating out at a restaurant, having a "playdate" with friends, or going to more public places where interaction is bound to happen.

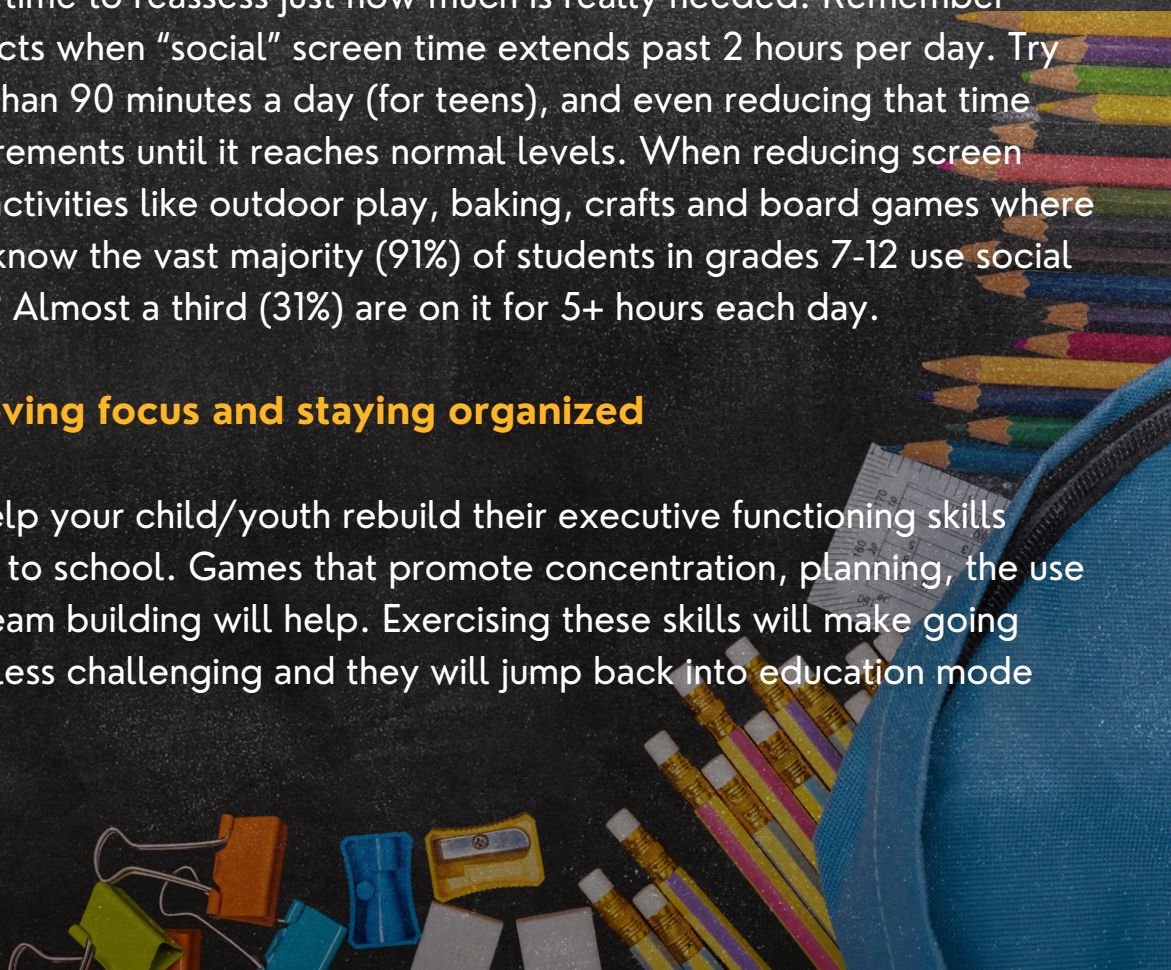


### **Reduce screen time.**

Always a painful discussion. While social media and devices in general have helped us all stay connected, it's time to reassess just how much is really needed. Remember there are negative effects when "social" screen time extends past 2 hours per day. Try capping it at no more than 90 minutes a day (for teens), and even reducing that time further in 15-minute increments until it reaches normal levels. When reducing screen time, swap in real life activities like outdoor play, baking, crafts and board games where you are able. Did you know the vast majority (91%) of students in grades 7-12 use social media on a daily basis? Almost a third (31%) are on it for 5+ hours each day.

