

Mindful Monday, August 31, 2020

"I don't think there has been a bigger emotional issue that we've had to deal with yet (in the pandemic) than the return to school"

- Dr Brent Roussin, Manitoba's chief public health officer

*This document was prepared by Donna Harris, mother of 2 kids (grades 2 and 4) who are returning to school in a week and who travel to school via the bus each day. She is feeling like she does not have all the required information and is somewhat trepidatious about it

Let us call a spade a spade. For families that include school-aged children, back to school this year is a rough go. Personally, I swing between moments of feeling like sending my kids back is a huge risk and feeling ok about it given the parameters in place (my kids are entering grade 2 and grade 4 as mentioned above). For parents and care givers especially, it is the toughest and most emotional event we have collectively faced during the pandemic. One of my colleagues said it best when she (also a mom) noted, *"this is a very sensitive subject for parents and the anxiety is building as the school year approaches. I believe part of the anxiety is that there is very little credible information out there, most of it is opinion based and parents are expected to take a leap of faith by sending their kids back. The schools are releasing very little information on the back to school plan and the medical information surrounding COVID and children is blurry at best."* Regardless how much angst you may or may not be feeling, back to school in 2020 will be different. See below for information and tips to help you navigate a back to school like no other.

01 Parents may feel worried and anxious. Psychology Today provides tips for parents to help manage their anxiety, the entire article can be [viewed here](#), but in summary the author suggests several approaches. Be prepared for big feelings and regressions from kids and parents alike. Remember the big picture, while this is dominating our world right now, it will not be like this forever. Even in small ways practice self-care and connect with friends and loved ones and finally, try to protect your time and create boundaries.

02 Tips for Supporting Kids as They Return to School. Returning to school in 2020 will be quite different for our kids. The resources below provide tips and tools for back to school including a decision making tool/matrix and answers to frequently asked questions to help parents and kids navigate their return to learning.

[School Decision-Making Tool for Parents, Caregivers, and Guardians](#)

(from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

[Back to School During COVID-19: Tips for Parents and Caregivers](#)

(from the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario)

[Supporting your child's mental health as they return to school during COVID-19](#)

+ [Talking to Your Child About COVID-19](#) (from Unicef and the WHO)

[How to Help Your Child Adapt to Wearing a Mask](#) (infographic at right, additional information and the graphic available in the article)



03 Be Kind to Yourself. During times of stress and uncertainty parents can be hardest on themselves. Remind yourself that this is new for everyone. There is no one right answer for everyone, but there is a right answer for your family and your kids. Being self-compassionate means practicing three things:

- 1 Self-Kindness, be nice to yourself;
- 2 Embrace your common humanity, we are not alone, we all facing challenging times and
- 3 Be Mindful of your self-talk and your emotions, try to label them without ruminating on them so you can keep moving forward. More resources are available at <https://self-compassion.org/>