

SUMMERTIME SURVIVAL TIPS



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summer

[səməɹ] noun.

The season where you never know what day it is.

A period of fulfillment, strength, and happiness.

The time of year when days get longer and nights get better.



Emotional Wellness

All children are born with the need and desire to connect with others. Building relationships, understanding emotions, and learning to manage them are key parts of healthy development.

What is Children's Mental Health?

Children's mental health refers to the social, emotional, and psychological well-being of all children and youth, from birth through age 18.

When children and families are emotionally healthy, they are better able to:

- Experience, manage, and express emotions in healthy ways.
- Form strong, secure relationships with others.
- Learn, grow, and explore their world with confidence.

Children's mental health is strengthened by:

- Caring, consistent relationships with adults.
- Having basic needs met, including food, housing, and physical safety.
- Access to high-quality learning environments and educational support.
- Being part of a safe, inclusive, and supportive community.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions or concerns about a child, call for a free, confidential consultation at (614) 824-KIDS (5437).



When adults stay calm and connected, children feel safe and supported.

How do my emotions affect my child?

Children look to adults to understand how to feel and respond. When parents are calm and reassuring—saying things like “You’re safe” and “Your feelings matter”—children feel more secure and better able to cope.

Taking Care of Yourself Helps Your Child

When adults pause to breathe, relax, and recharge, it helps both them and their children feel more balanced and connected.

Managing Challenging Behaviors

Children often act out to express big feelings or unmet needs. By focusing on their strengths, caregivers can guide them toward healthier ways to communicate and cope.

Emotional first aid after trauma

After a traumatic event, children may struggle with changes in routine or behavior. Consistent care, familiar routines, and limiting exposure to upsetting media or conversations can help them feel safe and supported.



Start Talking!

Research shows that strong, supportive relationships with caring adults help children and youth—from birth through age 18—build confidence, emotional strength, and lifelong success.

Start Talking! "Tell Me" is designed to help parents, caregivers, and educators support children and teens in reaching their full potential in school, relationships, and life.

Tell Me Every Day . . .

I am safe.

I am important.

You are proud of me.

I make you happy.

I have a bright future.

You love my smile and laugh.

You see beauty in who I am.

You enjoy when I share with you.

My feelings and thoughts matter.

You notice when I work hard.

You appreciate my creativity.

You value my kindness.

You see how thoughtful I am.

You care that I care about others.

You love when I express myself—through play, dance, music, or conversation.

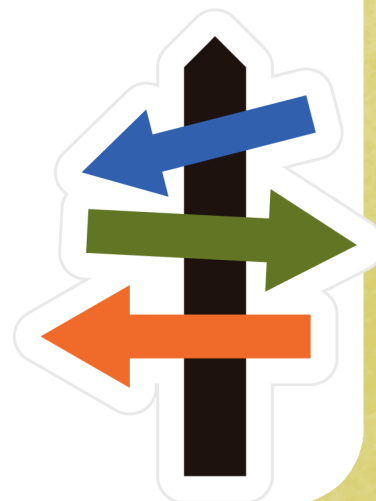
You're glad when I take care of my body.

You ask how I feel.

You ask what I think.

Words of love,
encouragement,
and belief shape a
child's future—
from birth
through 18.

Building
emotional health
starts with naming
feelings and
learning healthy
ways to cope





Summer Survival Tips

Summer is a time to slow down, recharge, and reconnect—but it can also come with stress, boredom, and big emotions. These gentle reminders can help make your family's summer a little smoother and more meaningful.

Make Time to Be Together

Whether it's a full vacation or just dinner outside, shared moments matter. Time away from everyday routines helps kids of all ages feel loved, grounded, and like they belong.

Let Everyone Have a Voice

Invite kids and teens to help plan activities. Ask what sounds fun or meaningful to them. Even small choices—like picking the movie or snack—help build confidence and connection. If plans don't go their way, acknowledge their feelings and remind them that their ideas still matter.

👉 **Tip:** If someone's idea doesn't get chosen, acknowledge their feelings and try to include part of their suggestion next time.

Play—Yes, Even Now & at every age!

Play isn't just for little kids. Teens and adults need fun too. Join in on something silly, try a new game, get outside, or let your child teach you how they like to play. These light moments build strong bonds.