### **Let's work on improving focus and staying organized**

Play games that will help your child/youth rebuild their executive functioning skills before they head back to school. Games that promote concentration, planning, the use of memory and even team building will help. Exercising these skills will make going back to school a little less challenging and they will jump back into education mode with more ease.





## **Anxiety is in the genes. This is where parents need to come in.**

Parents play a very large role in the development of anxiety, both biologically and environmentally in their kids. About 65% of our temperament is related to our genes and anxious parents tend to produce anxious kids. This goes beyond genetics though, and parents need to know they can change the outcome for their kids, but they need to manage their own emotions first.

## **Do the normal back to school routine.**

### **Some good sleep tips from the experts that benefit everyone are:**

- Go to bed at the same time and wake up at the same time every day (Yes, even on weekends)
- Keep your house cool. It's easier to fall asleep when your house is kept at 65-70-degree temperatures.
- Get to bed earlier as a family.
- Practice your morning routine (making the bed, having breakfast, packing lunch)
- Track your route to school.

\*For students attending school for the first time, or a new school, getting familiar with new steps and settings can be helpful.

## **Talk to your child about the friends they have that are in the same class.**

Getting kids to visualize their school day can offer some ease.





## Go shopping!

If your kid could care less about back to school shopping for clothes and supplies, then it can be a quick and painless exercise. For those kids who love the idea of picking out a new backpack, shoes and supplies this is yet another way to get them engaged in going back to school and can bring excitement and positive energy versus stress and anxiety. Designing a "study hut" in your house can also be a fun family activity. (This is a fun "fort" like area for just your kids to do their homework and keep their school bag) You know your kids better than anyone. If they are more curious, **make sure you are prepared with answers to their questions.** Have a plan, and follow it. Let your kids pick up on your positive energy about the upcoming school year versus nervous energy.

## Pathstone is here, lean on us.

Just under half (42%) of students say that in the past year they wanted to talk to someone about their mental health problem, but didn't know where to turn.

## Pathstone is your sounding board.

If you think something may be off, or know that there is, come and see us. We now have 10 in-person walk-in clinics across the Region, open Monday to Friday. A session by video is also available.

You can show up, or call to make an appointment at **1-800-263-4944. This line operates 24/7 and is also our Crisis & Support hotline.**





## Where our In-Person Walk-In clinics are located.

Fort Erie | Port Colborne | Fonthill | Welland | Niagara Falls | Thorold | St. Catharines |  
Beamsville | Grimsby | Pen Centre | Seaway Mall

As always, services are offered to children and youth in Niagara from birth to age 18.

**There is no referral, no cost, no appointment and no health card required to meet with a Pathstone counsellor.**

Information on all of our walk-in clinics can be found here:  
<https://pathstonementalhealth.ca/walk-in-clinic/>



\*More ideas and strategies on a host of mental health and wellness topics can be found at [www.pathstonementalhealth.ca/resources/](http://www.pathstonementalhealth.ca/resources/)



### Resources:

1. Pathstone Mental Health therapists and counsellors
2. Advanced Psychology - [https://www.psy-ed.com/wpblog/back-to-school-covid-19/?fbclid=IwAR1HuRizWBaY9TLBh7MitTB53Yiq\\_Y71P2faCF97MKGskYil4isEMJg6\\_Es](https://www.psy-ed.com/wpblog/back-to-school-covid-19/?fbclid=IwAR1HuRizWBaY9TLBh7MitTB53Yiq_Y71P2faCF97MKGskYil4isEMJg6_Es)
3. The Well-Being of Ontario Students: Findings from the 2021 Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey – camh and OSDUHS



# BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS

## for Parents

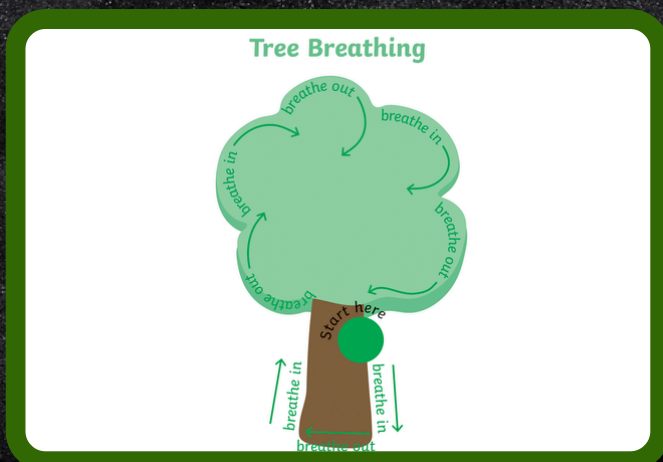
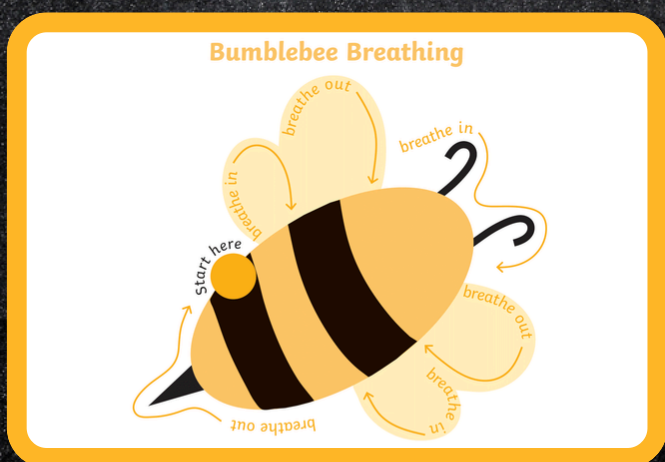
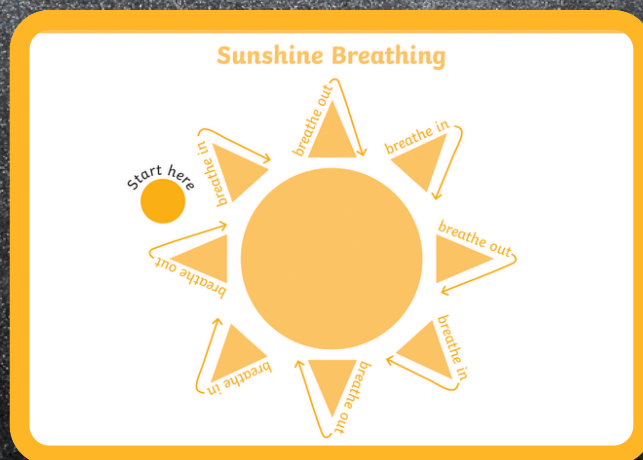
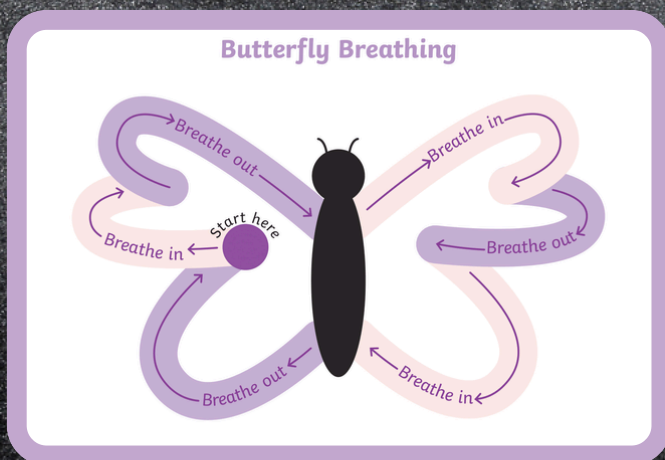
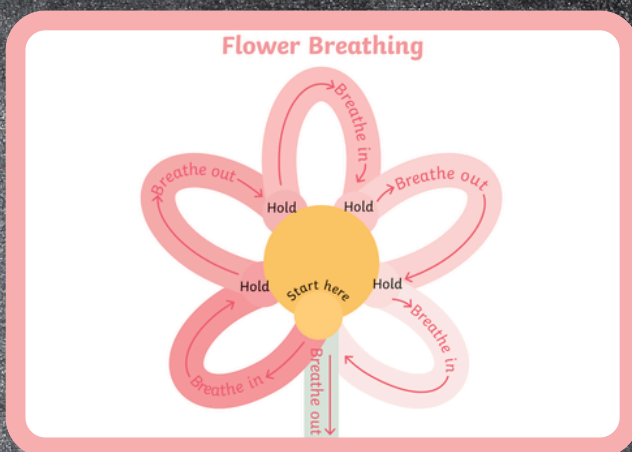
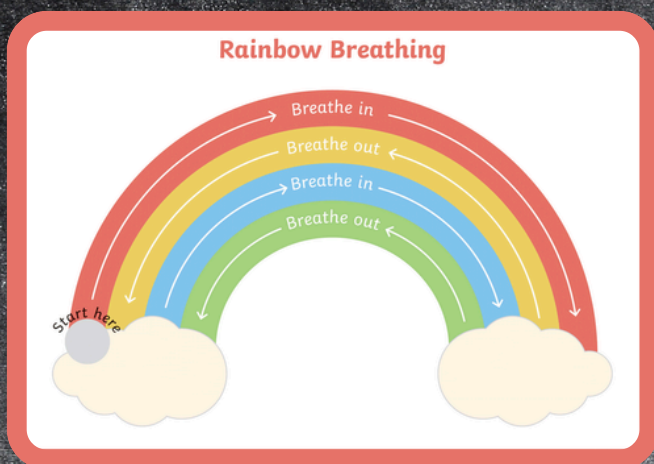
### Top 10 List (Mental Health Edition)

