



A Calmer Start to the School Year

Simple Habits for Families

A new school year brings fresh routines, new expectations, and often a mix of excitement and anxiety for children and parents.

Paying attention to the emotional transition—not just supplies, schedules, and logistics—can help families begin the year with greater confidence and calm.

Here are some tips to start the school year off on a positive note:

Start with Conversation

One of the best ways to ease a child's nerves is to share your own back-to-school memories, especially the awkward ones. Whether it was getting lost, forgetting a locker combination, or having a rough first day, these stories remind kids that nobody has everything figured out right away and that confidence grows over time.

Rebuild Routines Early

Begin adjusting sleep schedules before the first day of school. Moving bedtimes and wake-up times gradually in the weeks leading up to school can make mornings easier. A predictable routine helps the whole family feel prepared and reduces stress as the school year gets underway.





Make Time for What Matters

Activities kids enjoy, along with regular physical movement, provide an important outlet during times of change. Whether it's sports, art, dancing in the living room, or taking a walk, these moments help children stay connected to themselves and support overall well-being.

Keep Communication Open

Everyday moments—in the car, while cooking dinner, on a walk, or before bedtime—often create the best opportunities for family conversations. Try asking, "What was the best and most difficult part of your day?" to invite a meaningful response without making the conversation feel forced.

Know When to Seek Extra Support

Back-to-school nerves are common, but some changes may signal that a child needs additional support. Watch for persistent sleep problems, school avoidance, physical complaints, withdrawal, or significant mood changes. Families do not have to navigate these concerns alone: a pediatrician, school counselor, or mental health professional can help determine the next step.

A Season of Growth

The goal is not to eliminate every worry before the first day of school. It is to help children and families build the tools, connections, and routines they need to meet challenges with confidence. Small, consistent habits can set the stage for a school year grounded in balance, resilience, and growth.

Concerned about a child's emotional well-being?

Astor Services supports parents, educators, school partners, and healthcare providers across the Hudson Valley and Bronx. Services include outpatient counseling, school-based mental health care, intensive community-based programs, and crisis support.

To learn more or connect with services, call Astor's Centralized Screening & Intake Team at (845) 871-1500 or visit: astorservices.org.



By Alan Fong – Licensed Clinical Social Worker & Assistant Executive Director of Clinical Services at Astor Services