Warning: Play can be contagious!

Laugh Together

Laughter helps ease tension and makes everyday moments brighter. Use humor to lighten tough situations, but always aim for kindness. Laughing with each other—not at each other—builds trust and closeness.



Watch for Signs of Stress

Long summer days and disrupted routines can leave everyone feeling off-balance. If you notice grumpiness, irritability, or restlessness, it might be time for a reset. Check in with each other and see what needs to shift—sometimes it's just a snack, a nap, or a little quiet time.

Reminder: Transitions can be hard. Be patient—with yourself and your kids.

Keep a Rhythm (Even a Loose One)

While it's great to take a break from school-year structure, most kids and teens still need some kind of rhythm. A consistent bedtime, regular meals, and a few planned activities can bring calm to chaotic days.

Create Moments of Calm

Try simple grounding activities together: morning stretches, listening to music, drawing, or taking a walk. These moments help everyone slow down and reconnect.

Focus on Connection, Not Perfection

There's no "right" way to do summer. Some days will be magical; others might feel long and messy. What matters most is showing up with care, listening, and trying again tomorrow.



Cool off at Free Splash Pads in Columbus

There are **15 splash pads and water play areas** in the city where you can cool off during hot weather!

Splash pads are the perfect place to visit during the hottest part of the day when you don't want to commit to the hassle (and expense) of going to a public pool!

Splash pads are an easier way to cool off than going to a swimming pool, and are perfect for younger children and kids of various swimming abilities.

Don't forget to pack a bag with sunscreen, towels, and snacks (don't forget drinks!). The kids will play so hard that they'll be hungry and thirsty once they finally stop!



Gahanna Splash Pad at the Pool

This amenity to the pool includes over 3,100 square feet of spray area and 41 different features designed for toddlers to teens, as well as shaded picnic areas, additional benches and a year-round restroom that is also accessible to the Big Walnut Trail.

The splash pad is an amenity of the pool and will be available to pool members and those who purchase a day pass during operating hours. **It will be open and free to the public in the mornings from 8am-12pm, before the pool opens each day, as well as days on which the pool might not open.** Additionally, it will be open daily outside of the pool season, as weather permits.

Where: Gahanna Swimming Pool, 148 Parkland Dr

When: Memorial Day Weekend. Open and free to the public in the mornings from 8am-12pm, before the pool opens each day, as well as days on which the pool might not open. Additionally, it will be open daily outside of the pool season, as weather permits.

Scioto Mile Fountains

Where: Bicentennial Park, 233 S Civic Center Drive

When: Friday, May 24 open and completely free until Labor Day.

Open daily from 11:00am – 7:00pm



Hilliard Station Park

Where: Hilliard Station Park, 4021 Main St, Hilliard, OH 43026

When: Open now until October!



Partners Park Splash Pad

Where: 125 E. Sixth St., Marysville

When: Opening date **TBD**. Open daily from 10 am – 9 pm.

Spray and Play at Veterans Park Delaware

Where: 1121 S. Houk Rd, Delaware

When: 10 am to 8 pm Memorial Day through Labor Day

Details: Fun dinosaur-themed splash pad with playground nearby

Dublin Ballantrae Community Park Spray Fountains

Where: Ballantrae Community Park, 6350 Woerner Temple Rd

When: Open from Memorial Weekend through Labor Day from 10 a.m. – 8 p.m.

Details: Bring a picnic and a blanket and enjoy the day.

Extras: Known as the Dancing Bunnies Fountains, you'll find the sculpture of the 3 bunnies up on the hill.



Easton Town Square Fountain

Where: 160 Easton Town Center, Columbus, OH 43219

When: 10AM – 9PM Monday-Saturday and 12-6PM on Sunday. Fountain may be turned off in the case of special events or inclement weather.

Please call Guest Services at (614) 337-2200 to confirm if the fountain is on before your arrival.

Details: Tons of food options nearby, park in Easton garages or surface lot near Barnes and Noble/NorthStar Cafe.

Westerville Hanby Park Spray Ground

Where: 115 E Park St, Westerville, OH 43081

When: Opening date TBD, 8AM- 8PM.

Details: In addition to the spray ground, you'll find a play tower, playground equipment, accessible swings, shaded swinging benches, plus close parking and restrooms.



