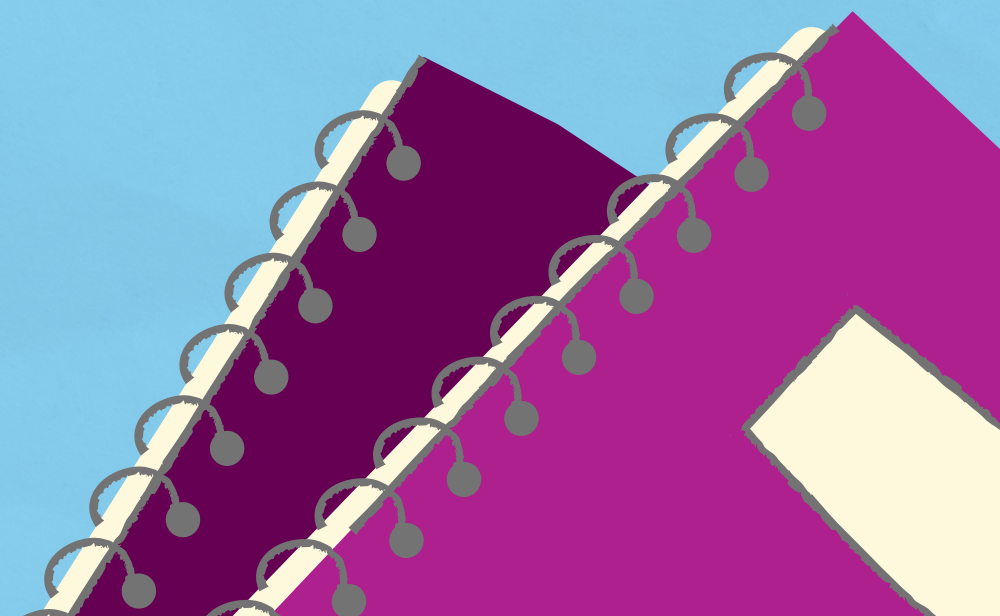
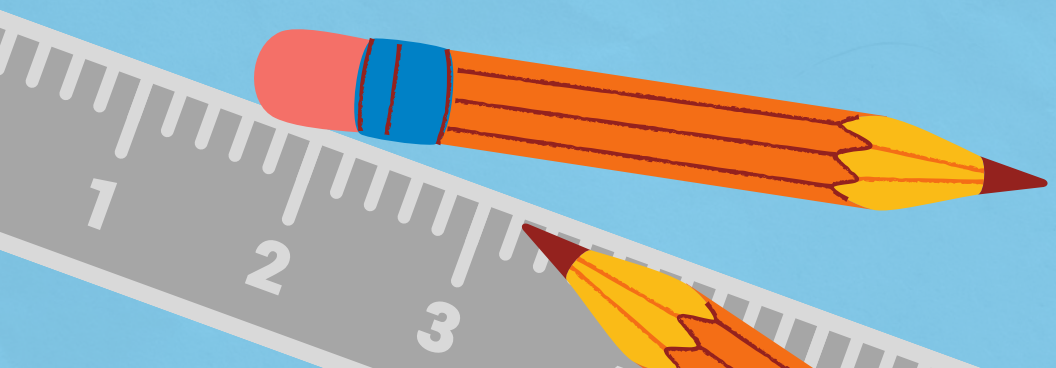


# BACK TO SCHOOL TOOLKIT

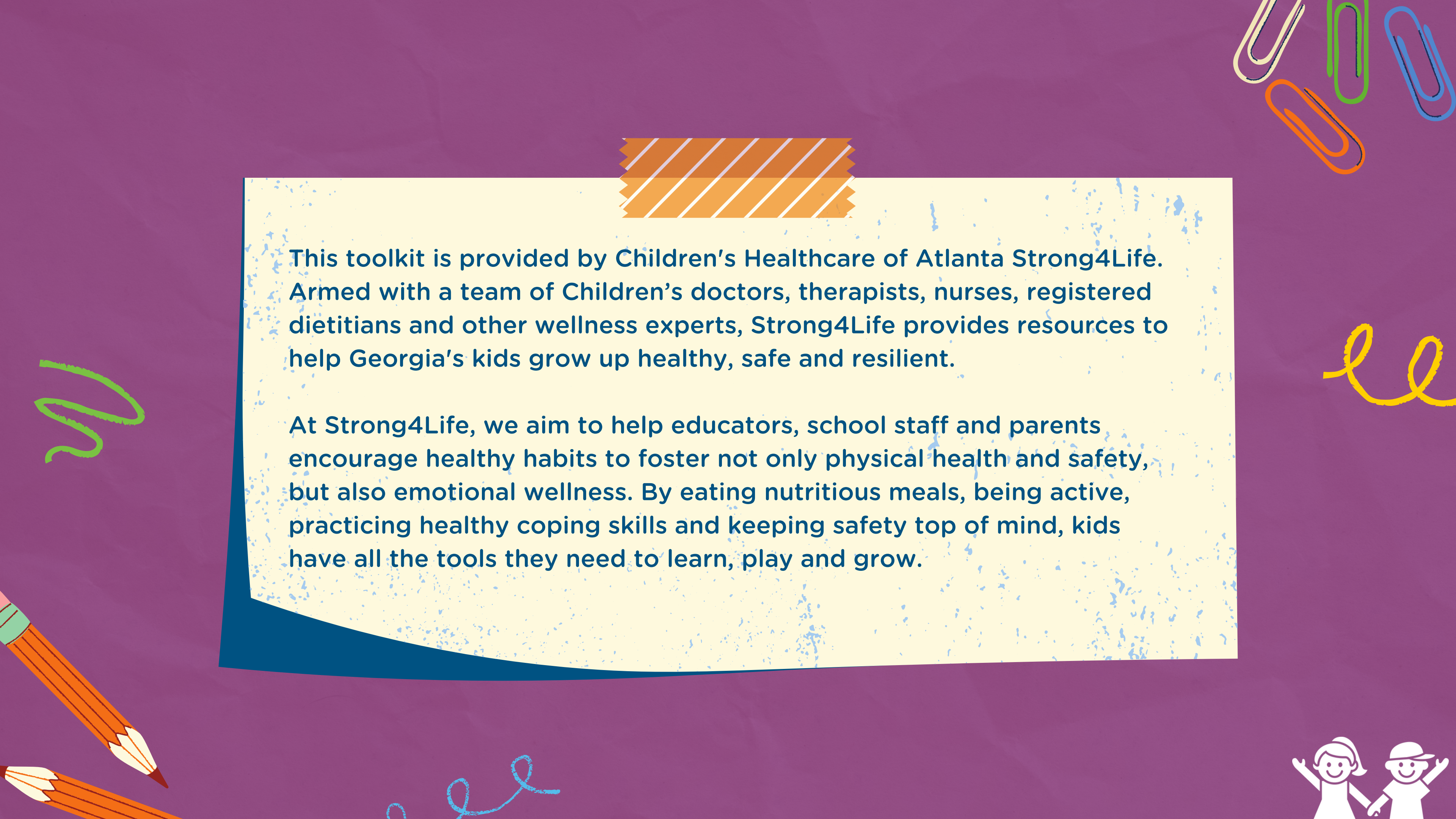
**STRONG<sup>4</sup>LIFE<sup>SM</sup>**



**Children's<sup>SM</sup>**  
Healthcare of Atlanta







This toolkit is provided by Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Strong4Life. Armed with a team of Children's doctors, therapists, nurses, registered dietitians and other wellness experts, Strong4Life provides resources to help Georgia's kids grow up healthy, safe and resilient.

At Strong4Life, we aim to help educators, school staff and parents encourage healthy habits to foster not only physical health and safety, but also emotional wellness. By eating nutritious meals, being active, practicing healthy coping skills and keeping safety top of mind, kids have all the tools they need to learn, play and grow.





