



# A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

BEACON COLLEGE



**DR. NICKI NANCE**

## Strategies for helping middle schoolers **EMERGE SUCCESSFULLY** from the COVID cocoon:

### As a person

- Take care of your own anxieties before you initiate “the talk.”
- Monitor your level of anxiety. If you are running anxious, take a walk, do some deep breathing, talk with a trusted friend before you talk to your child about the re-entry.
- Educate yourself on the specific actions being taken on school buses, in schools, and at extracurricular activities so you can make informed decisions
- Acknowledge the fine line between a cautious child and an anxious child. A cautious child can still learn and have fun. Anxiety interferes with life.

### As a parent

- Before you initiate a talk about COVID, talk about the other factors inherent in middle school transition. Otherwise, they won't be listening. Ask yourself, “If there were no COVID concerns, what would my child be focusing on.”
- Start the conversation in the positive with openers like, “I'll bet you'll be glad to see your friends again.” or “Are you ready to leave this boredom behind?”
- If they are struggling with anything, think of transitions they have made in the past and help them recall how they got through those transitions.

- When you do discuss COVID, expect the “infallibility myth.” At this age, it is normal for kids to believe they are irresistible, indestructible, and omnipotent. If you can't convince them that they are vulnerable, reiterate what you want them to do about taking precautions.

### As a strategist

- Start shopping for school early. Make it a pleasurable experience. If you venture into a store, it is a good opportunity to heighten awareness of how people are using social distancing, hand washing, and masks.
- Consider letting your pre-teens get together with some friends before they actually return to school. Remember that kids need kids. They understand each other, support each other, and entertain each other. If they have done some catch up with peers before school starts, focusing on academics may be easier
- Everyone needs a little space after cocooning together, and getting kids back in school is a welcome relief for a lot of working parents. It's still important to be faccessible when school actually starts in case your child needs to touch base. Be clear about when and how they can reach you if they hit a bump in their re-entry.