



TRANSITIONING BACK TO THE CLASSROOM

NOT JUST A REGULAR BACK TO SCHOOL

Child Care Providers

You may have mixed feelings about returning to work. It is normal and expected that you might experience a sense of relief, happiness, worry and anticipation all at the same time. Be sure to use your own sources of support to manage your thoughts and feelings so you can feel strong enough to re-integrate children into their days with you. They will need your steady emotional and physical availability to feel safe with you again.

Some of you may have worries about your own health, financial worries, family worries, etc. The accumulation of stress can take a toll on us. We encourage you and your program leaders work together to provide you with the emotional supports and strategies to help you stay present and connected for the children.

Our New Reality

Wearing masks all day will be potentially uncomfortable and challenging for both you and the children. Using ClearMasks will help reduce the stress and discomfort!

Children may show separation anxiety again. You may find it helpful to use your “beginning of the year” strategies as you transition children into your classroom. Children may have experienced loss, trauma, instability during stay-at-home orders—they may not be returning as the child they “were” when you last saw them. They will need your patience and understanding as they sort through difficult feelings.

What to Expect in Young Children

You already know that children express their thoughts and worries in a variety of ways. You may find their behavior somewhat confusing as they re-integrate to childcare. Some may feel that you “abandoned” them, and they may express anger or coolness toward you or be extra clingy yet hard to console.

Some patterns of a child’s stress response you might see:

- hyperactivity, trying to hide, being giddy or out of control
- being somber and withdrawn
- actively crying and difficult to console

They are likely to wonder about the “germ” and where it is. They may wonder if they are safe back at school. They will notice and possibly react to changes, such as new routines, teachers in masks, the heightened emotions of the adults around them, loss of friends they expected to see, etc.

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Adapted from ZeroToThrive.org



What You Can Do

First, make sure you are doing things for yourself that supports your own inner resilience. Find ways to be supported and stay emotionally strong for children through this challenging and time.

Providing predictable routines and offering the reassurance of your emotional and physical presence can go a long way to help young children feel safe and secure. You can help them by building routines around everyday experiences and building strong connections during those routines—even simple, everyday experiences.

Use the power of your presence--shown by your eye contact, gestures, and facial expression--to help children feel safe enough to play and learn.

Trauma-Informed Care

When children's behavior is confusing or upsetting, pause and ask yourself, "What does it mean? What do they need (attention, help, movement, kindness, or for you to notice and delight in them in some way)? How can I help them with their feelings, to restore their sense of emotional security & safety?" When children feel good, they usually act "good." It is worth the effort to consider the meaning of their behavior, even though it can be challenging for us. If you find yourself short-tempered or impatient, perhaps making a "repair" with a child when you are calm by talking with them about what happened, apologizing if you frightened or alarmed them, and reassuring them of your care for them can help build their relationship with you.



How Can FAIMH Help?

Some children who suffered extra stress, or who have suffered earlier traumas, may be especially hard to help right now. Also, remember that even children who were "fine" before may not be now. Children will need more support now than ever. Mental health consultants and/or a reflective consultant may be a source of support as you work to reassure and provide safety for these children and navigate the challenging and uncertain days ahead.

Join our FAIMH community and reach out to members who are mental health providers, or contact your local FAIMH Chapter to find those in your community who can help. We are here to support you.

Child Care Membership starting at \$15!
Learn more at www.faimh.org

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