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# WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

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**Administrators**

**Teachers**

**School Nurses**

**Educators and Staff**





# WHAT'S IN THIS TOOLKIT?

- 🌻 Downloadable handouts, checklists and tip sheets for
  - The classroom
  - Educator and staff well-being
  - Parents
- 🌻 Videos to help kids practice healthy habits, coping skills and brain breaks
- 🌻 Articles on [Strong4Life.com](https://www.strong4life.com) for
  - The classroom
  - Educator and staff well-being
  - Parents





# DOWNLOADS

handouts, checklists and tip sheets





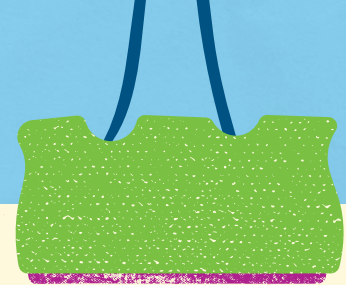


# CLASSROOM TOOLS

illness prevention and coping skills







## Preventing the Spread of Germs in Your Classroom

STRONG4LIFE



It is more important than ever to keep common spaces clean and as germ-free as possible. Check out these expert tips from our illness prevention team to keep your space clean.

### Classroom checklist

Before the first day of school, try your best to:

- Stock up on cleaning and hygiene supplies



Alcohol-based hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol)



Paper towels



Tissues



Cleaning and disinfectant wipes or spray for high-touch surfaces

- Identify a safe and secure storage place for cleaners and disinfectants when not in use.
- Space the seating to accommodate for social distancing, keeping in mind that students should not be facing one another.
- Stock up on supplies to minimize sharing (e.g., writing utensils, art supplies, technology, etc.).
- Develop a strategy to limit sharing of books, technology, toys or other learning aids.
- Post signage to promote everyday protective measures and demonstrate how to stop the spread.
- Identify routine handwashing times (e.g., upon arrival, before and after eating, after coughing/blowing nose, after going to the bathroom).
- Stock up on pre-packaged snacks and bottled water (if feasible).

### Daily germ-fighting checklist

- Ensure students wash hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer upon arrival.
- Ensure students are wearing masks properly (if required).
- Clean high-touch surfaces at least once per day:



Desktops



Door handles



Sink faucets and handles

- Ensure students wash hands before and after eating.

The information provided is only a recommendation. Be aware of and follow your school's or district's guidelines.

For more tips and expert advice, visit [Strong4Life.com/reopening](https://www.strong4life.com/reopening).

# CLEAN CLASSROOM CHECKLIST

School staff can use [this checklist](#) from our illness prevention team to ensure their classroom is clean and has all the supplies needed to fight fight germs throughout the day.





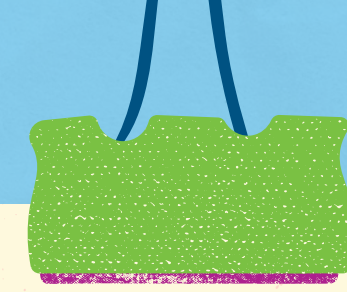


# HANDWASHING 101

Hang this flyer in every bathroom through the school to promote proper hand hygiene and help prevent illness.







# Coping Skills



As kids grow older, they face new stressors and challenges. By helping your child develop healthy coping skills (tools to help them manage their feelings and reduce stress), you're helping them become more resilient (better able to handle life's ups and downs).

## Coping skills ideas

Everyone is different, and what works one day may not work the next. Encourage your child to try lots of different coping strategies to help them find what works best for them.

The options are limitless, but here are some ideas to get you started:

Be active	Find your calm	Get creative	Connect with others	Shift your mindset
Put on music and dance	Take some deep breaths	Color, draw or paint	Cuddle or play with your pet	Think of something positive
Build with Legos or blocks	Listen to music or sing a song	Play with Play-Doh or sand	Read a book with someone	Focus on one thing you're grateful for
Do 10 jumping jacks	Close your eyes and count to 10 or backward from 100	Play an instrument	Play a game with a friend or family member	Identify your top three strengths
Run in place for 20 seconds	Take a quiet break or rest	Make up a song	Work with someone on a puzzle	Think about something you're looking forward to
Bounce a ball or play catch	Have a drink of cold water	Write about your thoughts or feelings	Write someone a letter	Focus on the present moment
Go for a walk, run or hike	Blow bubbles	Create a dance	Share your feelings with someone you trust	Think about something that makes you laugh
Squeeze a stress ball	Think of a calm, happy place	Write a poem	Ask for help	Practice reframes ("I didn't fail; I learned")
Do yoga or stretch	Look at pictures of a favorite memory	Make up a new game	Call a friend to catch up	Focus on what is in your control

Coping strategies are also helpful for adults. Practicing them is a great way to take care of yourself, be more present and model healthy ways to manage stress.

For more coping skills ideas, visit [Strong4Life.com/coping](https://Strong4Life.com/coping)

This is general information and not specific medical advice. Always consult with a doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns about the health of a child.

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# COPING SKILLS SHEET

Need healthy ways to help kids cope with life's ups and downs? Try these [coping skills ideas](#) with students. From deep breathing to dance parties, kids can use these skills for life as they face new stressors and challenges.





# Deep Breathing



As kids grow older, they face new stressors and challenges. By helping your child develop healthy coping skills (tools to help them manage their feelings and reduce stress), you're helping them become more resilient (better able to handle life's ups and downs).

## Why practice deep breathing?

Unlike normal breathing, taking deep breaths encourages you to slow down and pay attention to your body as you inhale and exhale. This relaxation exercise can help improve your ability to focus and better handle your emotions by lowering your heart rate, allowing your muscles to relax, and calming your mind and body.



It is difficult to learn something new when we are anxious, angry or distracted.

Teaching and practicing coping skills when everyone is calm gives us a variety of tools we can use to manage our feelings and reduce stress.

## How to practice deep breathing

- 1 Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
- 2 Place your hand on your stomach so that you can feel your hand moving up and down with each breath.
- 3 Inhale through your nose and feel your stomach fill with air.
- 4 Hold your breath for a few seconds.
- 5 Exhale slowly through your mouth.
- 6 Repeat several times or until you feel your body relaxing.

With deep breathing, you want to fill your stomach with air. If you notice that only your chest or shoulders are rising and falling, try to breathe even deeper so your stomach fills with air.



## Triangle breathing

- Start at the bottom left of the triangle.
- Breathe in through your nose for 3 counts as you trace the first side.
- Hold your breath for 3 counts as you trace the second side.
- Breathe out of your mouth for 3 counts as you trace the final side.
- Repeat several times or until you feel your body relaxing.

## Square breathing

- Start at the bottom right of the square.
- Breathe in through your nose for 4 counts as you trace the first side.
- Hold your breath for 4 counts as you trace the second side.
- Breathe out of your mouth for 4 counts as you trace the third side.
- Rest for 4 counts as you trace the final side.
- Repeat several times or until you feel your body relaxing.



# DEEP BREATHING SHEET

One healthy way to cope with stressors or challenges is to practice deep breathing. This relaxation exercise can help not only improve focus, but also lower our heart rate, allowing our muscles to relax, and calming our minds and bodies.





# Guided Imagery



As kids grow older, they face new stressors and challenges. By helping your child develop healthy coping skills (tools to help them manage their feelings and reduce stress), you're helping them become more resilient (better able to handle life's ups and downs).

## Why practice guided imagery?

Our minds are powerful and we can use our imagination to visualize almost anything. This relaxation exercise uses words, images and all five senses to help move attention away from worry and stress to a more relaxed state.



It is difficult to learn something new when we are anxious, angry or distracted.

Teaching and practicing coping skills when everyone is calm gives us a variety of tools we can use to manage our feelings and reduce stress.

## How to practice guided imagery



- Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down and, if you feel comfortable, close your eyes.
- Take a few deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Imagine yourself in a place where you feel safe, happy and comfortable. This might be a favorite place you go, somewhere you have been before or somewhere you've completely made up. It's up to you.
- Once you have picked out a place, imagine yourself there.
- Think about every detail that makes this place special for you.



What do you see?



What do you smell?



What do you hear?



What do you taste?



What can you touch?

- Take a few moments and notice how your body feels to enjoy your time in this place.
- When it is time to leave, know that you can return here any time, wherever you are, whenever you need to feel calm.
- Over the next few seconds, take a deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. Slowly open your eyes, and notice how your body feels. Are your muscles relaxed? Is your mind calm?

# GUIDED IMAGERY SHEET

Need to ease students' worries or address stress? Try practicing guided imagery. This relaxation exercise uses words, images and all 5 senses to help move attention away from worry and stress to a more relaxed state.





