

Keeping Routines Through the Holidays

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Last school year, kids were constantly wondering if they would be in the school building or learning virtually. Teachers and parents spent the beginning of this school year fielding the questions of what will this year look like?

With masks no longer being required in many of the schools, it would seem we are on the path to getting back to something more normal. But for many young students, that normal many of us are hoping to get back to was never even established.

Many students are experiencing a school year for the first time, sticking to a schedule, following class rules and staying focused for hours at a time with few breaks. Where last year they could do their schoolwork in their PJs with a snack and their dog curled up next to them, this year they are in a seat next to new faces, eating lunch on someone else's schedule and no check-ins from mom or dad. And just as we seem to be shedding a little bit of that 2020 anxiety, here comes Thanksgiving and Christmas break! Back to sleeping in, PJs and dog kisses all day long.

So, what can we do to both enjoy our time off and prepare for a smooth transition back in the new year? One word. Validate. Kids are experiencing feelings and emotions that are new, unfamiliar and very uncomfortable. These feelings they can't quite name look like anger, upset tummies, extra-long hugs and concern about where you are going and when you are coming back. Let them know you see them. When you see the angry outburst, tell them you see their frustration or their hurt feelings. During the long hug, hug them tighter and say I will miss you too. Their feelings are real, and it is ok to have them. With a calming presence, we can help them learn to manage the behaviors that result from uncomfortable feelings.

Remember to keep a consistent schedule. Wake up in the morning, have breakfast and do a scheduled activity. Hold off on screen time until later in the day. Mornings should resemble a school day as much as possible in routine. This will help the transition back to school in 2022!