- 1 Remind your child that they're not alone.** Nearly everyone feels behind in school this year. Hang in there and just do your best!
- 2 Help your child know what to expect.** Find out the school's policies this year. What's different about lockers, classrooms, lunch or anything else?
- 3 Praise all your child's efforts!** Life's more than grades. Recognize their curiosity, kindness and bravery.
- 4 Pay attention to your own anxiety.** Kids can sense anxiety. Talk to other adults to ease worry and get professional help if you need it.
- 5 Get enough sleep.** Preschoolers need 11-12 hours, school-aged kids need 10 hours and teens need 9-10 hours.
- 6 Schedule quality time together.** Just 1 hour makes a difference. Here's a topic of conversation: What are you most excited about this year?
- 7 Encourage daily movement.** Children need 1 hour of physical activity a day — riding a bike, a dance party or whatever gets them moving.
- 8 Keep a routine.** Waking up and going to bed at the same time every day improves mental health. (This goes for adults too!)
- 9 Identify ways to calm stress.** Taking deep breaths or holding something comforting in your hand (like a smooth rock) quietly relieve stress.
- 10 Just ask!** Ask your child if they're worried about being back in the classroom. Be a good listener and support them.



# MINDFULNESS BREATHING CARDS

Children can use their finger to trace over the image of their choice. Each shape has arrows and directions telling children when to breathe in and out. With a little adult guidance to begin with, young children will soon be able to practise mindfulness breathing independently, and self-regulate their emotions.





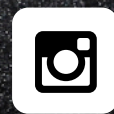


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