



BACK TO SCHOOL TOOLKIT

This resource packet is a practical, supportive guide for parents, caregivers, and educators to help children and teens transition smoothly into the school year. It's packed with resources for mental health, safety, and emotional well-being—covering everything from crisis helplines to healthy online habits.

PROTECTING YOUR CHILD ONLINE: WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW

In today's digital world, kids are online more than ever—watching videos, gaming, learning, and connecting. While technology offers many benefits, it also presents risks to your child's privacy and safety. As a parent or caregiver, you can help your child make smart, safe choices online.

Why It Matters

Children and teens may share personal details online without realizing the risks. This can lead to:

- Oversharing personal info (name, school, location)
- Cyberbullying or unwanted contact
- Scams or identity theft
- Exposure to inappropriate content

Smart Tips for Online Safety

Talk Often

Discuss what's safe to share and why it matters. Remind them: once something's online, it can be shared or saved.

Keep Info Private

Avoid posting full names, addresses, phone numbers, or current locations. Use screen names and privacy settings.

Check Privacy Settings Together

Review app and game settings regularly. Limit contact from strangers and turn off location sharing.

Know What They Use

Stay familiar with the apps, games, and sites they visit. Use parental controls and check in frequently.

Model Good Habits

Practice what you preach—protect your own info, take breaks from screens, and think before posting.

Keep the Door Open

Make sure your child knows they can come to you with questions or concerns. Ongoing, judgment-free conversations build trust—and keep them safer.

Your support is the best filter they'll ever have

HELPING TEENS FIND SAFE & SUPPORTIVE ONLINE COMMUNITIES

It's completely natural for parents to worry about social media—after all, the internet isn't always the friendliest place for teens. But here's the good news: not all online spaces are created equal. In fact, when thoughtfully chosen, online communities can offer powerful opportunities for teens to connect, express themselves, and feel understood—especially for those who may feel isolated or underrepresented in real life.

Whether you're concerned about traditional platforms or simply want to help your teen find a healthier online space, there are safe, supportive digital communities that you can explore together.

Why Online Communities Can Be a Good Thing

When well-designed and well-monitored, online communities can offer many benefits for teens, such as:

- A sense of belonging and validation
- Creative outlets like writing, photography, or video
- Positive role models and representation, especially for LGBTQIA+, BIPOC, and disabled youth
- A safe space to explore identity and build confidence
- Access to peers with shared interests or lived experiences
- A platform for activism and engaging with social issues

How to Tell If an Online Community Is Safe

Before your teen signs up, take a few minutes to evaluate the platform together. Look for these green flags:

- Run by a nonprofit or credible organization
- Moderated by trained adults—not just peers
- Strong privacy settings and age verification
- Clear community rules (and consequences for breaking them)
- Options for reporting harassment or inappropriate behavior
- Positive reviews from both parents and teens

No space is perfect, but platforms that check several of these boxes are a great place to start. Take time to explore the site with your teen and talk openly about what they see and experience.

5 TRUSTED COMMUNITIES FOR TEENS



Here are five safe, supportive online platforms where teens can be themselves:

TrevorSpace

A welcoming community for LGBTQIA+ youth and allies (ages 13–24), hosted by The Trevor Project and fully moderated.

Voices of Youth

UNICEF's global platform where teens (13–24) can blog, share photos, and create media around causes they care about.

e-Buddies

A space for teens with and without intellectual/developmental disabilities to form friendships and connect through virtual activities.

Write the World

Designed for teens ages 13–19, this platform offers writing prompts, peer feedback, competitions, and mentorship to inspire young writers.

Young People of Color Forum

An inclusive online message board created for BIPOC teens to share experiences and support one another. Strong guidelines and reporting features keep it safe.