# Progressive Muscle Relaxation



As kids grow older, they face new stressors and challenges. By helping your child develop healthy **copng skills** (tools to help them manage their feelings and reduce stress), you're helping them become more **resilient** (better able to handle life's ups and downs).

## Why practice progressive muscle relaxation?

Stress can cause our muscles to be tense and tight. Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is a relaxation exercise that helps us calm our bodies and minds by slowly and progressively tensing and relaxing our muscles, one group at a time.



It is difficult to learn something new when we are anxious, angry or distracted.

Teaching and practicing coping skills when everyone is calm gives us a variety of tools we can use to manage our feelings and reduce stress.

## How to practice progressive muscle relaxation

- 1 Sit or lie down in a comfortable, relaxed position.
- 2 Take a few deep breaths in through your **nose** and out through your **mouth**.
- 3 Begin tightening and releasing one muscle group at a time: **Inhale as you tighten. Hold for 5 seconds. Exhale as you relax.**
  - **Face** (scrunch up your nose and mouth)
  - **Shoulders** (lift your shoulders up as if you're trying to make them touch your ears)
  - **Arms**
  - **Fists** (pretend you're squeezing an orange or lemon)
  - **Stomach** (pull your belly button toward your back)
  - **Legs and thighs.**
  - **Feet and toes** (imagine that your feet are in sand or mud)
- 4 Now, take several deep breaths and notice how loose and relaxed your body has become. If there is any remaining tension in your body, tense and relax those muscles, while breathing in and out.



**You should be** tensing your muscles, but not to the point of straining them. If you are uncomfortable or feel any pain, stop. Remember to go slowly and take deep breaths in and out throughout the exercise.

# PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION SHEET

Stress can cause our muscles to be tense and tight. Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) is a relaxation exercise that helps us calm our bodies and minds by slowly and progressively tensing and relaxing our muscles, one group at a time.





# Grounding Your Body and Mind



As kids grow older, they face new stressors and challenges. By helping your child develop healthy **copng skills** (tools to help them manage their feelings and reduce stress), you're helping them become more **resilient** (better able to handle life's ups and downs).

## Why practice grounding?

Grounding is a relaxation exercise that can be used at any time to focus on the present moment rather than our worries, which helps calm our bodies and minds. Grounding exercises can improve concentration, decrease anxiety, and enhance decision-making and problem-solving skills.



It is difficult to learn something new when we are anxious, angry or distracted.

Teaching and practicing coping skills when everyone is calm gives us a variety of tools we can use to manage our feelings and reduce stress.

## How to practice grounding

- 1 Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down and, if you feel comfortable, close your eyes.
- 2 Take several slow, deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- 3 Use your five senses to notice the following:
  -  **5 things you can see around you.** Maybe it's a book, a painting or a chair.
  -  **4 things you can touch around you.** Maybe it's a dog, your desk or your leg.
  -  **3 things you can hear around you.** Maybe it's a ticking clock, a car alarm or a dog barking.
  -  **2 things you can smell.** Maybe it's the scent of soap or lotion on your hands, air freshener or freshly cut grass.
  -  **1 thing you can taste.** Maybe it's the drink or the snack you just had.
- 4 Notice how your body feels. Are you relaxed? Is your mind calmer?



**Did you know** that many athletes and performers use coping strategies like these before big games and performances to help them relax and focus?

# GROUNDING SHEET

Practicing grounding, can be beneficial in so many ways. Not only can this relaxation exercise help ease stress and worry, but it's also a great way to improve concentration and problem-solving skills. So it could be a great exercise to try in between lessons or when you find students' focus drifting.





# Journaling



As kids grow older, they face new stressors and challenges. By helping your child develop healthy **copng skills** (tools to help them manage their feelings and reduce stress), you're helping them become more **resilient** (better able to handle life's ups and downs).

## Why journal?

Sometimes we aren't ready to talk about our thoughts and feelings out loud, and that's OK. Journaling can help us become more aware of our thoughts, feelings and behaviors, and it can help us explore solutions for solving problems. Use the ideas provided to encourage your child to write or draw in a journal or notebook.








Journaling should be a safe way for your child to privately explore their feelings.

It may be tempting to try to find out what they are writing about, but it's important not to look at their journal unless they share it with you. Instead of looking at your child's journal, have regular conversations with your child about their feelings, especially if you have any concerns about their safety or well-being.

## Journaling ideas

### All ages

-  When you feel sad or angry, what things or what people make you feel better?
-  If you were granted 3 wishes, what would you ask for?
-  List or draw 3 things you are grateful for.
-  Close your eyes and think about your favorite smell. What is it? Where is it coming from? Why do you like it?
-  Think about a sound that makes you happy. What is it? Where are you when you're listening to it? Why do you like it?

### Younger kids

-  List 3 things you are really good at (or 3 things you are proud of).
-  Draw a picture or write about a happy time.
-  Draw a picture of an animal most like you and write about why it represents you.
-  Draw a picture of who or what makes you laugh the hardest.
-  Draw a picture or write about a time you were very kind to someone.
-  Think about a time you and a friend got upset with one another. How did you resolve the conflict?

# JOURNALING SHEET

Sometimes kids aren't ready to talk about our thoughts and feelings out loud, and that's OK. Journaling can help kids become more aware of their thoughts, feelings and behaviors, and it can help them explore solutions for solving problems.







UNWIND

YOUR

MIND



a journaling journey



## JOURNALING PROMPTS

Help kids practice journaling with guided prompts to help them discover what style of journaling they enjoy.





# Feelings



sad



brave



disappointed



excited



frustrated



proud



mad



happy



scared

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## FEELINGS ANIMALS

Before kids can express and cope with feelings in healthy ways, they first need to learn the skills to identify and label their feelings. Understanding how they feel gives kids a sense of control and helps them manage stress.





What Am I  
**FEELING?**



Happy



Mad



Sad



Scared



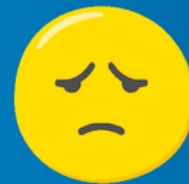
Embarrassed



Proud



Frustrated



Disappointed



Excited



Jealous



Thankful



Worried



Overwhelmed



Confident



Lonely



Brave

**STRONG<sup>4</sup>LIFE**



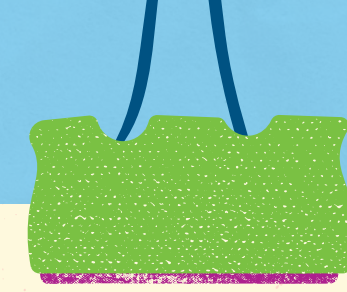
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# FEELINGS EMOJIS

Before kids can express and cope with feelings in healthy ways, they first need to learn the skills to identify and label their feelings. Understanding how they feel gives kids a sense of control and helps them manage stress.







# WHAT AM I FEELING?



happy



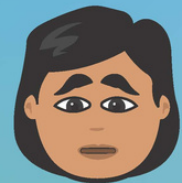
sad



lonely



mad



overwhelmed



hopeful



scared



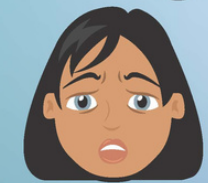
ashamed



grateful



proud



worried



excited



confused



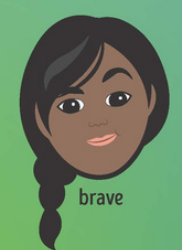
disappointed



embarrassed



frustrated



brave



anxious



jealous



confident

STRONG<sup>4</sup>LIFE



## FEELINGS BITMOJIS

Before kids can express and cope with feelings in healthy ways, they first need to learn the skills to identify and label their feelings. Understanding how they feel gives kids a sense of control and helps them manage stress.





# WHAT AM I FEELING?

CONFIDENT

Disappointed

WORRIED

EXCITED

JEALOUS

calm

OVERWHELMED

MAD

HOPEFUL

GRATEFUL

ANXIOUS

BRAVE

PRIDE

SAD

Confused

EMBARRASSED

SCARED

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FRUSTRATED

## FEELINGS WORDS

Before kids can express and cope with feelings in healthy ways, they first need to learn the skills to identify and label their feelings. Understanding how they feel gives kids a sense of control and helps them manage stress.





# Coping Skills



listen to music



ask for help



play



draw, color  
or paint



close eyes and  
count to 5



dance



take deep breaths



read a book



do jumping jacks

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## COPING SKILLS ANIMALS

Coping skills are strategies we use to manage feelings and handle stress. Coping is not something we are born knowing how to do; it's something we learn with practice. It's never too early or too late to start developing healthy coping skills.





