

Returning to “Norm”

By: Alisha Parker-Cummins

Throughout this pandemic, many of us have had to determine what normalcy is. What does “normal” really mean, anyway? Webster Dictionary defines Normalcy: “as the condition of being normal; the state of being usual, typical or expected.” One could agree that this year has been anything but normal. But in the rush to return to “normal” let’s use this time to consider what parts of normal are worth rushing back too. If we stop and think about our wish to return back to our “normal” lives, let us stop and think about what really is our goal now? One major goal of return to “normal” is helping transition our kids back into their school routine, which in some cases is not what their “normal” may look like. Whether classroom settings are smaller, virtual, wearing facemask, or less access to their activities, we have an opportunity to guide them through these changes in a positive way.

Staying optimistic is so crucial. Just the return to school schedules, homework, chores, and bedtime alone can have a positive effect on our children. By replacing the stress and worry they have had for the last several months we are giving them a sense of assurance that while it may not be their “normal” we can achieve a new kind of normality. Remind them about the positives in seeing their friends and teachers, and learning new things. This can help reduce anxiety and help them feel more self-confident. Communication is also vital into establishing a healthy new “normal”. For months, we have been flooded with COVID-19 news and updates. Being open with our kids that while things may not seem normal right now; we are working towards getting there. So many of our children are anxious and fearful about the return to school. According to Dr. Sudhakar Madakasira, MD, Chief Medical Director of Pyscamore Psychiatric programs, children and teens respond in different ways to the stress, disruption and isolation from the pandemic. He says look for these warning signs in children: excessive crying, irritability, return to outgrown behaviors such as bedwetting and toilet accidents; in adolescents, look out acting out and defiance. They also may exhibit poor concentration and school performance, school avoidance, worry and fears, unexplained headaches or body pains and unhealthy eating and sleeping habits. Reassuring them while it may seem different for a while, safety measures are in place to protect them and ensure that it is a healthy, safe environment for students, teachers, and families. Communicating that we understand their frustrations and letting them know we are right there with them also helps. Asking them how they are doing and help them express and communicate negative feelings they may have in a safe and healthy environment. This will teach them positive ways to express difficult feelings such as anger, fear or sadness. If you are like many, you have been practicing some form of social distancing for months. And it probably has not been easy. Yet the time away from packed schedules, has hopefully allowed us the time to pause and reflect about life balance. Whether it is our kid’s schedules, work, or prioritizing family/friends, we each can learn from our experiences through this journey. Children often feed off the emotions of the adults in their lives. It is important that we manage our emotions while remaining calm, listening and reassuring them things will get better.

Pyscamore hopes that everyone is having a great start back to school, while also understanding that some may need a little help transitioning into these new times. We have programs developed for Adults,

Adolescents, and Children statewide. All programs are running virtually, so we are able to meet your family right where you are, in the comfort of your home. Visit us online or contact us today to learn more. You are not alone; we are all in this together.

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