COMMUNITIES CONTINUED



How Parents Can Stay Involved

Even with safer platforms, your presence and support are key. Here's how to stay involved:

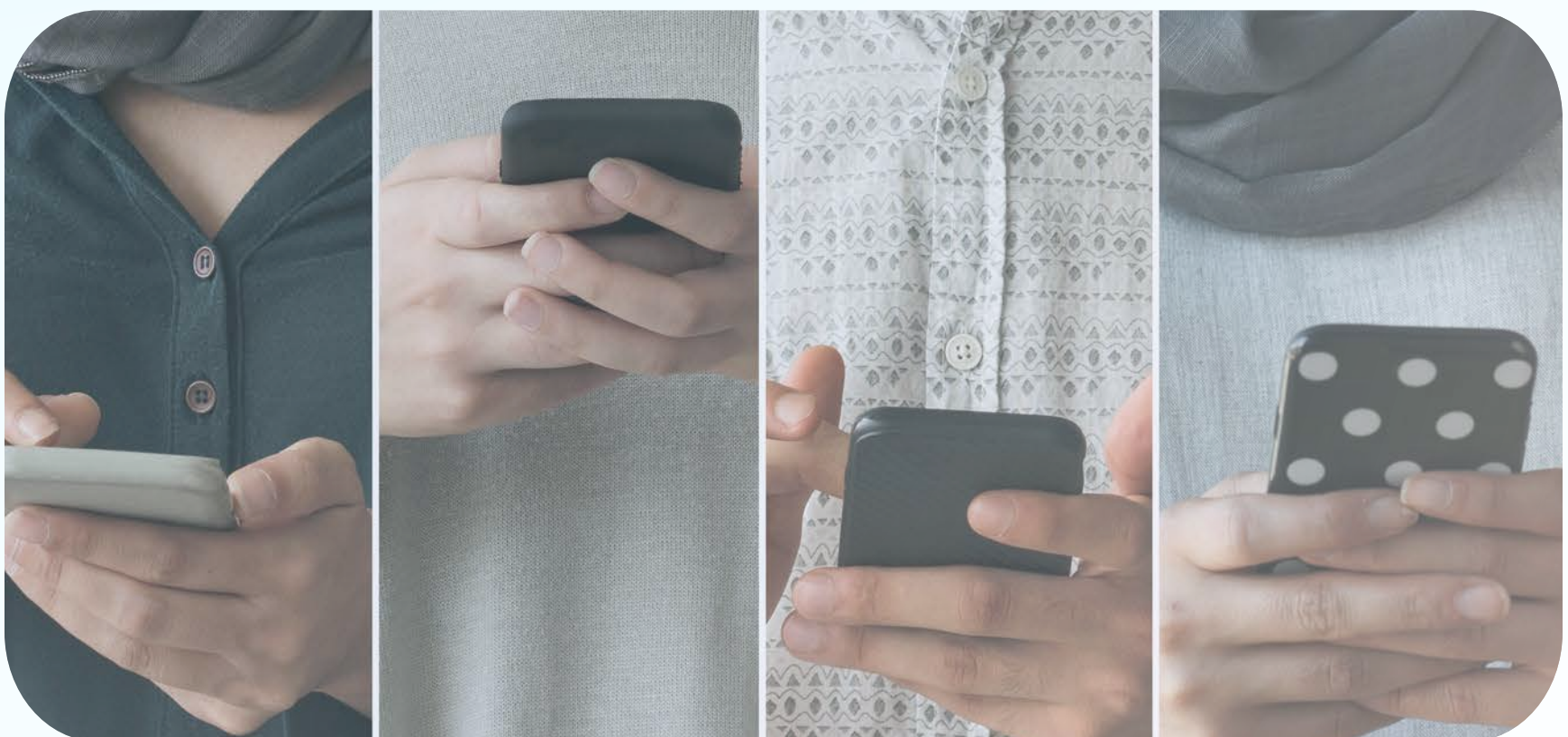
- Explore together: Check out platforms side-by-side so you both know what to expect.
- Review the rules: Talk about community guidelines and how to report harmful content.
- Use digital tools wisely: Consider monitoring apps (like BrightCanary) to stay informed—without invading your teen's privacy.
- Balance screen time: Encourage offline friendships, activities, and downtime away from devices.

