

[IMAGE]

Stressful School Daze: How to Beat the Heat

By Editorial Staff

Missing those lazy days of summer already? With school back in session, children and parents alike are feeling the heat – in the form of stress – as they transition to daily homework deadlines, after-school activities and seemingly constant "drop me off here, pick me up there" needs. What are families to do? Consider these strategies for relieving school stress this fall – and all school year round:

1. *Put it on the calendar:* There's nothing better than a calendar of events to keep children and parents reminded of the when, where, why and how of their busy week. Think it adds stress by "regimenting" your day? Consider the alternative: essentially running around with your collective heads cut off from event to event, task to task, hoping you can remember it all. For kids, it's particularly important that they have a clear sense of what they have to do and when they need to do it. It helps them understand what's on their plate for the day – and have a sense of accomplishment as they complete each task.
2. *Give yourself extra time:* Early to bed and early to rise is the success mantra when trying to minimize stress during the school year. You've got too much to do and too little time as it is; don't make it worse with perpetual lateness. Wake up early, get the kids up on time, enjoy a healthy family breakfast, and then get them off to school with time to spare. At night, set reasonable bedtimes so they – and you – can get adequate sleep that will leave everyone refreshed and ready for the next productive day.
3. stress-free school - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark *One part work, one part fun:* Stress builds when there's no release opportunity, so make sure you build breaks into your daily routine. Whether that's a 5-minute break for every 15-30 minutes of homework, 15 minutes of free / play time no matter how busy the schedule, or 15 minutes of television at night (yes, 15 minutes is OK), give your kids the chance to blow off some steam and *not* worry about what's next on their to-do list. And by the way, that free time for your kids should mean free time for *you* to relax and unwind, even if for only a few minutes.
4. *Prep for the week:* An hour of effort on Sunday can save you hours of time – and stress – throughout the week. Prep the components of a few staple dinners so all you have to do is reheat during the week. Make sure laundry is done so you're not washing, drying, sorting and folding at 10:00 on a Tuesday or Wednesday night while you're trying to help the kids finish their homework. A little work Sunday can

make Monday to Friday a whole lot easier on everyone.

5. *Laugh it off*: There's no better way to keep stress levels low than to laugh about it – or laugh it off – instead of letting stress build up day after day. Come up with the "joke of the day" at the dinner table and have each family member offer their best joke. Wind down in the evening with a board game the whole family can enjoy – and usually have a good laugh about while playing. Most important, as a parent, turn negatives into positives by teaching your children to laugh in the face of stress; to turn mountains into mole hills; and to appreciate that life is much more than what you do every day – it's about how you *feel* doing it. Help your family feel a little stressed today and every day.

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