

End of School Year Anxiety: Helping Kids Transition to Summer

The end of the school year often brings the anticipation and excitement of summer break to kids and teens alike. However, for some students, the end of the school year can be a time of mixed feelings, including fear, uncertainty, and increases in stress and anxiety. As adults, it is important that we don't underestimate how difficult this transition can be for some youth. Increases in stress and anxiety can result for a variety of reasons. This can include the anticipation of a new routine, loss of predictability, saying goodbye to teachers and friends, concern over the loss of social connections that school offers, worry about end-of-year exams and completing academic deadlines, concerns over the upcoming transitions to new schools or grade levels, and the expectations that come with graduation and taking on more adult responsibilities. Additionally, students who rely on the security that school brings may experience worries over having enough food to eat or a safe environment as the school year transitions to a close.

Children and teenagers don't always communicate their stressors as adults do (i.e., talking things out). Students who are experiencing higher levels of stress and anxiety due to the upcoming end-of-school-year transition may begin acting out, complain of headaches or stomachaches, appear less focused or withdrawn, have difficulty regulating emotion, or even shut down. It is important to recognize that fear and anxiety in youth may also look like anger.

Unfortunately, anxiety loves certainty and that is something that we can't always offer to a young person who is worried about what is to come next. As caring adults, we can offer support, guidance, and resources to better equip students to cope with and manage upcoming changes, transitions, and stress that can come with the end of the school year.

Adults can help youth communicate what they are feeling by opening up and talking to them. If you are worried about a student who is struggling, check in with them. Ask, "can you help me understand how you are feeling?" or "what might be helpful to you right now?" Understanding what a young person is feeling and experiencing through their eyes allows adults to show greater empathy and validate their concerns. When adults can acknowledge a young person's feelings, they may feel better just knowing that there is someone else who understands how they feel. Additionally, by finding out what is causing youth distress, adults are more capable of helping them find ways to cope.

In addition to providing validation, empathy, and support, engaging in activities at the school level that provide meaningful closure at the end of the school year can help ease into new experiences and make change a little more tolerable for those students who are struggling with saying goodbye to teachers and classmates. Below are some examples of activities that can give students the opportunity to process and reflect on accomplishments, lessons, and memories they shared during the school year.

1. Create a Goodbye Board- this could be done in the classroom or via a virtual platform such as Google Docs. Provide students with a list of prompts to share memories, stories, and reflections from the school year. Devote some time to read the items on the board and comment on what you notice. Examples of prompts include:
 - In this class, I appreciated it when....

- This class helped me think about....
 - One thing I learned how to do well this year was....
 - One thing that challenged me this year was....
 - I am most excited for _____ next year....
2. Note Card from Teacher or other school staff- While it can be easy to get caught up in the busyness of the end of the school year, a goodbye note to students can be especially meaningful. Keep notes positive, encouraging, (and personal if possible). For staff who have multiple classes or too many students, create one note that conveys your main message, and then add a short personal sentence for each student.
 3. Share Gratitude- research tells us that gratitude offers benefits like a better sense of self-worth, greater stress resistance, and more overall happiness and optimism. End the year on a high note by asking students what lessons, experiences, or memories they're most grateful for from the school year. Have students list what they're grateful for, draw it or write it on the board.

Every student is going to have different feelings about the end of the school year. Being mindful that some students may be experiencing anxiety and discomfort as the days dwindle down to the last day of school allows us to be more aware of students who may be in need of extra support and/or resources.

References: Childmind Institute; Edutopia; Family Education; National Education Association; Scholastic

How to Help Your Child Make Good Choices

Students making choices is always difficult, not only for the students but also for the adults in their lives who want what is best for them. It is especially hard when students don't want to talk about those choices with adults, or they think they "know best". It is hard for adults to sit by and let students make mistakes that they will learn from, even though the adult knows or can accurately predict how their choice will play out. Students do not always value the life experiences an adult has had because they think "it's different now than it was when you were a kid". So, what can you, as the caring adult, do to not only open that communication with your student, but also have your input heard and valued and hopefully influence them for the better?