Final Thoughts

Yes, social media can come with risks—but it can also be a lifeline. For many teens, online spaces offer connection, creativity, and confidence when they need it most.

The key is finding the right spaces and staying involved in your child's digital journey.

With a little guidance and a lot of conversation, you can help your teen thrive—online and off.



TIPS TO HELP YOUTH AVOID SOCIAL COMPARISON

Social comparison is a common part of being online, especially on social media—but it doesn't have to be harmful. Here are a few ways you can support young people in managing those feelings and creating healthier habits:

Take Regular Breaks

Help young people understand the value of stepping away from their screens now and then. Whether it's for a few hours, a weekend, or even longer, these breaks can reduce stress and give them space to focus on themselves without the constant pressure of comparison.

Connect Offline

While social media helps people stay in touch, it doesn't replace real-life connection. Spending time with friends face-to-face, playing a game, or simply having a phone call can improve mood and offer the kind of support that scrolling just can't provide. Encourage moments of genuine connection beyond the screen.

Clean Up Their Social Feed

Talk to them about how certain posts or accounts make them feel. If content is causing them to feel anxious, sad, or insecure, remind them they have the power to take control—by muting, unfollowing, blocking, or reporting. It's also okay not to comment, like, or respond to things that don't feel right.

Support Self-Esteem

Help them build confidence by focusing on their personal strengths, goals, and growth. Encourage them to reflect on what makes them unique, what they're proud of, and what they hope to accomplish—rather than comparing themselves to filtered versions of others online.

Social Media Isn't the Whole Picture

What people post online is often just the best parts of their lives. It's important for youth to understand that what they see doesn't show the full story. Real life is complex, and meaningful experiences happen both online and offline—with offline often being the most rewarding.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL SAFETY TIPS



As the school year kicks off and routines ramp up, it's a great time to review and reinforce safety habits with your kids. Whether they're walking, biking, or riding the bus, these tips can help keep them safe and confident all year long.

For Walkers

- Practice the route together before school starts
- Stay alert — eyes up, phones down
- Use sidewalks when available; if not, walk facing traffic
- Stop, look, and listen before crossing the street — left, right, then left again
- Make eye contact with drivers before crossing
- Use crosswalks and intersections whenever possible

For Bike Riders

- Do a practice ride to school with your child
- Ride on the right, with traffic, single file
- Stop and walk bikes across intersections
- Wear a helmet — snug, level, and always strapped
- Wear bright clothes to stay visible
- Put phones away and stay focused

For Bus Riders

- Practice safe loading/unloading by going to the stop together
- Stand back — at least 6 feet (three big steps) from the curb
- Cross safely — walk 10 feet ahead of the bus so the driver can see your child
- Never cross behind the bus
- Wait for the driver's signal before crossing in front

TIPS FOR HANDLING BACK-TO-SCHOOL ANXIETY



As summer winds down and the school year approaches, it's completely normal for kids (and parents!) to feel a bit anxious. The transition from the relaxed days of summer to the structured school routine can be challenging. But don't worry, I've got some tips to help you and your child navigate this period smoothly.

1. Open Communication is Key

Start by having an open conversation with your child about their feelings. Ask them what they're excited about and what worries them. Sometimes, just talking about their fears can make them seem less daunting. Remember to listen actively and validate their feelings.

2. Establish a Routine Early

A couple of weeks before school starts, begin to reintroduce a school-like routine. Gradually adjust bedtimes and wake-up times to match the school schedule. This helps ease the transition and reduces the shock of the first early morning.

3. Visit the School Together

If possible, take a trip to the school before the first day. Walk around the building, find their classroom, and maybe even meet their teacher. Familiarity can significantly reduce anxiety.

