



## Get Ready for Back to School!

The start of a new school year is full of excitement and opportunity. However, it may also put unexpected stresses on the entire family. Try these tips for managing the adjustments that come with the next stage in your child's education:

- **Address anxiety.** There are many reasons why a child might be anxious about starting a new school year, including:
  - A teacher with a scary reputation
  - Starting at a new school
  - Making new friends or changes in current friend dynamics
  - Having to see a child who has bullied them in the past

Encourage your child to talk about these fears and take practical steps to allay them, when possible.

- **Plan ahead.** A new school year tends to impact everyone's schedule. Determine when both you and your child will need to wake up on a school day, as well as how much time will be needed for a walk to the bus stop or a drop-off at school. Consider what preparations you can make in the evening (such as packing lunches) to make the morning less hectic.
- **Shop smart.** Take an inventory of your child's current wardrobe and leftover school supplies. Determine if you would rather do one massive school shopping trip or simply buy a few items at a time or as needed. Visit



the Discount Center on [mylifematters.com](https://mylifematters.com) to look for retailer coupons.

- **Access resources.** Your child's school and your local community may offer programs that could be helpful with managing expenses or scheduling issues. Check your employer benefits as well.
- **Create backup plans.** Put a plan in place for the following situations:
  - A schedule conflict that makes it difficult for you to drop off or pick up your child
  - Your child is unable to go to school due to illness or inclement weather
  - The school's holiday and in-service schedule

LifeMatters can provide helpful resources and practical suggestions for managing back-to-school stress. Call 24/7/365.

## Maintaining Focus and Avoiding Distractions

Do you struggle with concentration? Some common reasons why you might have difficulty staying focused include:

- Feeling tired or uncomfortable
- Worry or stress
- Uncertainty about next steps
- External distractions, such as your phone, email, or background noise
- Doing a task that you dislike or find boring

If you struggle to finish projects or have difficulty meeting deadlines, these tips may help:

- **Establish priorities.** If staying focused is difficult for you, it may be easier to complete key tasks by organizing them in order of importance.
- **Recognize your energy patterns.** What time of day is most productive for you? Schedule higher priority tasks for when your energy is at its peak.
- **Do something.** Do you need to “warm up” before taking on a large project? Consider starting with something that is easy or can be finished quickly before moving on to more complex tasks.
- **Avoid multitasking.** While attempting to engage in multiple activities at once may seem productive, it actually slows momentum and makes it harder to focus. Instead, try completing one task (or taking it as far as you can) before moving on to the next.
- **Minimize disruptions.** If you must perform a task that requires intense focus, move to a quiet location (if possible). Limit your exposure to emails, texts, or other forms of communication. Wearing noise-canceling headphones or listening to music that enhances concentration may also be helpful.
- **Take breaks.** An occasional short break may improve your productivity. Use this time to stretch, drink some water, or step outside for a bit of fresh air.
- **Seek help.** Poor concentration could be a symptom of several different health conditions, including depression, anxiety, or ADHD. If you frequently struggle to stay on task, talk to your doctor or contact LifeMatters. Help is available 24/7/365.



## Planning for a Home Purchase

Purchasing a home may feel overwhelming, especially for first-time buyers. Breaking the process into several steps may help you determine if becoming a homeowner is within your reach.

- **Research what homes cost in your area or preferred location.** Determine if you want to own a home, regardless of size or location, or if you would prefer to save for a property that fits your preferred specifications.
- **Explore financing options.** Meet with one or more financial institutions to determine options for financing. Factors that influence how much you could borrow include:
  - Your present income and credit history
  - The current interest rate
  - The lending institution's requirements
  - Personal circumstances (such as being a first-time homebuyer or a veteran)
- **Save.** If you already have a house fund in place or own a property that you can sell, you are ahead of the game! When determining your savings goals, keep these expenses in mind:
  - **Down payment.** While a 20% down payment is common, not every lending institution will require that much. However, a larger down payment will decrease your monthly mortgage.
  - **Earnest money.** This cash deposit (typically two percent of the asking



price) is usually required when you make an offer on a property. If the offer is accepted, the earnest money will be applied to the down payment.

- **Closing costs.** These fees, which are usually rolled into the mortgage, are associated with completing the sale.
- **Reserve fund.** Some lenders will want two to three months' worth of mortgage payments set aside. Other forms of security, such as a retirement or investment fund, may also be sufficient.
- **Moving and repair costs.** Factor moving expenses, urgent repairs or maintenance, and furniture or household goods into your home-buying budget. The Discount Center at [mylifematters.com](http://mylifematters.com) offers many options for saving on these expenses.

The LifeMatters Financial Consultation Service can guide you through every step of planning a home purchase. Call 24/7/365.

## The Four Pillars of Financial Wellbeing

Would you like to strengthen your financial wellbeing? The following four pillars are the foundation of a healthy financial outlook:

- **Spending.** Having a budget is key to managing your spending. Start by writing down how much you spend for a month, making your list as detailed as possible. Next, look for ways to cut spending. Even simple changes like making your own lunch can have a big impact over time. If you struggle with tracking your spending, try an app that will do the work for you.
- **Saving.** While saving is essential to financial health, it is often the first thing to suffer when money is tight. Instead, cut back on a budget item and divert that money to your savings account or emergency fund. Keep in mind that savings should not be used to cover monthly budget items.
- **Borrowing.** A little borrowing is good for your credit. However, too much can cause real damage. Unsecured debt (such as credit cards and personal loans) should make up no more than 15% of your income. If you have a large amount of unsecured debt, prioritize paying it off as fast as you can.
- **Planning.** Whether you want to save for retirement, buy a house, move to a new city, or pay for your child's college, a financial plan is key to making any



long-term goals a reality. Putting some thought into your life goals could help you avoid impulsive decisions or excess debt.

Improving your financial wellbeing begins one dollar — and behavior — at a time. LifeMatters offers a number of options that may help to strengthen your financial outlook:

- The **MyWellbeing Profile** on [mylifematters.com](https://mylifematters.com) can help you evaluate your financial wellbeing.
- The **LifeMatters Financial Consultation Service** can review your overall financial picture and recommend improvements.
- The **Discount Center** on [mylifematters.com](https://mylifematters.com) offers numerous options for saving on goods and services and decreasing spending.

Source: Balance

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Call collect to **262-574-2509** if outside of North America

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