One big barrier youth face when it comes to making decisions is their impulsivity. They may feel excited, anxious, upset, etc. when they think about a choice and its outcomes which can cause them to make rash decisions. The part of the brain that controls decision making

skills is still developing in your student. Encouraging your student to stop and take some time to think about everything before making a decision will help them make more appropriate decisions. Help them see that they are making an impulsive decision when they make decisions too quickly and that they are making decisions based on emotions rather than rational thoughts.

There are five steps your student should go through when making a decision. The first step is to identify the decision. This is looking at how the student feels in the moment. Are they making an impulsive decision or do they need to take some time to think about their decision? You can do this by asking three questions: What feelings are you having right now?; What is the strongest emotion you are feeling? and When did you notice you were feeling this way? Taking a step back and taking some time will help them gain a better understanding of the problem they are trying to solve, what they want to accomplish and what the best possible outcome would be.

Step Two is helping the student understand their options. This can be done in many ways, like simply talking through the decision and the options that the student faces. The best way to encourage a student to come to you when they have a hard decision is to make sure there is open communication. Create a no judgment zone so that the student feels like their opinions and wants/needs are valued. Do not lecture them or come into the conversation with a “know it all” attitude. Guide the decision but do not make the decision for your student.

The Third Step is to make the decision. Some questions you could ask to help your student make a decision are: Will it help you achieve your goal? Is it honest? Will it create a problem for someone else? and Is it safe? It is very important to help your student understand that with every decision comes a responsibility they will have as a result of that decision. Help guide the student to see if they are ready for that responsibility and help them decide for themselves if they think they can handle the outcome. Then if your student handles the responsibility in a good way, praise them. Help them see what they did well and it will encourage them to continue making good choices. Try not to intervene unless they or someone else is in danger. Let your student make little mistakes that they can learn from.

The next step is acting on the decision. This includes following through on the decision that the student has decided to make. Make sure that your student knows that no matter what the outcome is, you will be there to support and help them. Cultivate your relationship by talking with them and checking that they are ok after the fact. This will help the student feel like if something goes wrong, they can come to you for help. Or maybe they will be excited with how well the decision is going and want to share their experience with you. If that is the case, praise them for making good decisions to reinforce that behavior.

The last step is to reflect on the decision with the student. Help the student think through their decision-making process in order to see if there was anything they could do better in the future. Some questions to ask are: What did I learn about myself? What's important to me? What was hard about what I did? What was easy about what I did? The next time I have to make a decision, what would I do the same? and What might I do differently next time?

Decision-making skills are hard for youth to learn on their own because they may not make decisions by actually thinking about them but rather make decisions based on emotions. Taking these steps and helping students develop their skills while they are young will help them be able to make good decisions as adults. Their brains are still forming and they are learning these skills either on their own or with the guidance of caring adults. This is one skill that they will need to become a self-functioning adult who makes good decisions for the long-term.

References:

How to help your teen make good decisions about school and life

<https://www.sparktheirfuture.qld.edu.au/how-to-help-your-teen-make-good-decisions-about-school-and-life/>

Why teens make bad choices and how you can help them

<https://www.sparktheirfuture.qld.edu.au/why-teens-make-bad-choices-and-how-you-can-help-them/>

Steps to Good Decision Making Skills for Teens

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/steps-to-good-decision-making-skills-for-teens-2609104>

Teaching Teens How to Make Good Decisions

<https://www.marshall.usc.edu/sites/default/files/2020-02/Teaching-Teens-How-to-Make-Good-Decisions.pdf>

10 Ways to Teach Your Children to Make Wise Decisions

<https://www.allprodad.com/10-ways-teach-children-make-wise-decisions/>

Helping Kids Make Good Decisions

School Community Intervention and Prevention

May 2022

SCIP is funded in part by: Lincoln Public Schools, United Way of Lincoln/Lancaster County, Region V Systems, Nebraska DHHS: Division of Behavioral Health and Region 4 Behavioral Health System

<https://childmind.org/article/helping-kids-make-decisions/>

5 Ways to Help Your Kids Make Wise Choices

<https://theparentcue.org/5-ways-to-help-your-kids-make-wise-choices/>

How to Help Your Kids Make Good Decisions (According to Experts)

<https://tinybeans.com/decision-making-teaching-kids-to-make-good-decisions/>

SUMMER TIME FUN!!!