# Coping Skills



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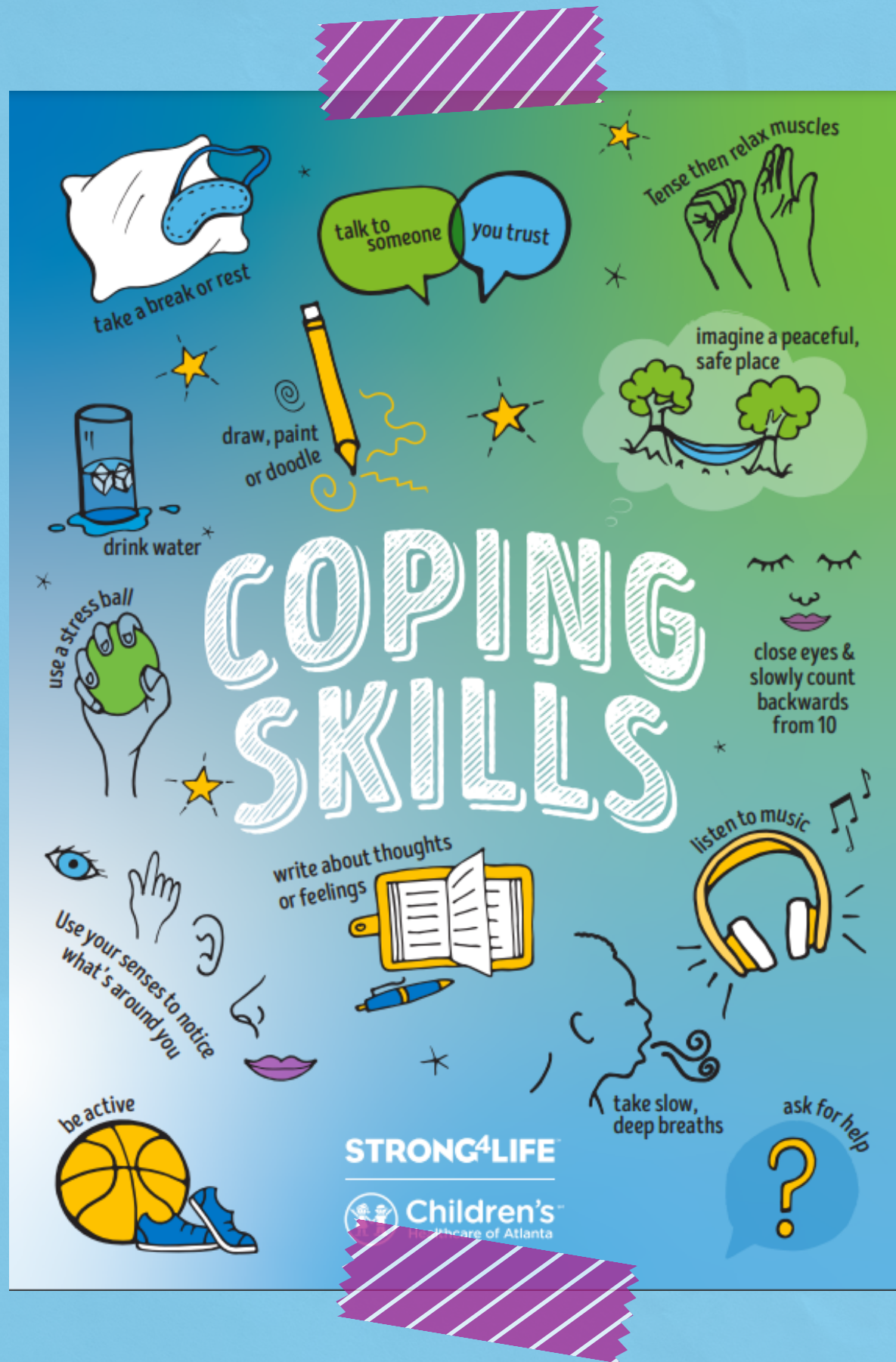
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## COPING SKILLS EMOJIS

Coping skills are strategies we use to manage feelings and handle stress. Coping is not something we are born knowing how to do; it's something we learn with practice. It's never too early or too late to start developing healthy coping skills.







# COPING SKILLS ILLUSTRATIONS

Coping skills are strategies we use to manage feelings and handle stress. Coping is not something we are born knowing how to do; it's something we learn with practice. It's never too early or too late to start developing healthy coping skills.







## LET'S STRETCH! ¡VAMOS A ESTIRARNOS!



Mountain  
Montaña



Tree  
Árbol



Airplane  
Avión



Chair  
Silla



Forward Fold  
Pinza de pie



Downward Dog  
Perro hacia abajo



Plank  
Tabla



Cobra  
Cobra



Butterfly  
Mariposa

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## LET'S STRETCH

Coping skills are strategies we use to manage feelings and handle stress. Coping is not something we are born knowing how to do; it's something we learn with practice. It's never too early or too late to start developing healthy coping skills.





# WHAT AM I FEELING?



happy



sad



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worried



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disappointed



embarrassed



frustrated



brave



anxious



jealous



confident

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# COLORING SHEETS

Incorporate feelings identification and coping skills into a coloring activity with these [coloring sheet](#) versions of our Strong4Life feelings and coping skills handouts.





# INTERNET SAFETY PRINTABLE

Technology provides children with new ways to learn every day, but sometimes that comes at a cost. The internet can expose children to some scary stuff, including bullying, inappropriate content and online predators. That's why it's important to teach kids how to stay safe online.

**WAYS TO STAY SAFE ONLINE**

- Stop communicating if you feel UNCOMFORTABLE**  
It's difficult to know when someone is being honest or lying online. If anyone ever asks you questions that make you feel uncomfortable, stop responding and tell a trusted adult.
- Don't post or send naked PHOTOS of yourself**  
You do not know what will happen to the photos in the future. They could be wrongfully shared out of anger or as revenge.
- Keep personal details PRIVATE**  
Do not share your full name, address, phone number, age, school or grade.
- Be careful with HASHTAGS**  
#classof2021 or #MHSGirlsSoccer could identify your age, location or activities.
- Keep chat and game rooms PUBLIC**  
Don't use private messages unless you are certain you are talking to someone you know in real life.
- Turn OFF location services**  
Do not include your location when you share photos, posts or updates.
- Keep your passwords SAFE**  
Do not share your passwords with anyone other than your parents.

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# TIPS FOR PARENTS





## Getting Your Child Ready for Pre-K or Kindergarten

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For many kids, going to school is a big transition: being in a structured environment, learning new skills and meeting new faces. While you can't prepare your child for everything, here are some things you can do to help set them up for success.

### Managing feelings

**Talk openly about feelings.** Encourage your child to name and express how they are feeling regularly, so that it becomes normal and familiar. You can use characters in books or charts with feeling faces to help your child start to identify and express feelings.

**Actively listen and validate their feelings.** If your child feels they have your full attention, they are more likely to open up to you. Put away any distractions and let them know it's OK and normal to feel anything they feel (even if you feel differently).

**Focus on the positive.** Help your child feel a little excitement about starting school by creating a new back-to-school tradition or going to pick out supplies together.

**Help your child manage their feelings, not avoid them.** Coping skills help us manage our feelings and handle stress. Whether it's taking deep breaths, drawing, listening to music, or talking to someone, help your child practice lots of ways they can manage their feelings.



It's difficult to learn new things when we are anxious, tired, distracted or upset. Be sure to teach and practice new coping skills when everyone is calm.

### Advocating for your child

- ✓ Check in with your child's teacher regularly, and be open and honest about your child's strengths and needs.
- ✓ Let the staff know if your child is facing challenges outside of school and that your child may need extra support throughout the day.