Powell Splash Pad

Where: 47 Hall St., Powell

When: Memorial Day 9 am – 9 pm through Labor Day Weekend

Details: Bring a picnic to enjoy in the shaded solar picnic pavilion or on a blanket in the grass. Plenty of parking in the lot for Village Green Park.

Extras: Nearby playground when the kids have enough of the water.

Barnett Community Center Sprayground

Where: 1184 Barnett Rd, Columbus 43227

When: TBA from 11 am – 6 pm daily. Sprayground may be monitored for capacity and you may have to wait in a queue before entering. In order to take advantage of the great programs and facilities they offer, it is suggested to obtain a **Columbus Recreation and Parks Leisure Card**

Blackburn Community Center Sprayground

Where: 263 Carpenter St, Columbus 43205

When: TBA from 11 am – 6 pm daily. Sprayground may be monitored for capacity and you may have to wait in a queue before entering. In order to take advantage of the great programs and facilities they offer, it is suggested to obtain a **Columbus Recreation and Parks Leisure Card**

Linden Center for Opportunity Sprayground

Where: 1350 Briarwood Ave. Columbus, OH 43211

When: TBD from 11 am – 6 pm daily once open. Sprayground may be monitored for capacity and you may have to wait in a queue before entering. In order to take advantage of the great programs and facilities they offer, it is suggested to obtain a **Columbus Recreation and Parks Leisure Card**

Splash Pad at Plain City Aquatic Center

Where: 213 S Chillicothe St, Plain City, Ohio 43064

When: Follow along on Facebook. Typically open and free to the public before and after pool hours from 8am-10:45am and then from 8pm-10pm, 7days per week.

Details: The Pool is open (registration required) and splashpad will be a part of pool admission during pool hours.

North Bank Park

Where: 311 W Long St, Columbus, OH 43215

When: No specific hours as it's closed to the public during special events (weddings are held there frequently).

Details: Small fountain is great for small children.

No nearby food options, but plenty of seating and shade

Extras: Beautiful view of the Scioto River and Downtown Columbus



Splash Pad at Fryer Park

Where: Fryer Park, 3600 Discovery Dr., outside the Grove City YMCA

When: Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Monday through Thursday: noon to 8 p.m.

Friday: noon to 7 p.m.

Saturday: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Details: The bright, colorful interactive water play structures follow Discovery Frontier's space theme and include a rocket slide and a variety of whimsical spray effects with accessibility for all. There's lots of other fun in Fryer Park.

Splashpad at Whitehall John Bishop Park

Where: 4815 Etna Road Whitehall, Ohio 43213

(Enter from Kae Avenue Elementary access road or from Langley Avenue)

When: May 25th, 2025

Tuesday - Sunday

Noon - 7:00pm

CLOSED MONDAYS



Obetz Splash Pad

Where: 4390 Lancaster Avenue 43207 Obetz, OH

When: Memorial Day – Labor Day; Monday – Sunday from 11 AM – 7 PM

Details: Splashpad is only open to kids 12 and under. Individuals under the age of 12 must be accompanied by someone who is 16 years of age or older. Individuals that are 13 years of age or older may enter the Splash Pad if supervising children 6 years of age and under or an individual with special needs. Call 614-409-4409 with any questions.

COST: The Splash Pad is free to residents and non-residents

Additional safety: Household groups limited to 10. Bring your own chair; picnic tables have been removed.

Worthington Pools Lagoon Splashpad

Where: 400 W Dublin Granville Rd, Worthington OH

When: Memorial Day-Labor Day 2025

Fountain Plaza at Dorrian Green (behind COSI)

Where: 50 South Belle St., Columbus, Ohio 43215

Polaris Fashion Place

Where: 1500 Polaris Parkway ,Columbus, OH 43240. In the Polaris Lifestyle Center open mall area near Cheesecake Factory and Cantina Laredo

When: TBD for 2025

Details: Tons of food options nearby, easy mall parking

Extras: KidX Club hosts events on Fridays during the summer from 10:30 am – noon with characters, crafts, Sunny 95 and more.

Kids Eat Free (or cheap) in Columbus



If you want to dine out as a family, stretch your money by choosing places where KIDS EAT FREE or cheap in Columbus.

