

THE BACKPACK OF ANTICIPATION

Is your family feeling excited, overwhelmed, or a little bit of both as school begins again? The back-to-school season brings more than new routines—it brings emotions, adjustments, and opportunities for connection.

As summer winds down, many children, teens, and parents begin to experience a mix of emotions about returning to school. For some, there is excitement about reconnecting with friends, new teachers, and fresh opportunities. For others, this transition can bring increased anxiety, uncertainty, and emotional stress.

It is important to recognize that “back to school” is not a simple event—it is a significant adjustment that can impact the whole family system. Children may worry about academic expectations, social relationships, safety, or changes in routine. Parents may notice their own stress increasing as they manage schedules, finances, transportation, and emotional support needs. Even positive changes can create feelings of overwhelm when routines shift quickly.

Anxiety during this time can show up in many ways. Children may express irritability, difficulty sleeping, stomachaches, increased clinginess, or reluctance to attend school. Teens may become more withdrawn, have changes in appetite or sleep patterns, or express worries about performance and peer relationships. Adults may experience racing thoughts, fatigue, or a sense of being stretched too thin.

From a faith and community perspective, these moments of transition are opportunities to offer reassurance, stability, and presence. Children and families often benefit most not from immediate solutions, but from consistent support, calm reassurance, and permission to feel what they are feeling without judgment.

As a church community, we can support families by being attentive to signs of stress, offering grace during this adjustment period, and reminding one another that transitions take time. Encouraging open communication at home, maintaining predictable routines where possible, and prioritizing rest can help ease this seasonal shift.

Most importantly, families are reminded that they are not alone. Anxiety during transitions is a common human experience, and with support—both practical and spiritual—children and caregivers can move through this season with resilience and connection.