### Preparing for school

Help your child feel more independent, confident and prepared by:

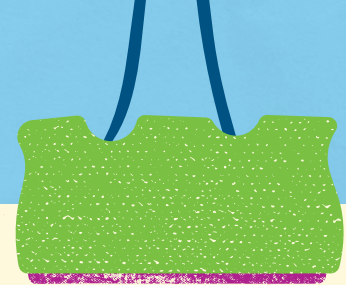
- Attending the "meet the teacher night" or visiting the school before the first day.
- Driving the bus route or drop-off route with your child before the first day and talking about what they can expect.
- Encouraging your child to practice with any items or materials they will be using on their own (e.g., lunch containers, backpacks, jacket zippers, etc.).
- Meeting up with other kids that will be attending your child's school, so they know someone on the first day. These meet-ups can also help improve communication and social skills, such as sharing and taking turns.
- Creating, or maintaining, daily bedtime and morning routines to help keep things predictable and to create a sense of comfort and security.

# GOING BACK TO SCHOOL (PRE-K/KINDERGARTEN)

Want to help your students' parents set their children up for a successful school year? Share [this tip sheet](#) with them. It covers a variety of ways they can help their child adjust to new routines and practice healthy habits.







# Going Back to School Elementary



## Supporting your child

Returning to school is a big transition, and every child responds differently. Here are some ways to help support your child:

Strategy	Try saying	Instead of
<b>Validate feelings.</b> Let your child know that you understand what they said—by repeating back what you heard, without judgment—and that it's normal to feel that way.	"It's normal to feel nervous about going back to school."	"It will be fine! There's nothing to be nervous about."
<b>Model healthy coping skills.</b> Model positive ways you handle stress, and involve your child in practicing healthy coping skills.	"I'm feeling overwhelmed by everything that is going on. I'm going on a walk to unwind. Want to join me?"	"Everything's fine! We'll get through it."
<b>Keep your cool.</b> Be careful not to pass along any anxiety you may have.	"Take it one day at a time. I know you will do your best."	"I think this is going to be a really challenging year."

## Talking to your child about their day

Whether your child is tired after a long day, or doesn't know what to share, it's common for kids to give one-word answers. Encourage them to say more by asking specific, open-ended questions.

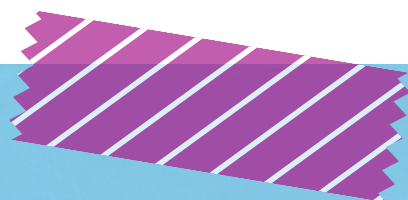
“What was the funniest thing that happened today?”

“What was your favorite part of the day?”

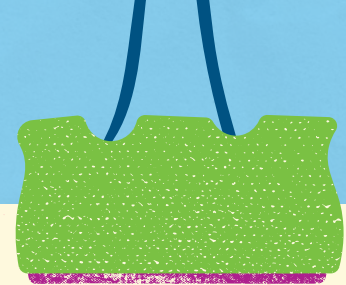
“What was the hardest thing you had to do today?”

# GOING BACK TO (ELEMENTARY) SCHOOL

Want to help your students' parents set their children up for a successful school year? Share [this tip sheet](#) with them. It covers a variety of ways they can help their child adjust to new routines and practice healthy habits.







# Going Back to School

## Middle School



Starting a new school year can already be difficult, and the pandemic is creating a new set of unique challenges. Along with adjusting to new teachers and new classmates, students will be welcomed by new rules, new expectations and a lot of unknowns. It is completely normal for some kids to be excited about all the newness, while others may feel overwhelmed at times. Here are some ways to support your child and get the year off to a great start.

### Supporting your child

Returning to school is a big transition, and what might seem like a small problem to you may be overwhelming for your child. Here are some ways to help support your child:

Strategy	Try saying	Instead of
<b>Listen.</b> Make time each day (even 5 minutes) to check in, ask open-ended questions and listen to your child without interrupting.	"How are you feeling about being back at school?"	"I'm sure you're happy being back at school."
<b>Validate feelings.</b> Let your child know that you understand what they said—by repeating back what you heard, without judgment—and that it's normal to feel that way.	"It sounds like you feel overwhelmed about going back to school with so many changes and unknowns. It is completely normal to feel that way."	"It's no big deal. You'll be fine!"
<b>Model healthy coping skills.</b> Model positive ways you handle stress, and involve your child in practicing healthy coping skills.	"I'm feeling anxious about all the changes I'm experiencing at work. I'd love to go play basketball to let go of some stress. Want to join me?"	"It's hard but there's nothing we can do to change it. We'll get through it."

### Promoting academic success

Creating strong study and organizational habits can boost your child's confidence.

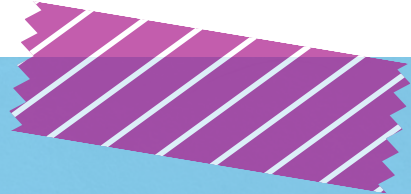
- ✓ Have your child keep an agenda or calendar of their tasks to stay organized and to be aware of upcoming deadlines and tests.
- ✓ Help your child find a quiet space to study, and remove distractions (such as the TV, phone, etc.).

**Preteens** ages 11 to 12 typically need 9 to 12 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period.

**Teens** 13 and up typically need 8 to 10 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period.

# GOING BACK TO (MIDDLE) SCHOOL

Want to help your students' parents set their children up for a successful school year? Share [this tip sheet](#) with them. It covers a variety of ways they can help their child adjust to new routines and practice healthy habits.





# Going Back to School

## High School



### Communicating with your teen


Whether your teen is just starting as a freshman, entering their final year or somewhere in between, high school can be stressful. Here are some tips for staying connected and communicating with your teen.

Strategy	Try saying	Instead of
<b>Ask open-ended questions, and listen to your teen without interrupting.</b>	"How are you feeling about the start of the school year?"	"I bet you're feeling nervous going into this year."
<b>Validate their feelings.</b> Let your teen know that you understand what they said—by repeating back what you heard, without judgment—and that it's normal to feel that way.	"It sounds like you're feeling worried. It's completely normal to feel that way."	"There's nothing to worry about. You'll be fine!"
<b>Normalize and model healthy coping skills.</b> Help your teen understand that we all need to practice healthy coping skills by modeling positive ways you handle stress and encouraging them to practice as well.	"I'm feeling overwhelmed about work. I'd love to play basketball to let go of some stress. Want to play?"	"Life is stressful and busy, but there's nothing we can do about that."

### Promoting academic success

Creating strong study and organizational habits can boost your teen's confidence.

- ✓ Encourage your teen to keep an agenda or calendar of their tasks to stay organized and to be aware of upcoming deadlines and tests.
- ✓ Help your teen find a quiet space to study, and remove distractions (such as the TV, phone, etc.).
- ✓ Encourage your teen to take regular breaks when studying. Sitting for too long can make them feel tired and impact their focus.

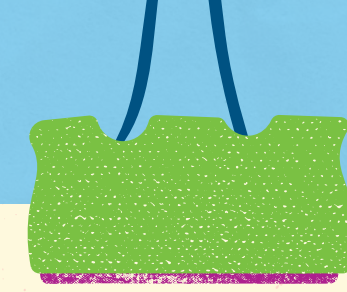
 **Teens 13 and up typically need 8 to 10 hours of sleep in a 24-hour period.**

# GOING BACK TO (HIGH) SCHOOL

Want to help your students' parents set their children up for a successful school year? Share [this tip sheet](#) with them. It covers a variety of ways they can help their child adjust to new routines and practice healthy habits.







# Managing Academic Anxiety

Elementary school

STRONG<sup>4</sup>LIFE



In any given school year, children may experience feelings of anxiety from daily activities, such as homework, testing or being called on in class. While some anxiety can be helpful and motivating, it can become an issue when it interferes with everyday functioning.



**Anxiety** is a normal feeling of nervousness, worry or uneasiness that everyone experiences throughout their lives.

**Academic anxiety** is a specific type of worry associated with school-related responsibilities and pressures.

## Signs of academic anxiety

While anxiety can look different in every child, here are some general signs to watch out for:

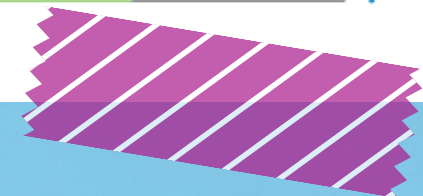
- Complaining of frequent headaches, stomachaches or other physical pain with no known medical cause.
- Avoiding school or certain classes (e.g., refusing to get dressed or trying to miss the bus).
- Worrying about school and no longer making time for activities they used to enjoy, including social interactions.
- Showing changes in sleep or eating habits.
- Showing changes in mood, such as appearing to be "on edge," irritable or tearful.
- Acting out in class (e.g., being the class clown, getting in fights or talking back).
- Having an "I don't care" attitude about anything related to school.
- Sweating, shaking or fast breathing when thinking or talking about school.