Here are some standard guidelines:

- Promos are valid at participating locations on respective day of the week. Dine-in only.
- Many have time restrictions, so be sure to check your watch before sitting down.
- Most (if not all) free kids' meals must be ordered from a children's or select menu.
- Most offers are limited to kids 12 and under. However, a few have younger age restrictions.
- In most cases, free kid's meal requires the purchase of an adult entrée at regular price.
- Limit of one free kid's meal per paid adult entrée – some, but not many, allow more than one.
- Discount cannot be combined with other offers, coupons or promos.
- Children must be present.

If you want to be sure they are still offering the promotion, please **CALL** the establishment to verify. These deals have all been vetted, but may have since changed.

Kids Eat Free Everyday

IHOP: Kids eat free everyday from 4 pm – 10 pm. Dine in only.

Golden Corral: Children 3 and under eat FREE from the buffet with the purchase of an adult meal, every day

O'Charley's: One free kids meal with the purchase of an adult entrée. Beverage not included. Dine in only. Not valid with any other discount or promotion. Limited time only.

Rusty Bucket: Kids can earn a free kid's meal when they fill in the Bucketed Bookwork Bookmark Tracker with 5 books they have read. Just visit your neighborhood Bucket and ask for your **Bucketeer Bookworm Bookmark Tracker**.

Submarine House Bar & Grill (Hilliard): One kids eats free from 4-8 pm daily with \$20 order. Children 12 & under – dine-in only. 2459 Hilliard Rome Road

Roots Natural Kitchen: (OSU Campus) – Children 12 and under eat free with a purchase of an adult meal. All day.

Carfagna's Kitchen on Polaris Pkwy: Mon-Weds nights Kids 12 and under eat free (one kids dish with each adult entrée)



Kids Eat Free on Mondays

BD's Mongolian Grill: BD's Kid's Night deal with \$1.99 Kid's Meals every Monday after 4PM for dine-in only. The Kids Menu at bd's consists of Kid's Stir-Fry for kids 10 and under, with plenty of personalized options.

Columbus, Easton – 3977 Worth Avenue Columbus, OH 43219

Columbus, Dublin – 6242 Sawmill Road Columbus, OH 43017

Carsonies (Upper Arlington): 2 free kids' meals per adult meal purchased.

Frisch's Big Boy: Kids eat free all day on Mondays. Enjoy one free Kids Mini Meal (for children 12 and under) per adult purchase of \$6.98 or more. This is a dine-in, drive-thru and carryout special only for a limited time. Available at participating locations. PLEASE call your local restaurant or check the link before you go.

Las Margaritas (Canal and Westerville locations): Receive a free kids meal with each adult entrée purchase. Kids 12 and under. Drink not included.

MCL Restaurant & Bakery (UA, Whitehall): Monday's; Enjoy up to two complimentary kids meals per adult meal purchased (dine-in only)

*Valid for kids 12 and under.

Buffalo Wings & Rings (Lewis Center and Broad Street): Kids 10 and under with paying adult* \$10 minimum purchase. Dine in only.

Fazoli's: Kids Meals for 99 cents each with the purchase of each adult meal from 5-8 pm. Enjoy Spaghetti Smarts activities and crafts. Heath, Grove City, Hilliard, Reynoldsburg, and Westerville.

Nasty's Sports Bar & Grill: Kids dine for 1/2 off on Sundays and Mondays (4561 Scioto Darby Rd, Hilliard, OH 43026)

Texas Roadhouse: (E Main St., Polaris, Grove City, Hilliard Rome Rd.) Free kids' meal per adult entrée purchase. Check with individual locations for times.



Kids Eat Free on Tuesdays

El Vaquero: Buy one regular dinner and get one free kid's meal only for kids under 12 years old on Tuesdays. Youth over 12 add \$3.00. Mexican Rice, refried beans or pinto beans may be substituted for french fries. Add a small white milk, chocolate milk (no refill) or soft drink for \$0.99

Skyline Chili: Every Tuesday Night Kids Eat FREE! For every paying adult, one child receives a kid's meal for FREE. On Tuesdays, we also feature a FREE kid's craft complete with a craft coordinator! So make Tuesday your family night and head to Skyline.

Kids Eat Free on Wednesday

Fiesta Jalisco: Kids eat free (4-10 p.m.). 1 adult entree must be purchased.