4. Practice Makes Perfect

Role-playing can be a fun and effective way to prepare for school scenarios. Practice things like introducing themselves to new classmates, asking the teacher for help, or navigating the lunch line. This can boost their confidence and make them feel more prepared.

5. Create a Positive Mindset

Encourage your child to focus on the positive aspects of going back to school. Talk about the fun things they'll do, the friends they'll see, and the new things they'll learn. A positive outlook can make a big difference.

6. Stay Organized

Help your child get organized for the school year. Together, you can create a checklist of supplies, set up a study area, and plan out their weekly schedule. Being prepared can alleviate a lot of anxiety.

7. Model Calm and Confidence

Kids often take cues from their parents. If you stay calm and positive about the new school year, your child is more likely to feel the same way. Show them that you believe in their ability to handle the challenges ahead.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL ANXIETY CONTINUED



8. Encourage Healthy Habits

Ensure your child is getting enough sleep, eating nutritious meals, and staying active. Physical health is closely linked to mental well-being, and a healthy body can better cope with stress.

9. Stay Involved

Stay engaged with your child's school life. Attend parent-teacher meetings, volunteer if you can, and keep the lines of communication open with teachers. Knowing you're involved can provide your child with a sense of security.

10. Seek Professional Help if Needed

If your child's anxiety seems overwhelming or persistent, don't hesitate to seek help from a school counselor or a mental health professional through your Bree Health. Sometimes, extra support is necessary, and that's okay.

Remember, every child is different, and what works for one may not work for another. Be patient and flexible, and most importantly, let your child know that you're there for them no matter what. Together, you can make this school year a great one!



YOUTH BOOK LIST



Here's a thoughtfully curated Youth Book List featuring titles that support mental health, emotional regulation, and social-emotional learning, organized by age group—from preschool through high school. These books include both fiction and nonfiction and touch on topics like anxiety, sadness, mindfulness, resilience, and self-acceptance.

Preschool (Ages 3–5):

The Color Monster by Anna Llenas

A pop-up book that introduces emotions through colors.

In My Heart: A Book of Feelings by Jo Witek

Explores a wide range of emotions in poetic, child-friendly language.

When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry by Molly Bang

Teaches coping strategies for dealing with anger.

A Little Spot of Emotion Box Set by Diane Alber.

A fun and visual introduction to emotions like anxiety, sadness, and confidence.

B Is for Breathe: The ABCs of Coping with Fussy and Frustrating Feelings by Dr. Melissa Munro Boyd

An A-to-Z guide with healthy coping mechanisms for everyday emotions.

Early Elementary (Ages 6–8):

What to Do When You Worry Too Much by Dawn Huebner

A kid-friendly CBT workbook for dealing with anxiety.

The Invisible String by Patrice Karst

Addresses separation anxiety and emotional connection.

Ruby Finds a Worry by Tom Percival **Empowers kids to open up about their worries.**

The Way I Feel by Janan Cain

A colorful, rhyming introduction to common feelings.

How Full Is Your Bucket? For Kids by Tom Rath and Mary Reckmeyer

Introduces the concept of emotional well-being through positive interactions.

YOUTH BOOK LIST CONTINUED



Upper Elementary (Ages 9–11):

Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You by Sonia Sotomayor

Encourages self-acceptance and understanding of differences.

Guts by Raina Telgemeier

A graphic novel that explores anxiety and physical symptoms.

You Are Enough: A Book About Inclusion by Margaret O'Hair

Celebrates diversity and mental strength.

Brave Every Day by Trudy Ludwig

A gentle, empowering story about facing fears.

Mindful Me: Mindfulness and Meditation for Kids by Whitney Stewart

A practical guide to mindfulness techniques for tweens.

Middle School (Ages 12–14):

Taking Up Space by Alyson Gerber

Explores disordered eating and the pressure to be "perfect."

Maybe He Just Likes You by Barbara Dee

Tackles consent, boundaries, and self advocacy.