## Talking about academic anxiety

Communication Tip	Instead of saying ...	Try saying ...
<b>Ask open-ended questions</b> and allow your child to share their honest feelings.	"Are you worried you won't do well on that assignment?"	"How are you feeling about that test?"
<b>Acknowledge their feelings</b> so your child feels understood.	"Don't worry about it—you'll be fine!"	"I can tell this is important to you and that you're feeling overwhelmed."
<b>Help your child learn to manage their feelings</b> , not avoid them.	"I know you're nervous to read out loud in front of your class. I'll email your teacher to ask if they can skip you"	"It's normal to feel nervous. Let's take a few deep breaths together, and then you can practice with me to help you feel more prepared."

# MANAGING ACADEMIC ANXIETY (ELEMENTARY)

In any given school year, children may experience feelings of anxiety from daily activities, such as homework, testing or being called on in class. While some anxiety can be helpful and motivating, it can become an issue when it interferes with everyday functioning.





# Managing Academic Anxiety

## Middle school

STRONG<sup>4</sup>LIFE



In any given school year, children may experience feelings of anxiety from academic pressure, testing or being called on in class. While some anxiety can be helpful and motivating, anxiety can become problematic when it interferes with everyday functioning.



**Anxiety** is a normal feeling of nervousness, worry or uneasiness that everyone experiences throughout their lives.

**Academic anxiety** is a specific type of worry associated with school-related responsibilities and pressures.

### Talking about academic anxiety

Communication Tip	Instead of saying ...	Try saying ...
Ask open-ended questions and allow them to share their honest feelings.	"Have you studied enough? Are you worried you're going to fail?"	"How are you feeling about that class?"
Keep your cool. Try not to pass along any of your own anxiety.	"Tests always made me feel uneasy. I hope you don't get overwhelmed and forget everything you've studied."	"I know you have been studying so hard and will do your best."
Help them learn to manage their feelings, not avoid them.	"I get it. You're nervous to present in front of your class. Let's ask your teacher if you can do something else."	"It's normal to feel nervous. How about you practice presenting it in front of me so that you feel more prepared tomorrow?"

### Signs of academic anxiety

While anxiety can look different in every child, here are some general signs to watch out for:

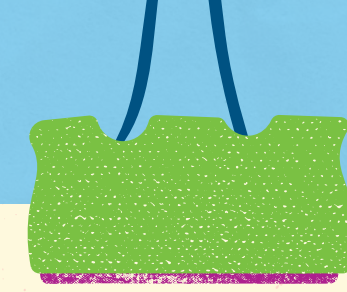
- Complaining of frequent headaches, stomachaches or other physical pain with no known medical cause.
- Avoiding school or certain classes (e.g., refusing to get dressed or trying to miss the bus).
- Worrying about school and no longer making time for activities they used to enjoy, including social interactions.
- Showing changes in sleep or eating habits.
- Showing changes in mood, such as appearing to be "on edge," irritable or tearful.
- Acting out in class (e.g., being the class clown, getting in fights or talking back).
- Having an "I don't care" attitude about anything related to school.
- Sweating, shaking or fast breathing when thinking or talking about school.

# MANAGING ACADEMIC ANXIETY (MIDDLE)

In any given school year, children and teens may experience feelings of anxiety from daily activities, such as homework, testing or being called on in class. While some anxiety can be helpful and motivating, it can become an issue when it interferes with everyday functioning.







# Managing Academic Anxiety

## High school

STRONG<sup>4</sup>LIFE



High school can be a particularly stressful and anxiety-filled time as kids get closer to transitioning into adulthood. Earning enough credits, taking more challenging classes and worrying about the future can all contribute to feelings of anxiety. While some anxiety can be helpful and motivating, anxiety can become an issue when it interferes with everyday functioning.



**Anxiety** is a normal feeling of nervousness, worry or uneasiness that everyone experiences throughout their lives.

**Academic anxiety** is a specific type of worry associated with school-related responsibilities and pressures.

### Signs of academic anxiety

While anxiety can look different in every teen, here are some general signs to watch out for:

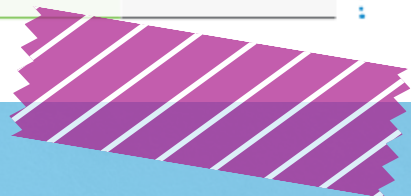
- Complaining of frequent headaches, stomachaches or other physical pain with no known medical cause.
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- Worrying about school and no longer making time for activities they used to enjoy, including social interactions.
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- Acting out in class (e.g., being the class clown, getting in fights or talking back).
- Having an "I don't care" attitude about anything related to school.
- Sweating, shaking or fast breathing when thinking or talking about school.

### Talking about academic anxiety

Communication Tip	Instead of saying ...	Try saying ...
<b>Ask open-ended questions</b> and allow your teen to share their honest feelings.	"Are you working hard enough? Are you worried you're not going to pass?"	"How are you feeling about that class?"
<b>Keep your cool.</b> Try not to pass along any of your own anxiety.	"When I was in high school, I was always stressed about getting all A's."	"I know how much you've been studying."
<b>Focus on the effort,</b> not the score or outcome.	"I'm so proud of your high GPA."	"I'm really proud of how hard you have worked this year."

# MANAGING ACADEMIC ANXIETY (HIGH)

In any given school year, teens may experience feelings of anxiety from daily activities, such as homework, testing or being called on in class. While some anxiety can be helpful and motivating, it can become an issue when it interferes with everyday functioning.







YOUR WELL-BEING





STRONG<sup>4</sup>LIFE



# PREPARING for the WORKDAY

- ✓ **Rest well**  
Try to get a full night's rest before starting a new day. Getting ample sleep will help you feel energized and stay focused.
- ✓ **Quiet your commute**  
Use your commute as a time to refocus and find your center. Listen to calming music, practice deep breathing or listen to an episode of a Podcast.
- ✓ **Take inventory**  
Once you arrive, take note of how you're feeling physically and emotionally. If you're holding any tension in your muscles, take a moment to clench your fists tightly, squeeze for five seconds and relax. Try this exercise with any areas of tension.
- ✓ **Fuel up**  
Nutrition can affect your mood, attitude and energy level, so start your day with a balanced breakfast.
- ✓ **Let go of home**  
Establish a daily ritual that signals the start of the workday. Take a deep breath and let go of the things you can't address while at work.
- ✓ **Set an intention**  
Before leaving your car, take three deep breaths (four counts in and four counts out), visualize the day ahead and set an intention, like "I will overcome the challenges I face today with grace." Setting an intention can help you focus and stay grounded in times of stress.

Review this checklist before each workday. Take the time needed to make a smooth transition from home to work.

## PREP FOR THE WORKDAY

How are you helping yourself prepare for the workday? From getting enough rest to eating a nutritious breakfast and setting a daily intention. Remember: You deserve self-care, and you you can model these healthy habits for your students.





STRONG<sup>4</sup>LIFE



# MINDFULNESS

during the **WORKDAY**

- ✓ **Check in**  
Check in with yourself every few hours. Notice how you feel and how you respond to stressors. If you notice any warning signs that you're starting to enter into distress, pause and take a quick break.
- ✓ **Stay grounded**  
Every time you wash your hands, recite a short mantra or phrase to yourself to help you reset and refocus. For example, remind yourself that by doing this one simple thing, you're doing your part to keep yourself and others safe.
- ✓ **Breathe**  
If you start to feel stressed, take three deep breaths (four counts in and four counts out) and remind yourself of the intention you set at the beginning of the day.
- ✓ **Connect**  
If you need support, connect with a colleague. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.
- ✓ **Change your scenery**  
Go for a short walk, climb a flight of stairs or step outside to clear your mind.
- ✓ **Be present**  
If your mind starts to wander, take a moment to notice one thing in the room. It could be the warm smile of a colleague or the sunlight filtering in through the windows.

Review this checklist throughout the workday. Remember to give yourself moments to practice mindfulness.

# MINDFULNESS DURING THE WORKDAY

Let's face it, no job is easy. Especially when you're doing the important work of helping kids learn, play and grow. Make sure you're taking moments throughout the day to practice mindfulness. It could make all the difference for you and your students.