Star Lanes Polaris: Kids eat free with purchase of adult meal. (5 p.m.-close)

Melt Bar and Grill: Tired of cooking for the family? Join us for Half-Off Wednesdays at Melt where kids ten years old and under eat for only \$3 from our kids' menu!

Kids Eat Free on Thursdays

Quaker Steak & Lube (Polaris): kids eat free all day with an adult order (kids 10 and under)



Friday/Saturday

Don't forget about the daily deals listed above from Rusty Bucket and The Submarine House!

Kids Eat Free on Sundays

Dickey's Barbecue (Hilliard): 1 Free Kid's Meal per \$12 purchase. 12 and under. Must order from Kid's Meals. Now available for delivery and carryout orders for a limited time. Use code **KEFOLO** at online checkout.

Iron Grill Barbecue & Brew: Kids eat free!

Old Bag of Nails: Kids eat free here on Sunday, no coupon is needed!

Moe's Southwest Grill: Kids eat free (all day) with each purchase of an adult meal/entree you get one free kid's meal.

Nasty's Sports Bar & Grill: Kids dine for 1/2 off on Sundays and Mondays (4561 Scioto Darby Rd, Hilliard, OH 43026)

Culture Pass

Spaces to explore culture.

Check out **Culture Passes** for admission to these central Ohio organizations – **free with your library card**. For in-person checkout only; non-reservable.

Search "culture passes" on their website to check for availability.



Available at all Columbus Metropolitan Library locations.

- Valid for 2025 performances only. Supplies are limited.
- Pass admits two adults or children.
- Able to be checked out up to two weeks in advance of performance.
- Redeem at theater box office up to two hours in advance of performance.



Available at Main Library, Linden, Martin Luther King, Parsons and Shepard branches.

Valid for 2025 performances only.

- Pass admits four individuals of any age.
- Able to be checked out up to two weeks in advance of performance.
- Redeem at theater box office up to two hours in advance of performance.
- Call the box office in advance to be sure the show isn't sold out.



Available at all Columbus Metropolitan Library locations

- Valid for Sunday games only during the regular season.
- Pass admits up to two adults and four children.
- Able to be checked out up to two weeks in advance of game.
- Passes good for bleacher seating sections.



Available at all Columbus Metropolitan Library locations

- Pass admits eight people of any age.
- Valid for seven days.



columbus
symphony
ROSSEN MILANOV, MUSIC DIRECTOR

Available at all Columbus Metropolitan Library locations.

- Valid for Masterworks performances only.
- Pass admits one adult; children under 16 are free.
- Able to be checked out up to two weeks in advance of performance.
- Seat selection must be made in advance of performance.



Available at Main Library, Barnett, Driving Park, Franklinton, Hilltop, Karl Road, Linden, Marion-Franklin, Martin Luther King, Northern Lights, Northside, Parsons, Shepard & Whitehall branches.

- Pass admits up to six people of any age.
- Valid for two days.
- Pass is not valid for Zoombezi Bay, Safari Golf Club or The Wilds.
- Pass does not include parking fees



Available at Driving Park, Martin Luther King & Shepard branches.

- Pass admits two adults and six children.
- Valid for 30 days.



Ohio History Center
& Ohio Village

Available at Driving Park, Franklinton, Hilltop, Karl Road, Linden, Martin Luther King, Northern Lights & Northside branches.

- Pass admits up to eight adults and/or children.
- Pass also valid to Ohio Village (seasonal).
- Valid for seven days.
- Valid for 10% discount at café and gift shop.



Available at Main Library, Barnett, Franklinton, Martin Luther King & Parsons branches.

- Pass admits two adults and five children.
- Valid for seven days.



What else is going on? Free kid friendly activities

Summer is the best time to get out and experience lots of fun things with the kids! Luckily for us, there are lots of FREE things to do in Columbus this summer!

► **Climb aboard the train at Homestead Metro Park:**

Homestead Metro Park also has a great playground and a fun little Nature Center!



► **Watch an outdoor movie:** Summer is time for outdoor movies and drive in movies! Most of them are free to attend! ***for more movie titles search the following event names.*



Movies at Moonlight at Easton Town Center

Free outdoor movies will take place on Tuesday evenings in June in the Town Square at dusk.

