

# CCYP HAPPENINGS

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Center for Child & Youth Psychiatry  
A PROGRAM MANAGED BY NEW ALTERNATIVES



## BACK TO SCHOOL EDITION!

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NATIONAL  
SUICIDE  
PREVENTION  
MONTH  
SEPTEMBER

### The Importance of Sleep by Dr Larson

Sleep is a very important part of maintaining physical and mental health, yet sleep disturbance is one of the most common complaints that people report. Many behavioral factors contribute to our poor-quality sleep such as keeping inconsistent schedules, staying on electronics too late in the evenings, shift work, chemicals such as caffeine and alcohol, and staying in bed and trying to force oneself to sleep. Sleep experts estimate that we are sleeping on average an hour less than we did a century ago and this is largely due to lifestyle factors.



Two body systems help regulate sleep. The first is the **circadian rhythm**. The circadian rhythm is the brain's internal clock that helps tell the body when to feel wakeful and when to feel sleepy. While numerous factors can influence the circadian rhythm (some of which we are born with, such as why some are morning people and some are night owls), two of the most important factors are exposure to light and the time you wake up. Exposure to light in the morning signals certain hormones to be

released that help us feel wakeful. Likewise, when the sun sets and our brains detect lower levels of light, that signals the brain to produce other hormones (such as melatonin) that help promote sleepiness.

The second body system that helps regulate sleep is the sleep drive. Sleep drive is the force that makes you feel sleepy when you have been awake too long. From the moment you wake up, the body starts creating a chemical called adenosine that gradually builds up throughout the day. Once adenosine accumulates to a certain level, it triggers the brain to turn off brain regions that promote wakefulness that then allows the body to sleep. Many problems with sleep come from trying to force your body to sleep when it's not ready. Your body needs sleep like it needs food and water. Just like the longer you go without food, the hungrier you get, the longer you stay awake, the stronger your sleep drive becomes. Several things can affect your sleep drive. For example, caffeine temporarily blocks adenosine receptors thus making the brain sense lower levels of adenosine. Once the caffeine is metabolized, the brain is once again able to detect accurate adenosine levels and you feel sleepy again. Likewise, taking a nap during the day washes away some of the day's accumulated adenosine and reduces the sleep drive. This is why napping makes it harder to sleep that night- it reduces the body's sleep drive. The good news is that the only thing you need to do to maintain your sleep drive is to stay awake.

In addition to common tips for getting a good night's sleep (what's often referred to as "sleep hygiene") the following are other practical tips to getting a good night's sleep:

- **Maintain a regular wake up time, including on weekends.** This is best done by setting a strict wake up time and sticking to it, no matter how poorly you slept the night before. Keeping in mind that your body knows how to sleep and will sleep when ready will help you get out of bed and make it through the day.
- **Don't lie awake in bed.** If you can't sleep, get out of bed and find something relaxing to do until you feel sleepy. You can't force yourself to sleep and the more you lie in bed frustrated, the harder it will be for you to relax and fall asleep.
- **Create a nightly routine.** Turn off your electronics early (an hour before bedtime ideally) and find some relaxing activities that help you wind down before sleep. However don't stress too much about following a strict nighttime routine. Remember that your body will sleep when it's ready, and you can help to prepare for bedtime by doing calming activities ahead of time.
- **Create a morning routine.** To help stick to your set wake-up time, create an enjoyable morning routine or ritual to help entice you out of bed to start your day. This could include doing some activity that gives you pleasure, perhaps even something you may



feel a bit guilty doing if you pursued them in the middle of the day. Some examples include: saving the next episode of your favorite show to watch in the morning, listening to a favorite podcast, setting up a coffee date with friends, yoga, meditation, or some other creative activity. The point is to have it be something that YOU enjoy that will make getting out of bed easier.

- **Consider daytime activities.** Even a small amount of exercise can help you sleep better. Also try to avoid eating, alcohol, and caffeine too close to bedtime. Remember that napping during the day can drain the sleep drive so avoid daytime naps.



## TIPS FOR RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER CORONAVIRUS

[The Hun School of Princeton](#) has provided some tips to help with returning to school this year. No one knows exactly what the fall semester will look like – and it's normal to feel anxiety in the face of that uncertainty. In this article, the Hun School aims to help provide some sort of expectations and empower you to embrace the unknowns to feel confident returning to school after COVID-19.

*IT'S OKAY  
TO TAKE A  
BREAK.*

### 1. GET BACK IN A ROUTINE – INCLUDING BREAKS AS NEEDED

Routines give us the predictability and structure we crave in times of uncertainty. Even in a pre-pandemic world, routines were an integral part of helping each student excel. Now, having an

established back-to-school routine will be more important than ever.

From wakeup habits and favorite breakfast treats to study zones and regular bedtime rituals, stick with a routine that helps you feel your best. Getting back to regular habits through the summer will help you ease back into school. Don't forget to build in time for fun and recognize if you need a break to relax, too.

## 2. SHARE YOUR CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS WITH A TEACHER OR COUNSELOR



Faculty members are here to provide the support and care you need. They are your advocates and allies. If you're feeling overwhelmed or have any concerns as you return to school, they're in your corner. Whether you're daunted by your workload or simply feeling anxious about readjusting to school life, you can share openly and honestly with your teachers.

## 3. STAY FLEXIBLE

We understand that flexibility is easier said than done! However, we're all sharing the same boat. Everyone is learning and working together to adapt in order to create a safe, supportive space for our community. Keep in mind that things may change quickly, which will make positivity and a flexible mindset your greatest assets.