## Quick Tips to Feel Physically Energized



### Stretch

Stretching is the best way to restore blood flow to your muscles after you have been still for a long period. Try practicing Ragdoll and shoulder/neck exercises—two useful ways to stretch that you can practice anywhere. Choose your stretch and close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, relax into the posture and hold for 60 seconds.

#### Ragdoll



This yoga pose helps increase blood flow to the brain, which is a great way to clear your mind. Stand up straight, close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, then bend forward at the waist and hold for 60 seconds. Let your head hang heavy, arms fall toward the ground and hips reach to the ceiling.



#### Shoulder and neck stretches

1. Stand or sit with your arms at your sides. Bring your shoulders up toward your ears. Hold for four seconds and release. Repeat three times.

2. Let your chin fall to your chest. Slowly roll your head down and around making a complete circle. Repeat in the opposite direction moving slowly. Repeat in each direction.



3. Reach your right arm upward as if you were trying to touch the ceiling. Reach for eight to 10 seconds. Reach with your left arm. Alternate reaching with your right and left arm three times.

### Eat something

Maintaining your blood sugar levels can help you control your focus, temper and energy. Plan ahead to take breaks for power snacks, which include a protein, fat and carbohydrate. Try these power-snack combinations:

- ✓ Handful of nuts and a banana
- ✓ Apple slices and nut butter
- ✓ String cheese and crackers
- ✓ Hummus and carrots

### Drink something

Hydration is important under usual circumstances, but even more so when you're stressed. In the morning, grab a cup or water bottle and refill it throughout the day. You need at least 64 ounces of water every day; however, exercise, stress and humidity will increase your daily need.

# QUICK TIPS TO FEEL PHYSICALLY ENERGIZED

Whether you need a morning jumpstart or you're trying to get over the mid-day slump, try some of these [quick tips to feel physically energized](#). Pro tip: Hang this up near your desk for quick reference.





Practice the mindfulness activities below, and cross them off as you go.

Close your eyes and mentally scan your body to discover where you might be holding tension.	Practice mindfulness as you make your bed.	<b>Clench your fists</b> tightly like you're squeezing an orange. Squeeze for <b>five seconds</b> and then relax. Do this with any part of your body that holds tension.	Listen to relaxing music.	Try a guided meditation from an app like Calm or Headspace.
Notice your emotions. Are you angry, frustrated, calm, happy, sad or stressed?	Observe details in the environment as you walk around your neighborhood. Try to notice one new thing you haven't noticed before.	Take a walk and feel the sensation of <b>your feet firmly</b> planted on the ground.	Before you start thinking about all you have to do, take a moment to acknowledge the beauty of a brand-new day. With gratitude, acknowledge your ability to see, touch and hear.	Visualize the day ahead and then set an intention for how you'd like the day to go.
As you eat your food, experience the <b>flavors and textures</b> of your meal.	Breathe in the fresh air and take some time to think about what you're grateful for in the moment.	 <b>FREE</b>	Take a moment to notice one thing in your room.	Connect with nature by noticing <b>how many different colors</b> you can name.
Notice your thoughts. Are you worrying about the future or thinking about the past? Center your thoughts.	<b>Name five things</b> you can see, four things you can hear, three things you can smell and two things you can feel.	Spend a few moments <b>reflecting on your day</b> . What did you accomplish? What are you grateful for? Write it down in a journal, share it with your partner or just close your <b>eyes and reflect</b> .	Practice mindfulness as you brush your teeth.	Notice your body, its position and if there are any points of tension. Stretch, bring life into your joints and relax your muscles.
Enjoy the feeling of washing your hair, the soap on your skin and soaking in the warmth of the water.	Notice your location. Where are you?	Practice intuitive eating. Before you start your meal, rate your hunger on a scale of one to 10.	Take a moment to practice mindfulness as your computer turns on.	Enjoy a soothing candle or calming incense.

# MINDFUL MINUTES BINGO

Want to challenge yourself to practice mindfulness throughout the day? Download our [mindful minutes BINGO card](#) and playing guide. You can even modify parts of the challenge to play in the classroom.





STRONG<sup>4</sup>LIFE



# LETTING GO of the **WORKDAY**

- ✓ Take a moment to contemplate today.
- ✓ Check on your colleagues before you leave. Are they OK?
- ✓ Think about one difficult thing that happened today. Let it go.
- ✓ Choose a signal that marks the end of your workday. Commit to stopping here.
- ✓ Identify three things that went well. Hold on to them.
- ✓ Switch your attention to going home, resting and recharging.

Review this checklist at the end of each workday. Take the time needed to make a smooth transition from work to home.

# LET GO OF THE WORKDAY

Helping kids learn may be a never-ending story, but if you're going to prioritize your own mental and physical well-being, you have to let go of the workday. After the last bell rings and planning is done, it's time to turn work off and focus on you.





# VIDEOS

videos to help Kids practice healthy habits







## HEALTHY HABITS

Watch [this playlist](#) to help students learn about healthy habits from the Strong4Life Challenge Team.



Eat smarter,  
drink water

Screens away,  
go play

Get rest to  
be your best

Emotions are  
real, express  
how you feel





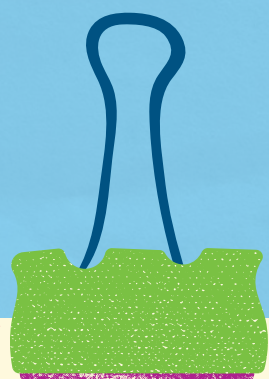


# COPING SKILLS

Watch [this playlist](#) to practice coping skills with the Strong4Life Challenge Team and more.

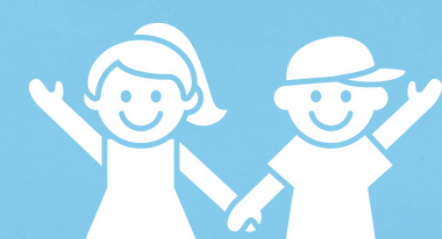
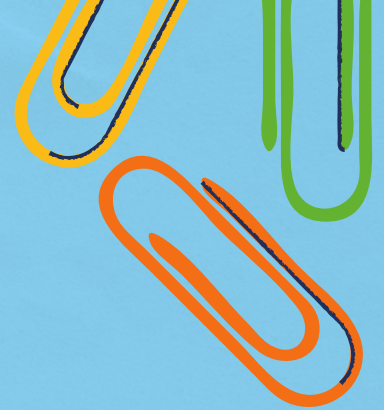






## BRAIN BREAKS

Take quick brain breaks throughout the day with the Strong4Life Challenge Team with [this playlist](#).





# ARTICLES

find relevant content on [Strong4Life.com](https://Strong4Life.com)







IN THE CLASSROOM







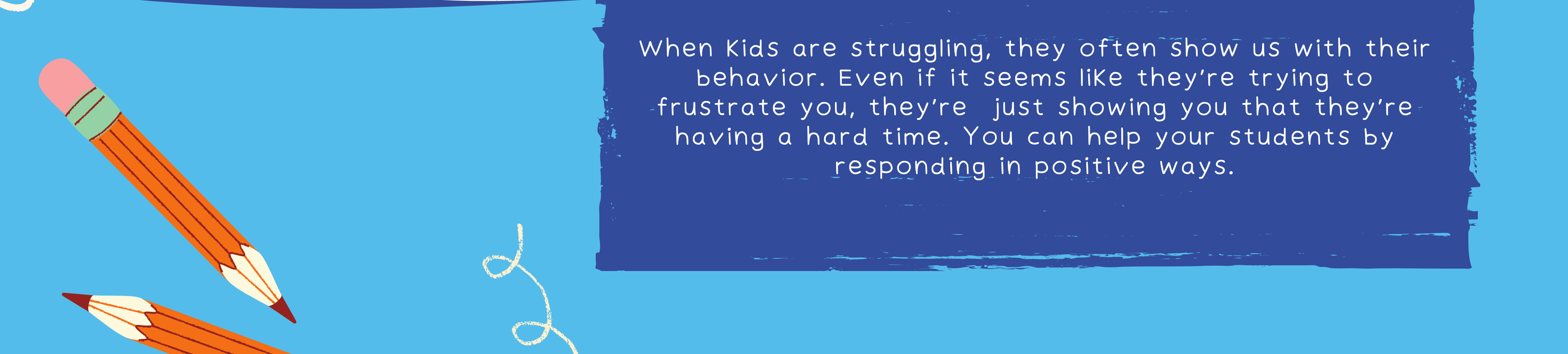
**10 TIPS FOR**  
**ENCOURAGING POSITIVE**  
**STUDENT BEHAVIOR**

To encourage positive behavior in the youth you are working with, try these tips from our mental and behavioral health experts.