2025 movies include:

June 6: Lightyear

June 13: DC League of Super Pets

June 20: Back To the Future

June 27: Puss In Boots: The Last Wish



Free Movie Nights at Columbus Commons

Watch an outdoor movie on the large screen at Columbus Commons! Movies begin at 7 PM.

2025 movie line up is:

- May 9 - Finding Nemo
- June 20 - Inside out
- July 18 - Surf's Up
- August 1 - Tangled

For the June 23 and July 14 free movies, gates will open at 7 PM following a ticketed Columbus Symphony Orchestra Popcorn Pops performance. You will not be able to enter the park until the event has finished.

On Sept. 9, Columbus Commons will welcome families with Autism and developmental disabilities in a partnership with Bridgeway Academy & Therapy Center.

Outdoor movies conti..



Cinema Under the Stars in Friendship Park

Outdoor activities, crafts and more will take place before a showing of an outdoor movie in Friendship Park in Gahanna!

Activities begin at 7:00 PM.

***Check their website out for 2025 line up.*



Movies Under the Stars at Greenlawn Abbey

Select Fridays beginning June 3 through September 30, 2025 you can watch movies on the lawn at Greenlawn Abbey. Food truck and drinks will be available for purchase and the Abbey will be open for tours. \$5 donation at the door.

***Check their website out for 2025 line up.*



Drive-In Summer Movies at CrossRoads Baptist Church

Movies will begin 30 minutes after sunset, therefore the start times will vary. Rain dates will be for one week after scheduled date. Admission and popcorn are free!

***Check their website out for 2025 line up.*



Movie Nights at the Metro Parks

There will be 7 outdoor movies at the Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks this summer! Movies begin at dark and refreshments will be provided!

***check out their website for 2025 line up and location.*



The Main Event in Bexley

Three outdoor movies will be shown on Main Street Lawn at Sunset this summer!

2025 Movie Line Up:

- May 30 – The Wild Robot
- August 15 – Inside Out
- September 12 – If

Events include live music and food trucks beginning at 6:00 PM and the free movies begin around sundown.



Family Movie Series at East Market

Outdoor movies will take place at 8:00 PM in the Switch Yard. It's recommended that you bring a chair!

***Check out their website for 2025 line up.*

Outdoor movies conti..



Movies in the Parks in Upper Arlington

Movies are at rotating locations and are sometimes part of larger events.

2025 Movie Line up is as follows:

Friday, June 13 – Freaky Friday

Start: 7 pm

Location: Thompson Park, 4250 Woodbridge Rd

Friday, July 11 – Wild Robot (Family Camp out)

Start: 7 pm

Location: Sunny 95 Park, 4395 Carriage Hill Ln

Friday, August 8 – Wicked

Start: 7 pm

Location: Thompson Park, 4250 Woodbridge Rd

Friday, September 12 – Remember the Titans

Start: 7 pm

Location: Hastings Middle School



Movies at McNamara

These free outdoor movies take place in McNamara Park in Genoa Township. Bring a chair or blanket. A rain date is saved in case either movie is cancelled!

2025 movie line up is as follows:

June 14 – Moana 2 with pre-show luau entertainment by DJ Justice.

July 12 – Dog Man

August 9 (rain date)



Discovery District Outdoor Summer Movie Series at Columbus Museum of Art

These outdoor movies are free and free parking is available in the CMA parking lot. Movies will be shown in the sculpture garden and will begin at dusk (approximately 9:00 PM).

***Check out their website for the 2025 line up.*



- **Have fun at KidX at Polaris Fashion Place:** The **KidX** program at Polaris features a theme, activities, special guests and more! ***Check their website out for specific event details.*



- **Climb into the tree house at Inniswood Metro Gardens:** Exploring Inniswood Metro Gardens can feel like you are entering a fairy tale! There are so many beautiful gardens and the kids love the tree house!
- **Play at Commons for Kids every Friday:** Commons for Kids takes place on Friday mornings at Columbus Commons from 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM, June 9 – August 11, 2025. There are games, inflatables, face painting, and special visitors each week!
- **Do a scavenger hunt at the Outdoor Gallery at 934 Gallery:** It's free to visit the Outdoor Gallery at 934 Gallery! It's a great spot for colorful murals! They have a scavenger hunt where kids can look for specific things in the murals! It's a fun way to introduce kids to art!

