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NEDA

Tips for Caregivers: Eating Disorders & Mental Health

By NEDA Staff I Adapted for Back to School

Back-to-school transitions can be especially challenging for children with eating disorders. Changes in routines, schoolwork, and social settings can bring added stress. As these shifts occur, your child's needs may also change. It's important to stay attuned to what they're experiencing and be ready to adjust your support to help them navigate this time.

How to Support Your Child

- Know and watch for the signs of disordered eating. If you notice anything concerning, express your concerns directly, without judgment.
- Talk with your child about how they want to be supported during this time. Ask what support looks like for them.
- Encourage your child to connect with trusted adults at school—like a teacher, counselor, or staff member—to support their recovery.
- Don't hesitate to reach out. If your child is in treatment, stay in touch with their care team. If you're noticing signs for the first time, contact an eating disorder specialist as soon as possible.

Accessing School Support

- If needed, ask about accommodations like excused absences, PE exemptions, class notes, or nurse support.
- Know your child's educational rights under disability laws.
- In K–12, you can request a formal 504 plan if informal supports aren't enough.
- In college, connect with the campus disability services office to explore available academic and health-related supports.

Visit nationaleatingdisorders.org for free tools, information, and resources.