## RESPONDING TO CHALLENGING STUDENT BEHAVIOR



When Kids are struggling, they often show us with their behavior. Even if it seems like they're trying to frustrate you, they're just showing you that they're having a hard time. You can help your students by responding in positive ways.





## TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS

There are so many things out of our control on any given day, but one thing you can control is communication with your students. It's natural to want to shield kids from fear, but kids are affected by what is happening around them whether we acknowledge it or not, and not acknowledging it can cause more harm than good.





YOUR WELL-BEING







## EDUCATOR SELF-CARE TIPS

The challenges facing educators are enormous right now, making it more difficult to prioritize your own needs. That's why it's critical that you are intentional and carve out "me" time each day, if only for a few minutes. It's important for both your emotional and physical wellness.





## QUICK TIPS FOR EATING SMARTER AND HYDRATING

Fueling your body with smart foods and drinks will help keep your brain focused, body energized and immune system strong. Follow these quick tips to make smart choices simple.





# TIPS FOR PARENTS







## 10 WAYS TO ENCOURAGE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

There is no textbook to follow or one right way to parent. However, there are things you can do to improve your family dynamic, make your day-to-day a little smoother and make parenting more enjoyable.





## HOW STRESS CAN LEAD TO CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR

It's normal for stress to lead to changes in behavior, and our kids and teens need our help to get through it.





## POSITIVE PARENTING FOR CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR

Taking a positive approach to discipline (positive parenting) is about teaching your kids rather than simply punishing them. It does not mean you are completely hands-off or that you allow them to do whatever they want. The difference is that when you react to challenging behavior, you keep your focus on providing clear expectations and guidance.

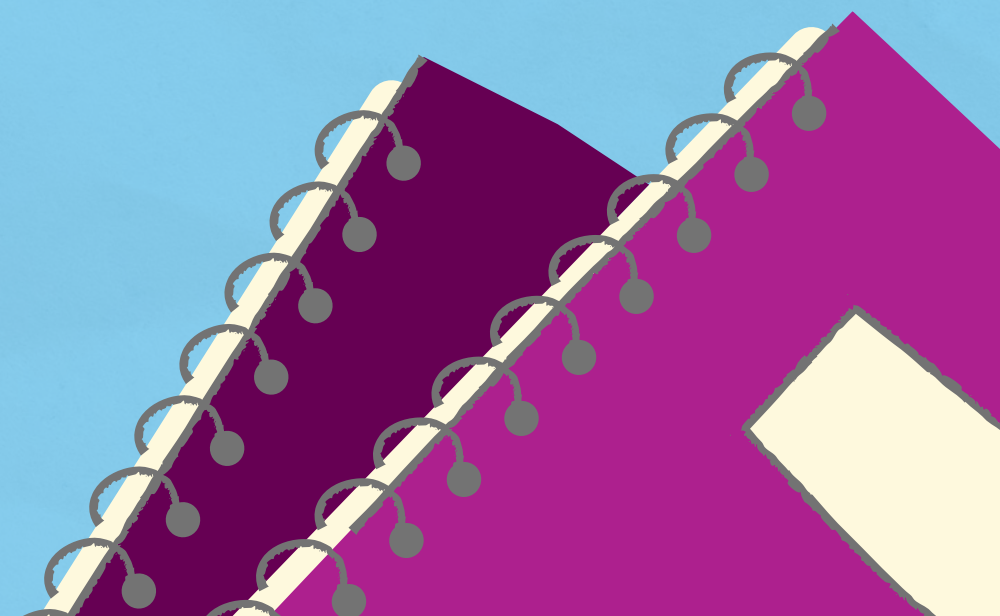
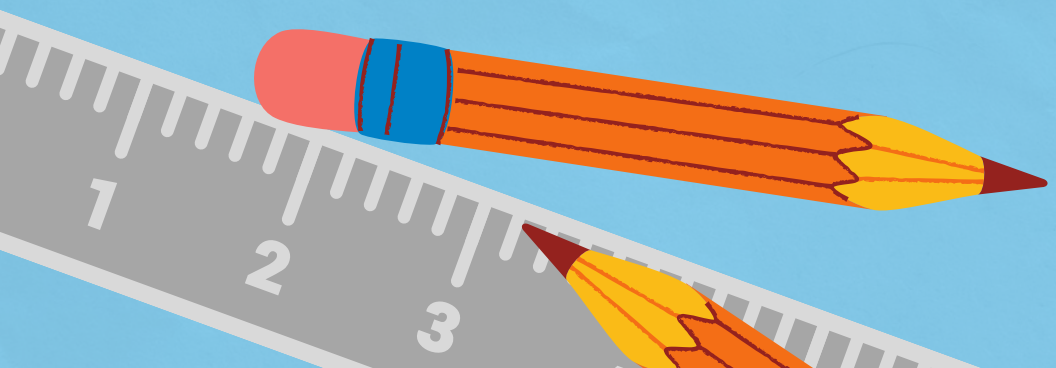
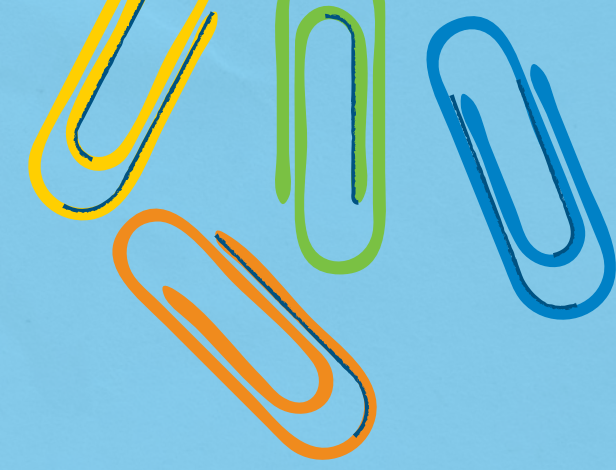
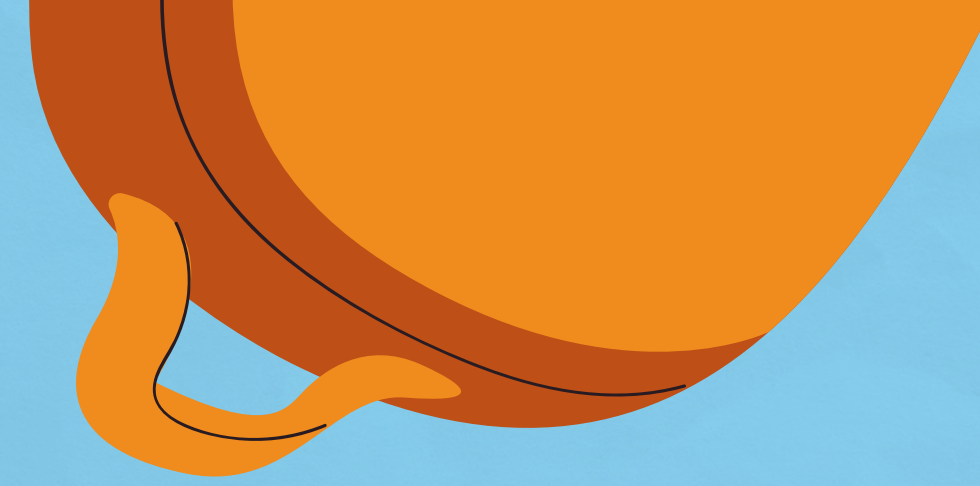




**TAKING CARE OF  
YOURSELF (THE PARENT  
OR CAREGIVER**

Regardless of your unique situation, it's critical that you are intentional and carve out "me" time each day, if only for a few minutes. It's important for both your mental and physical wellness.





**STRONG<sup>4</sup>LIFE<sup>SM</sup>**



**Children's<sup>SM</sup>**  
Healthcare of Atlanta