Summer is right around the corner! Summer break is usually a welcomed change of pace, where kids can sleep in and take time to just relax. Needless to say, kids still need to keep active.

After all, kids live in a world where they already spend so much of their time, when school is in session, sitting in classrooms.

Hiking and Biking Trails:

Not only is hiking and biking great exercise, it can also be fun as well as educational.

You and your family can learn how to use a compass and paper trail maps. Sure, smart phones and other smart devices have apps for hiking and biking on trails but some trails might not have good wireless reception so it is always good to know how to navigate when such apps are not working for whatever reason.

You and your family can read and learn about different trees and plants as well as how to recognize and identify what plants are safe and which are poisonous. You can also research and learn about what kinds of wildlife live in the area of the trails you explore.



Fishing:

Nebraska Game and Parks has a variety of fishing programs aimed at recruiting kids to the sport of fishing. They sponsor "Community Fishing Nights", which are held at several locations across the state.

At these events, Nebraska Game and Parks provides certified fishing instructors to offer some basic education to kids and adults on fishing, as well as demonstrating and providing hands on skills to those who may have never been fishing before or have not been for quite some time. Once you learn how to fish, it can be a fun and relaxing outdoor activity.

On the evening of the event, head out to the location specified and look for the Game and Parks' Fishing Trailer, where staff will be waiting to assist and provide instruction. Free loaner equipment such as rods, reels and bait will also be available to participants. For More Information on the Community Fishing Nights please visit <http://outdoornebraska.gov>



Swimming & Outdoor Water Fun:

Most cities/towns have a local pool where kids and adults can go to swim socialize and take in some sunshine! However, there is almost always a cost to enter local water

parks and pools so families should plan and budget accordingly. Check with your local swimming pools/water parks to see if they offer income sensitive programs that provide free and/or reduced pricing for those who qualify.

Of course, there's nothing quite like a family and/or neighborhood "swim and water fight extravaganza"! Round up your kiddie pools, sprinklers, slip & slides, water balloons, pails and hoses.



Backyard & Driveway Games:

Host a neighborhood gathering in your backyard. Yard games, such as cornhole/toss, horse shoes, volleyball, etc. are almost always a big hit. Shoot some hoops or host a neighborhood pick-up game, jump rope, or play catch. Staying fit and active with family and friends makes for a more active and fun summer!



Outdoor Movie Night:

While Drive Ins are pretty much a thing of the past, many communities now have outdoor summer movie nights. You can check your local area to see if your community will be hosting one. And no worries if your community doesn't host an outdoor movie night because with a little research and effort, you can create and hold your own

outdoor viewing party right in your own backyard! What a great way to end a neighborhood BBQ or a day playing games in the backyard!

So, breakout those lawn chairs and blankets, grab some popcorn and drinks, and sit back and enjoy the show!



NEBRASKA COUNTY FAIRS:

County fairs in most communities in Nebraska are a special occasion. It's important to recognize and remember that any and all of these activities do more than keep kids entertained during the summer...they often create memories that last a lifetime, especially following such unprecedented summers the last two years!

COUNTY FAIRS AND CELEBRATIONS BY DATES



It's About Time!

Please click on the link below for more information on the 2022 County Fairs in Nebraska.

<https://www.nebraskafairs.org>

SOME ADDITIONAL NEBRASKA CELEBRATIONS THIS SUMMER:

ELKHORN DAYS

What: Parade, family activities, baseball/softball tournament, hot air balloon rides

When: June 2-6

Where: Elkhorn

More Information: elkhorndays.com

TASTE OF OMAHA

What: Food vendors, family village, kid zone, five entertainment stages

When: June 4-6

Where: Omaha

More Information: tasteofomaha.info

OMAHA SUMMER ARTS FESTIVAL

What: Pop-up concerts, mural cube public art, online artist market, 6-hour virtual concert

When: June 4-6, mixture of outdoor and online activities

Where: Omaha

More Information: summerarts.org

BENNINGTON DAZE

What: Parade, book sale, kid's games, scavenger hunt, fireworks, dance performances, golf tournament, street dance

When: June 4-6

Where: Bennington

More Information: facebook.com/benningtondaze

CASTLEPALOOZA!

