



# A Back-to-School Mental Health Checklist to Support Your Teen

Families can get the year off on the right foot by providing teens with a set of back-to-school mental health tools and support systems.



## Make time for regular check-ins.

Open communication is vital for teen mental health.

- Try starting a conversation when you're doing an activity together—driving, walking, or doing errands, for example.
- When you're saying goodnight to your teen, ask a question about how they're doing.
- Have meals together at least a few times a week, and have each family member share something about their day.
- Let your teen choose an activity for the weekend (breakfast out, a shopping trip) and look for opportunities to ask open-ended questions about how they're doing.



## Make sure they get down time that's not screen focused.

- Teens need time to rest and recharge. However, it's important that downtime doesn't become screen time. Hiking, creative expression, yoga, meditating, or making music can help regulate an adolescent's nervous system and build self-confidence. And if the whole family can do these activities together, you'll get the added bonus of strengthening parent-child bonds—plus more opportunities for communication.



## Give them ways to prevent or cope with bullying.

Here are some strategies teens can use:

- Have a few neutral phrases to use when facing a bully, such as "Not funny" or "Cut it out."
- Walk away—don't react or engage with the bully.
- Keep a straight face without showing anger or fear.
- Make sure to have supportive friends with them in situations where they may encounter bullying.
- Let teachers or other adults know what's going on. This may be hard for teens, but parents can let them know that doing so is not "tattling," it's a way to protect themselves and other potential victims.



## **Set them up with approaches for staying organized.**

There are many tools available, ranging from a simple checklist or spreadsheet to more sophisticated time-management tools. Along with organizing their tasks, teens may also need support organizing their personal space and keeping it tidy. Here are some ways to help teens clean up their rooms:

- Make cleaning a family project: The whole family can help each other clean, one room at a time.
- Have your teen make a playlist to listen to while cleaning up.
- Encourage teens to set aside 10 minutes daily to clear out one area of their room.
- Incentivize teens by letting them choose a few new items for their room once it's cleaned up.



## **Help them build a self-care schedule.**

To maintain good mental health, teens should focus on these four essential aspects of self-care:

- Getting enough sleep (around 8 hours for most teens)
- Good nutrition
- Regular exercise
- Personal hygiene

Parents can help by setting up a balanced schedule for the whole family. For example, unplugging from devices before bed, eating meals together, and doing physical activities as a family.



## **Connect with support systems for both parents and teens.**

- Check with administration at your teen's school to see if they offer clubs or get-togethers focused on teen mental health.
- Find out what services the school guidance counselor provides.
- Find out if the school has a staff member who focuses on providing support for teens who are having a hard time socially, emotionally, or academically.
- Check out local support groups; teens and parents can each attend their own support groups. LGBTQ teens may find a great support network through their local PFLAG chapter or other community group. For teens or parents in recovery, 12-step groups might be a good fit.



## **Access professional mental health support if needed.**

If your teen is experiencing symptoms of anxiety, depression, trauma/PTSD, grief, or other emotional or behavioral challenges, parents need to take action to seek additional support.

Depending on the severity of their symptoms, teens may benefit most from weekly therapy, an outpatient treatment program, or residential care. An assessment with a mental health professional is the first step. A clinician can determine a possible diagnosis and help families find the appropriate level of care.

**Newport Academy provides teen mental health assessments at no charge, in person or online.**

**Contact us to get started:**  
[newportacademy.com](http://newportacademy.com)  
**866-680-5018**



# **NEWPORT ACADEMY**

## **About Newport Academy**

Newport Academy, the nation's leading teen treatment program, offers gender-responsive, individualized residential and outpatient treatment that encompasses clinical therapy, experiential modalities, and academic support. We take a family-focused approach; parents receive ongoing communication and support throughout the treatment process.