



Monthly Parenting Tip from the ACFC

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Building Strong Relationships With Teachers

Parents and teachers share a common goal: helping children succeed. When families and educators work together, children benefit academically, socially and emotionally. Transitioning back to school looks different at every stage of a child's development. Here is how you can navigate these transitions, organized by the each age group:

1. The Early Years (Ages 0–5): Overcoming Separation Anxiety

For parents of children entering preschool, pre-K, or kindergarten, the biggest hurdle is often the emotional transition of separating from caregivers.

- **Establish Predictable Routines:** Practice a consistent goodbye routine. A quick, loving and predictable departure reduces a child's anxiety much more effectively than a prolonged exit.
- **Encourage Independence:** Help young children practice school skills at home, like putting on their own shoes, zipping their backpacks, and washing their hands.

2. School-Aged Children (Ages 5–12): Minimizing Morning Power Struggles

As homework, structured schedules and extracurricular activities increase, so does the potential for daily friction at home.

- **The Method of Choice:** Offer limited choices to reduce push back (e.g., "Do you want to pack your lunch tonight, or do it tomorrow morning before we leave?" Parents should only offer choices they can accept. This gives the child a sense of power while keeping the routine moving forward.
- **Create a Dedicated Study Space:** Help kids establish a consistent, distraction-free "homework zone" to build strong study habits early.

3. Preteens & Teens (Ages 12–18): Balancing Autonomy & Support

Middle and high school transitions bring academic pressure, complex social dynamics, extracurricular commitments, a strong desire for independence and major developmental changes all at once. While parents often become more focused on grades and responsibilities during this time, teens still need connection just as much as younger children do.

- **Encourage Joint Problem-Solving:** Instead of dictating a teen's schedule, invite them to help design their own routines.
- **Watch for Signs of Stress:** Look for subtle shifts in behavior—such as sudden social withdrawal, changes in sleep patterns or unusual irritability.
- **Connect:** Look for opportunities to listen without immediately giving advice, ask open-ended questions, show interest in their goals and concerns, respect their growing independence and maintain clear expectations and boundaries.

The most effective relationships are built on mutual respect. When teens feel understood and valued, they are more likely to communicate openly and make responsible decisions.

To learn more about effective parenting skills, visit the Active Parenting Online Video Library. These helpful videos are offered free of charge by the ACFC in partnership with Active Parenting. Guidance and help are available for parents of children of all ages. To access the Online Video Library, go to the [ACFC website](https://www.acfc.org/active-parenting), click on the Active Parenting tab, and follow the instructions on how to view the videos.

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Choose from four available courses:

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- **Active Parenting 4th ED:** For parents of children ages 5 to 12
- **Active Parenting of Teens:** For parents of preteens and teens
- **Crossroads of Parenting & Divorce:** For divorced and divorcing parents

Continue your experience as an "active" parent by reviewing what you learn in the class in your accompanying parent guide. Each guide contains additional information, activities, and worksheets to help you practice what you learn.

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