

# Solutions Newsletter

May 2022



Effective School  
Solutions

*Solutions* is a newsletter published by ESS for parents, guardians, and caretakers. Each issue highlights an important topic related to children's mental health and provides practical applications for parents in the home environment.

## Reset and Renew- Fostering Transition & Wellness Skills

May is Mental Health Awareness Month in the United States and after two years of unrelenting stress and uncertainty we are reminded more than ever that it is essential to prioritize mental health and its role in our well-being. According to the American Psychological Association's (APA) most recent Stress in America survey, Americans of all ages are reporting record high levels of stress. This stress is tied to inflation and economic uncertainty, global tensions such as the invasion of Ukraine, and the ongoing fears and disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings only deepen the alarm of parents, educators, and mental health professionals as children's mental health problems continue to soar, and at the same time highlight the realization that the mental well-being of children is closely tied to the health and well-being of parents and other adults in their lives.

Far from the return to normalcy that many craved last September, the 2021-22 school year has been a slog for students, parents, and teachers. Mental health needs have outpaced the capacity of current treatment systems, both school-based and in the community. Waiting lists remain long and there is no quick solution to the shortage of mental health professionals. In response, both school and mental health professionals have been seeking creative ways to expand their reach, from building out school-based services to designing single-session intervention models to assist those who are unable to access traditional outpatient therapy in a timely manner.

As parents look for ways to continue to support school-age children it might be helpful to remember that there are incredibly powerful yet simple tools to help children build mental health resilience. We all get overwhelmed by emotions from time to time – it is a uniquely human experience. Parents can adopt a *Transition Reset* ritual that is practiced throughout the day to help their children and themselves release unpleasant thoughts, emotions, and behaviors while allowing the opportunity to stay “present” for each family activity. *Transition Resets* combine mindfulness and emotion regulation techniques into daily routines and ideally would signal each transition throughout the day, from getting dressed to eating breakfast, from arriving home to homework time, from leisure activities to bedtime, etc.

There are an infinite number of Reset practices, both active and quiet. Prior to starting this practice at home, discuss the

idea and the benefits of *Transition Resets* with your child. Clearly define expectations and provide some examples of Reset activities. Consider using a gentle chime or bell as the signal to enter and exit a Reset activity. Close your eyes and share 3-4 deep breaths with your child before each exercise, and after each *Transition Reset* congratulate your child and ask her to share her experiences. Give your child permission to use or request a Reset strategy during activities as well (e.g., during dinner) if he finds himself losing focus or becoming dysregulated.

Select a dozen or more Reset options and switch up activities from day to day, encouraging your child to suggest some as well. The time of day might influence your choice of reset activity; before bedtime, for example, you may want a more quiet, calming reset activity.

Some examples of *Transition Reset* activities are:

- Deep or paced breathing
- Tossing/catching a bean bag
- Running in place or doing jumping jacks for 30 seconds followed by counting one's pulse
- Tapping out a song's rhythm or singing a song
- A game of Simon-Says
- Stretching or yoga poses
- Blowing bubbles
- Five Senses: Write 5 things you can see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, one thing you can taste
- Muscle Relaxation Exercise: gently squeeze and release muscles, from the feet up
- Gratitude journaling

### Resources:

<https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-for-children-kids-activities/>

[More growth for patients in less time \(apa.org\)](#)

[Speaking of Psychology: How to keep stress from harming your health, with George Slavich, PhD \(apa.org\)](#)