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Helping Anxious Students Thrive: Summer Preparation Tips for School Counselors

What Counselors Should Know—and How to Help Before the School Year Begins

SIGNS OF SCHOOL-RELATED ANXIETY

Avoidance Behaviors?

Skipping summer reading, avoiding back-to-school events, or resisting school-related tasks.

Frequent Worries?

Persistent concerns about school routines, teachers, classmates, or performance.

Physical Complaints?

Increased headaches, stomachaches, or fatigue as the first day approaches.

Emotional Reactivity?

Irritability, panic, or meltdowns when discussing the upcoming school year.

6 PROACTIVE STEPS SCHOOLS CAN TAKE BEFORE DAY ONE

1. Offer Summer Meet-and-Greets

Host informal visits or virtual calls so anxious students can meet key staff before the first day.

2. Collaborate with Parents

Invite parents of anxious students to share concerns and strategies that have worked in the past.

3. Create a Re-entry Plan

Develop a simple, individualized return-to-school plan for students who have struggled with attendance or regulation.

4. Identify Safe Adults

Clearly assign a go-to adult in the building that the student knows and trusts.

5. Prepare Teachers

Offer quick training or bulletins about how anxiety can present in the classroom (e.g., avoidance, irritability, perfectionism).

6. Normalize Anxiety

Share age-appropriate messages school-wide that normalize nerves and remind students they're not alone.

TIPS COUNSELORS CAN SHARE WITH PARENTS THIS SUMMER

Counselors can empower parents to support their child's return to school by encouraging small, confidence-building steps over the summer. Suggest gradual exposure, like visiting the school or driving the route together. Recommend practicing routines early—such as shifting bedtimes—and rehearsing coping tools through role-play. Most importantly, remind parents to focus on building confidence, not just comfort: “You can do hard things, even when they feel scary.”



Follow the *Aspire: Parenting With Confidence* channel on WhatsApp

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If a child's anxiety is interfering with daily life—or if parents feel stuck—call my practice.



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