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# Fostering School Connectedness to Create a Healthy and Supportive School Environment

There is an increase of stress and anxiety among children. Here at Spring Branch ISD, we are committed to implementing policies and practices that can improve students' mental health, emotional well-being, and overall academic achievement. Students who have parents involved in their school lives are also more likely to avoid unhealthy behaviors and are less likely to be emotionally distressed. A healthy and supportive school environment helps children and adolescents develop the skills they need to recognize and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, appreciate the perspectives of others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

School connectedness reflects students' belief that peers and adults in the school support, value, and care about their individual well-being as well as their academic progress. Students who feel more connected to school are less likely to engage in risky behaviors (alcohol or drug use), more likely to engage in positive health behaviors (physical activity and healthy eating), more likely to have higher grades and test scores, have better school attendance, and graduate high school.

To support school connectedness and create a healthy and supportive school environment, we:

- Provide professional development on classroom management. Reinforcing positive behavior through praise and establishing rules, routines, and expectations are classroom management techniques that promote higher levels of school connectedness.
- Support student led-clubs at school. These clubs create a safe space for students to socialize, support each other, and connect with supportive school staff.
- Facilitate positive youth development activities. Implementing mentoring programs, providing opportunities to volunteer in the community; or connecting students to community-based programs can provide youth with a network of supportive adults.
- Provide parents and families with resources that support positive parenting practices such as open, honest communication and parental supervision.

Parents and families have a powerful role in supporting children's learning, mental health, and emotional well-being at home and at school. When parents are engaged in their children's school activities and initiatives, children get better grades, choose healthier behaviors, and have better social skills. Students who have parents involved in their school lives also are more likely to avoid unhealthy behaviors and they are less likely to be emotionally distressed.

There are three simple ways you can help support your child's mental health and emotional well-being in school and at home:

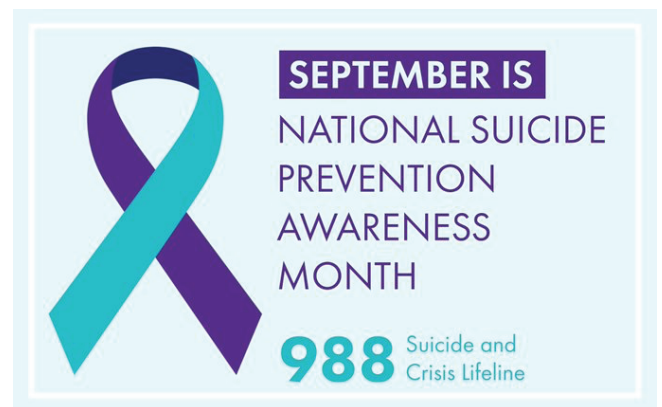
- Get involved in the health decisions at school by becoming a part of the PTA, PTO, school health council, or school health action team.
- Communicate with us! We'd love to know how we can help support your child individually.
- Try simple strategies at home like asking about your child's feelings, focusing on their strengths, and modeling positive coping skills to manage stress, like going for a walk.

# Helping Young Children and Parents Transition Back to School

Transitioning back to school or starting them for the first time can create extra challenges in times of stress. Learn what parents and teachers can do to help children make a successful transition.

## Transitions can be hard for children and families

A new school year often means lots of changes, new routines, and meeting new people. Young children are often wary of strangers and want to stay close to their parents and other familiar and trusted caregivers. Until they are old enough to talk clearly about their feelings, it's hard to explain to them that a new caregiver is going to protect them, which means it takes time for children to get used to new people. School-aged children who are sensitive or easily worried, or those who have developmental delays, may need extra time to adjust. Parents often worry about their child making the transition, and it's easier for parents to keep calm and be reassured if they have met their child's teacher and feel comfortable with them.



September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. It's a tough topic to think about, but rates of suicide in the U.S. have increased 33% since 1999. One person dies of suicide every 11 minutes, and the number of people who seriously think about, plan, or attempt suicide is even higher. For every one death by suicide, more than 25 others make an attempt. But suicide can be prevented. By learning the warning signs, anyone can become a mental health advocate and save a life.

## What is suicide?

Suicide is a major public health concern. In 2020, suicide was the 12th leading cause of death overall in the United States, claiming the lives of over 45,900 people.

Suicide is complicated and tragic, but it is often preventable. Knowing the warning signs for suicide and how to get help can help save lives.

**Suicide** is when people harm themselves with the intent of ending their life, and they die as a result. A **suicide attempt** is when people harm themselves with the intent of ending their life, but they do not die. Avoid using terms such as "committing suicide," "successful suicide," or "failed suicide" when referring to suicide and suicide attempts, as these terms often carry negative meanings.





# WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE:

The behaviors listed below may be some of the signs that someone is thinking about suicide.

## TALKING ABOUT:



- ▷ Wanting to die
- ▷ Great guilt or shame
- ▷ Being a burden to others

## FEELING:



- ▷ Empty, hopeless, trapped, or having no reason to live
- ▷ Extremely sad, more anxious, agitated, or full of rage
- ▷ Unbearable emotional or physical pain

## CHANGING BEHAVIOR, SUCH AS:



- ▷ Making a plan or researching ways to die
- ▷ Taking dangerous risks such as driving extremely fast
- ▷ Displaying extreme mood swings
- ▷ Eating or sleeping more or less
- ▷ Using drugs or alcohol more often
- ▷ Withdrawing from friends, saying goodbye, giving away important items, or making a will

**If these warning signs apply to you or someone you know, get help as soon as possible, particularly if the behavior is new or has increased recently.**

**988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**  
Call or text 988  
Chat at 988lifeline.org

**Crisis Text Line**  
Text "HELLO" to 741741



**NIH** National Institute of Mental Health

[nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention](https://nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention)

## If You're in Crisis, Help is Available

If you're in crisis, there are options available to help you cope. You can call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at any time to connect with a trained crisis counselor. For confidential support available 24/7 for everyone in the U.S., call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org



## References

Source: National Institute of Mental Health  
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/suicideprevention>

Source: <https://988lifeline.org>

## My Mental Health: Do I Need Help?

First, determine how much your symptoms interfere with your daily life.



### Do I have mild symptoms that have lasted for less than 2 weeks?

- Feeling a little down
- Some trouble sleeping
- Feeling down, but still able to do job, schoolwork, or housework
- Feeling down, but still able to take care of yourself or take care of others



### If so, here are some self-care activities that can help:

- Exercising (e.g., aerobics, yoga)
- Eating healthy
- Engaging in social contact (virtual or in person)
- Talking to a trusted friend or family member
- Getting adequate sleep on a regular schedule
- Practicing meditation, relaxation, and mindfulness

**If the symptoms above do not improve or seem to be worsening despite self-care efforts, talk to your health care provider.**



### Do I have severe symptoms that have lasted 2 weeks or more?

- Difficulty sleeping
- Difficulty concentrating
- Appetite changes that result in unwanted weight changes
- Loss of interest in things you usually find enjoyable
- Struggling to get out of bed in the morning because of mood
- Unable to perform usual daily functions and responsibilities
- Thoughts of death or self-harm



### Seek professional help:

- Psychotherapy (talk therapy)—virtual or in person; individual, group, or family
- Medications
- Brain stimulation therapies

**For help finding treatment, visit [nimh.nih.gov/findhelp](https://nimh.nih.gov/findhelp).**

**If you are in crisis, call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org, or text the Crisis Text Line (text HELLO to 741741).**



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