- **Learn about nature at one of the Preschool Programs at Columbus and Franklin County Metro Parks:** Our Columbus Metro Parks have great programs for preschoolers! All ages, really! Plus you can visit any of their their Nature Centers for more free fun!

***check the metro parks website for event details and events.*

- **Enjoy a free concert at Celebration at the Station at Hilliard's Station Park**
These free concerts take place from 6:30 PM – 9:00 PM on Thursdays, June 1 – August 10, 2025 (except for June 29) in Hilliard's Station Park.

- **Explore the Free Activities at Olentangy Caverns:** There is a lot to do at Olentangy Caverns but did you know that some of the activities are actually free? Your kids will love the real fire truck on the playground and you can take an easy hike on the Bigfoot Walking Trail for free! These free activities are available during business hours (9:30 AM – 5:00 PM).

- **Beat the heat with a free indoor play area:** Find a free indoor play area in Columbus where your kids can stay cool and entertained!

Blendon Woods Metro Park

Westerville Community Center

Scoops and Chutes Playground at Graeter's Ice Cream

Battelle Darby Nature Center

Columbus Metropolitan Libraries

United Art and Education

The Naz Playplace

Central Park at Westerville Christian Church

Wonder Room at Columbus Museum of Art

Coffee Connections of Hilliard

Grange Insurance Audubon Center



***Also, please check out EVENTBRITE
for other events using key words "free" and "kids"***

6 Tips to Help Kids & Teens Refocus for the New School Year



Summer is a time for play, rest, and freedom—but heading back to school requires a shift in mindset. Whether your child is starting preschool or preparing for high school, these tips can help ease the transition and set the stage for a successful school year.

1. Talk about what's ahead.

Use mealtimes, car rides, or quiet moments to ask about hopes, goals, and worries for the new school year. Kids and teens may be excited about friends or sports—or nervous about teachers, grades, or social dynamics. Let them share without judgment, and offer your own stories from when you were their age to build connection.

2. Get Creative with Expression

Not every child likes to talk. Give them other ways to process back-to-school feelings—like drawing, journaling, or creating a vision board. Even young children can express themselves through pictures, while older kids might prefer making lists or playlists for the school year.

3. Watch a School-Themed Movie Together

Pick an age-appropriate movie that features school life and watch it as a family. Afterward, talk about the characters and challenges. This can be a low-pressure way to open up conversations about friendships, anxiety, peer pressure, and goals.



4. Make Back-to-School Prep Fun

Turn school shopping into a special outing. Add in a favorite meal or small treat to make it a positive memory. Let kids choose some of their supplies or clothes to help them feel excited and in control.

5. Practice Calming Skills Together

Help your child or teen learn simple coping strategies for big emotions—like taking deep breaths, stretching, or visualizing a calm place. For younger kids, try playful techniques like "robot and rag doll" (tense and relax their body). Reading books or watching short videos about emotions can help children of all ages build emotional resilience.



6. Set a Routine (and Stick With It)

Talk through the school day schedule, including morning routines, transportation, after-school plans, and bedtime. Older kids may need help balancing homework or extracurriculars. Routines provide structure, reduce stress, and make transitions smoother for everyone.

A Final Thought: Every child reacts differently to the return to school. Some are excited, while others feel overwhelmed. There's no "right" way to feel. What matters most is giving them space to talk, tools to cope, and a sense that you're in it together.





Always remember:

- My home is a safe and loving place.
- I am resilient—I can get through anything.
- I am exactly who my child needs.
- I am grateful for the moments I share with my children today.
- My greatest gift to the world may not be what I do, but who I raise.
- Taking care of myself is part of taking care of my family.
- I lead with love, strength, and example.
- Our home is filled with love and joy.
- I give my best to my family every day.
- I am my child's rock.
- My family is the best team I could ever ask for.
- I am creating happy memories with my children.
- Everything I do has meaning and purpose for my family.
- My kids trust me and look up to me.
- I am a role model they can be proud of.
- I deserve time for myself and my well-being.
- Parenthood is challenging, but I am capable and strong.
- My family and I are in this together—we've got this!
- I am building a legacy of love.
- If everyone feels loved at the end of the day, I've done enough.