What: A free community festival on the Joslyn Castle grounds; live music, food trucks, children's activities, vendor booths, yoga on the lawn

When: June 5

Where: Omaha

More Information: joslyncastle.com

GATEWAY TO THE WEST DAYS

What: Street dance, live music, car show, parade, vendors, craft fair

When: June 10-13

Where: Blair

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More Information: washingtoncountychamberne.com

SPRINGFIELD DAYS

What: Color run, cornhole tournament, parade, street dance, fireworks

When: June 12

Where: Springfield

More Information: springfieldnebraska.com

SCANDINAVIAN MIDSUMMER FESTIVAL

What: Folk dancing, traditional Scandinavian food and games, children's activities, craft and booths

When: June 13

Where: Omaha

More Information: visitnebraska.com

JUNETEENTH-LINCOLN

What: Family-friendly event, activities for kids, music, dance and rap contest, health fair

When: June 16

Where: Malone Clyde Center & Trago Park, Lincoln

More Information: <https://newsroom.unl.edu> › [announce](#) › [olliatunl](#)

PAPILLION DAYS

What: Carnival, parade, market, fireworks, live entertainment

When: June 17-20

Where: Papillion

More Information: papilliondays.org

MEAD DAYS

What: Street dance, fireworks, kiddie tractor pull, parade, 5K color run

When: June 18-20

Where: Mead

More Information: facebook.com/Mead-Days

HOMESTEAD DAYS

What: Run, horseshoe tournament, car show, fishing clinic, parade

When: June 23-27

Where: Beatrice

More Information: beatricechamber.com/homestead-days

CLARKSON CZECH DAYS

What: Nebraska Czech Queen Pageant, Czech food, silent auction, street dance, water fights, polka bands, parade

When: June 25-27

Where: Clarkson

More Information: clarksonczechdays.org

LIMESTONE DAY

What: Fishing contest, mud run, softball, horseshoe tournament, craft show, grand parade, duck races, fireworks

When: June 26

Where: Weeping Water

More Information: visitcasscounty.com

ESSENTIAL FESTIVAL

What: Music, clowns, face painting, food trucks, fire trucks;

When: July 2

Where: Papillion

More Information: essentialfest.org

RALSTON INDEPENDENCE DAY PARADE AND CELEBRATION

What: Parade, fun run, water fights, fireworks

When: July 4

Where: Ralston

More Information: ralstonareachamber.org

FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION

What: Car show, craft show, fireworks, parade, entertainment

When: July 4

Where: Seward

More Information: julyfourthseward.com

FREMONT 4-H FAIR

What: 4-H/FFA exhibitors from Burt, Butler, Colfax, Cuming, Dodge, Douglas, Sarpy, Saunders and Washington Counties

When: July 7-10

Where: Christensen Field, 1710 W. 16th St., Fremont

More Information: extension.unl.edu/statewide/dodge

JULY 4TH CELEBRATION

What: Fireworks, parade, softball tournament, fun run, car show, live music

When: July 4

Where: Hooper

More Information: hooperjuly4th.com

SANTA LUCIA ITALIAN FESTIVAL

What: Italian food, music

When: July 8-11

Where: Little Italy, 10th and William Streets. Omaha

More Information: santaluciafestival.com

WAYNE CHICKEN SHOW

What: Parade, national cluck-off, sidewalk market, world's largest chicken dance, arts and crafts, quilt show, egg toss

When: July 9-11

Where: Wayne

More Information: chickenshow.com

DODGE DAZE

What: Music, food, games, mobile ax throwing

When: July 9-11

Where: Dodge

More Information: [Facebook.com/DodgeDaze](https://www.facebook.com/DodgeDaze)

JOHN C. FREMONT DAYS

What: Car show, parade, arts and crafts

When: July 9-11

Where: Fremont

More Information: johncfremontdays.org

TBCS 5K COLOR RUN

What: 5K color Run, prizes

When: July 15

Where: Chadron

More Information: <https://www.raceentry.com/tbcs-5k-color-run/race-information>

SCRIBNER DAYS

When: July 16-18

What: Airboat rides, trolley tours, jazz in the park, kidpalooza, car show, Velvet Haze,