The Science of Breakable Things by Tae Keller

A heartfelt story involving depression and resilience.

Drama by Raina Telgemeier

Graphic novel exploring friendships, identity, and emotional growth.

The Feeling Good Handbook (Youth Edition) by David D. Burns

A science-backed guide to challenging negative thoughts (simplified version).

The List of Things That Will Not Change by Rebecca Stead

Explores big feelings around change, identity, and family shifts.

Dear Student by Elly Swartz

Explores social anxiety and imposter syndrome.

What to Do When You Worry Too Much by Dawn Huebner

Kid-friendly CBT workbook that's great for managing anxiety and building coping skills.

Better Than Perfect by Melissa Kantor

Focuses on the pressure to be perfect and how it affects self-image and emotional health.

YOUTH BOOK LIST CONTINUED



High School (Ages 15–18):

Turtles All the Way Down by John Green

A powerful portrayal of OCD and intrusive thoughts.

Darius the Great Is Not Okay by Adib Khorram

Explores cultural identity and depression in a relatable teen voice.

The Astonishing Color of After by Emily X.R. Pan

Deals with grief, suicide, and emotional healing through magical realism.

You Can't Tell Me What to Do (But I Can Tell You How I Feel) by Diane Davis

A therapeutic workbook for teens navigating emotions and tough situations.

Girl in Pieces by Kathleen Glasgow

A raw, honest novel about self-harm, recovery, and healing.

The Words We Keep by Erin Stewart

A raw, hopeful look at anxiety, OCD, and the unspoken pain families carry. A teen poet navigates her sister's mental health crisis while managing her own spiraling anxiety.

I Have Lost My Way by Gayle Forman

Three teens, each facing personal struggles—grief, pressure, and identity—cross paths in New York City and find connection and healing in a single transformative day.

Hold Still by Nina LaCour

Following the loss of her best friend to suicide, a teen uncovers a journal that helps her process grief and find a path forward. Honest, gentle, and deeply empathetic.



RESOURCES



FOR IMMEDIATE HELP

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

The Lifeline provides 24/7, free, and confidential support to people in distress – you don't need to be suicidal to reach out. Call 988 to be connected with a crisis counselor. Crisis counselors who speak Spanish are also available. You can also use the 988 text line if you prefer. You will complete a short survey letting the crisis counselor know a little about your situation. You will be connected with a trained crisis counselor in a crisis center who will answer the text, provide support, and share resources if needed.

Crisis Text Line

If you prefer texting to talking on the phone, text "HOME" to 741-741 to be connected with a crisis counselor who will help you get through your big emotions.

Domestic Violence Hotline

If you're experiencing domestic violence, looking for resources or information, or are questioning unhealthy aspects of your relationship, call 1-800-799-7233 or text "START" to 88788.

RESOURCES CONTINUED



Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline

If you or a child you know is being hurt or doesn't feel safe at home, you can call or text 1-800-4-ACHILD (1-800-422-4453) or start an online chat at childhelp.org to reach a crisis counselor. They can help you figure out next steps to work through what is happening and stay safe.

The Trevor Project

The Trevor Project is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning youth. Trained counselors are available 24/7 to youth in crisis, feeling suicidal, or in need of a safe and judgment-free person to talk to. Call 1-866- 488-7386, text "START" to 678-678, or start an online chat at thetrevorproject.org/get-help.

The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids Helpline

Call 1-855-378-4373 if you are having difficulty accessing support for your family, or a loved one struggling with addiction faces care or treatment challenges, the Partnership for Drug-free Kids' specialists can guide you. Support is available in English and Spanish, from 9 am - midnight ET week days and noon - 5 pm ET on weekends.

BREE HEALTH CAN HELP:



Get Support Now: Scan to
Download the Bree Health Mobile App
Access emotional support, tools, and
resources—anytime, anywhere. Just
scan the QR code to get started.

 (800) 327-2255

 login.breehealth.com

 Mobile App: Bree Health