## 4. FIND WAYS TO CONNECT WITH FRIENDS

While safety should always come first, there are plenty of ways to connect with friends in a physically-distanced way. As we prepare to return to school, we're always looking to create opportunities for connection.

Throughout the summer, we encourage you to make an effort and reach out to other students.



From virtual game nights over Zoom to online movie nights, this is the time to get creative! You can even take an old-fashioned route and spend time writing letters, postcards, or sending surprise gifts in the mail to your friends.

## 5. PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE HABITS

Now's the time to build strong hygiene habits that will feel like second nature by the time the fall semester begins. While schools have strict measures in place to ensure safety and sanitization, you can do your part by practicing washing your hands and avoiding touching your face.

## Helping Your Child Cope with Back-to-School Anxiety

[Anxiety Canada](#) has shared a sample script for engaging your child in problem-solving and planning (instead of giving reassurance):

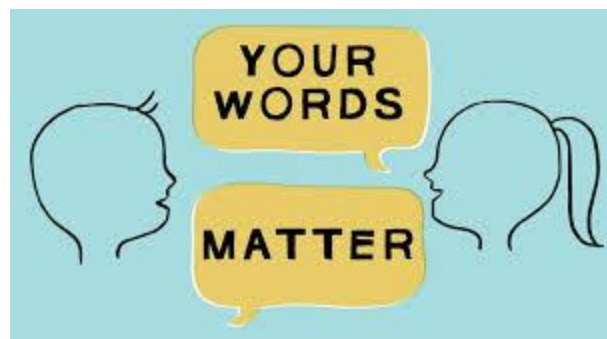
- **Role-play with your child.** Sometimes role-playing a certain situation with your child can help him or her make a plan, and feel more confident that he or she will be able to handle the situation. For example, let your child play the part of the demanding teacher or bullying classmate.



Then, model appropriate responses and coping techniques for your child, to help them calm down. For more information on role-playing, see [Helping your Anxious Child Make Friends](#)

- **Focus on the positive aspects!** Encourage your child to re-direct attention away from the worries, and towards the positives. Ask your child, “What are three things that you are most excited about on your first day of school?” Most kids can think of something good, even if it’s just eating a special snack or going home at the end of the day. Chances are that the fun aspects are simply getting overlooked by repetitive worries.

- **Pay attention to your own behaviour.** It can be anxiety-provoking for parents to hand over the care and responsibility of their child to teachers. Children take cues from their parents, so the more confidence and comfort you can model, the more your child will understand



there is no reason to be afraid. Be supportive yet firm. When saying goodbye in the



morning, say it cheerfully – once! Ensure you don't reward your child's protests, crying, or tantrums by allowing him or her to avoid going to school. Instead, in a calm tone, say: "I can see that going to school is making you scared, but you still have to go. Tell me what you are worried about, so we can talk about it." Chances are, your child is anxious about something that requires a little problem-solving, role-playing, planning, and/or involvement from the teacher.

## September is Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month

**If you or someone you care about feels overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression or anxiety, or like you want to harm yourself or others, call 911.**

You can also contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Disaster Distress Helpline at 800-985-5990, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255 or text MHFA to 741741 to talk to a Crisis Text Line counselor.



- This is a stressful time for many. With the government and media sharing updates throughout the day and the fear of the unknown, it is understandable to feel overwhelmed, stressed and anxious. You are not alone.
- Millions of people across the country are facing the same worries and challenges that you are. During this time, it is important to remember that it's OK to not be OK. It's also important to take care of your mental health.
- While practicing physical distancing, there are easy self-care strategies that can help reduce feelings of depression and anxiety, or prevent anxiety before it even starts.
- Use these tips from the MHFA curriculum to take care of your mental health while practicing physical distancing.
- Eat healthfully to keep your body in top working order.
- Exercise reduces symptoms of depression and anxiety, whether we're working out at home or taking a solo jog around the neighborhood.
- Practice relaxation therapy. Focusing on tensing and relaxing muscle groups can help you relax voluntarily when feeling overwhelmed, stressed or anxious.
- Let light in. For some people, increased exposure to light can improve symptoms of depression. If you can, open the shades and let more sunlight in.
- Be kind to yourself! Treat yourself with the same compassion you would a friend.

- Stay connected. Even if you can't get together face-to-face, you can stay connected to friends, family and neighbors with phone calls, text messages, video chats and social media. If you're feeling lonely, sad or anxious, reach out to your social support networks. Share what you are feeling and offer to listen to friends or family members about their feelings. We are all experiencing this scary and uncertain time together.
- Monitor media consumption. While you might want to stay up-to the minute with COVID-19 news, too much exposure can be overwhelming. Balance media consumption with other activities you enjoy, such as reading, cooking or listening to music.
- Self-care doesn't require you to go outside or spend a lot of money. Adding small changes to your routine can make a big difference to your overall mood and well-being.

Thank you for choosing to #BeTheDifference and remember to practice self-care with [Mental Health First Aid](#).

## Yoga for Inner Peace: A Stress-Relieving Sequence

*Colleen Saidman Yee demonstrates [8 poses for stress relief](#).*

When inner peace is nowhere to be found, it's time to tune into the body. One technique is to notice where stress or panic lands in the body, and take our mind and breath there. Eventually, we want to get into a forward bend, which increases the exhalation, leading to the relaxation response. Forward bends are also restorative and move the needle of our battery back to the black. The following forward bend sequence can help address the symptoms of stress.



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