Where: Scribner

More Information: [facebook.com/ScribnerSQ150](https://www.facebook.com/ScribnerSQ150)

GRETNA DAYS

What: Carnival, golf tournament, kids pedal tractor pull, dance, car show, fireworks

When: July 29-Aug. 1

Where: Gretna

More Information: gretnadays.com

BENSON DAYS

What: Movie night in the park, historical building tour, bike ride

When: July 30-Aug. 1

Where: Military Avenue and Maple Street. Omaha

More Information: bensondays.com

NEBRASKA STAR PARTY

What: Beginners field school, camping, stargazing, opportunities for swimming, boating and fishing

When: Aug. 1-6

Where: Merritt Reservoir near Valentine

More Information: nebraskastarparty.org

CHIMNEY ROCK PIONEER DAYS

What: Opening ceremonies, BBQ, Music, activities, softball, 5 K, etc.

When: August 5-7

Where: Bayard

More Information: LASR.net

NEBRASKA CHAUTAUQUA: The Fifties in Focus

What: Lectures, presentations and activities for all ages

When: Aug. 6-7

Where: Ashland

More Information: humanitiesnebraska.org

WILBER CZECH FESTIVAL

What: Grand parade, children's parade, live Czech music, quilt show, talent contest

When: Aug. 6-8

Where: Wilber

More Information: nebraskaczehsofwilber.com

NEW AMERICAN ARTS FESTIVAL

What: Exhibits, artisans, food trucks, stages

When: Aug. 6

Where: Military Avenue and Maple Street. Omaha

More Information: bffomaha.org/naaf.html

BELLEVUE ROCKS THE RIVERFRONT

What: Music, carnival, food, fireworks

When: Aug. 13-14

Where: American Heroes Park, East Mission Avenue and Payne Drive, Bellevue

More Information: bellevuerockstheriverfront.com

VALLEY DAYS

What: Street dance, pancake breakfast, parade, car show, craft show

When: Aug. 13-15

Where: Valley

More Information: valleydays.net

OMAHA'S ORIGINAL GREEK FESTIVAL

What: Greek cuisine, live music, traditional Greek dancing, a boutique and children's activities

When: Aug. 20-22

Where: St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, 602 Park Ave. Omaha

More Information: greekfestomaha.com

KOOL-AID DAYS

What: Parade, Kool-Aid stands, farmer's market, disc golf tournament, car show, Kool-Aid collectibles, fireworks

When: Aug. 20-22

Where: Hastings

More Information: kool-aiddays.com

DUNDEE DAY

What: Pancake breakfast, 5K, food, parade, street Olympics, music

When: Aug. 21

Where: 50th Street and Underwood Avenue area. Omaha

More Information: dundeeday.org

MILLARD DAYS

What: Carnival, parade, live music, kids tractor pull, ice cream social

When: Aug. 24-29

Where: Andersen Park, 136th and Q Streets Millard/Omaha

More Information: millarddays.com

NORFOLK BEEF EXPO

What: Food, beverages, trade show, exhibits

When: Sept. 10, 11

Where: Northeast Community College Norfolk

More Information: <https://10times.com/beef-expo-norfolk>

GERMAN DAY/OKTOBERFEST

What: Beer, singing, dancing, live music, food

When: Sept. 17-18

Where: German-American Society, 3717 S. 120th St.

More Information: germanamericansociety.org

APPLEJACK FESTIVAL

What: Festivities, Apple pie, apple cider, candy apples, caramel apples

When: Sept. 17-19

Where: Nebraska City

More Information: nebraskacity.com

FORT OMAHA INTERTRIBAL POWWOW

What: Traditional dance, music, artistry, oral history, foods from tribes around the region

When: Sept. 25

Where: MCC Fort Omaha Campus, 5300 N. 30th St.

More Information: mccneb.edu/Prospective-Students/Resources/Intercultural/Programs-and-Events/Fort-Omaha-Intertribal-Powwow