

Back-to-School Mental Health Checklist for Parents

When you're helping your teen get ready for the new school year, preparation includes more than new binders and pencils. It's important that they also prioritize their mental well-being so that they're ready to take on the academic, social and emotional challenges they may encounter.

Having a mental health checklist as a parent can help ensure that your teen has the tools and support needed to succeed in every facet of the upcoming school year.

Collaborate with your teen to work through the list:

- ☐ **Ease back into a school-year sleep routine**
Start adjusting bedtimes and wake-up times before the first day of school. Sleep changes can affect mood, focus, irritability and stress tolerance.
- ☐ **Talk through what your teen is looking forward to — and what feels hard**
Ask open-ended questions like, "What feels good about going back?" and "What part feels most stressful?" Try to listen without jumping straight into fixing.
- ☐ **Review the school schedule together**
Walk through classes, transportation, lunch, sports, clubs and after-school plans. For some teens, knowing what to expect can reduce anxiety.
- ☐ **Create a calm morning plan**
Decide what can be done the night before, such as packing a bag, choosing clothes or setting out breakfast options. A smoother morning can help reduce stress.
- ☐ **Make a mental health support plan**
Talk about what helps when your teen feels stressed, anxious, sad or overstimulated.
This might include taking a short break, texting a parent, talking with a counselor, using a grounding skill or getting help from a teacher.

If your teen is experiencing symptoms of mental health conditions that are impacting their academic performance, friendships or sense of self, Lightfully Teen level of care may be what they need to have a fulfilling school year, such as our Intensive Outpatient Program or Partial Hospitalization Program.