

BACK TO SCHOOL

WITH
CONFIDENCE



Revive Pack

For Students & Parents

Discussion

Tips

Activities

Resources



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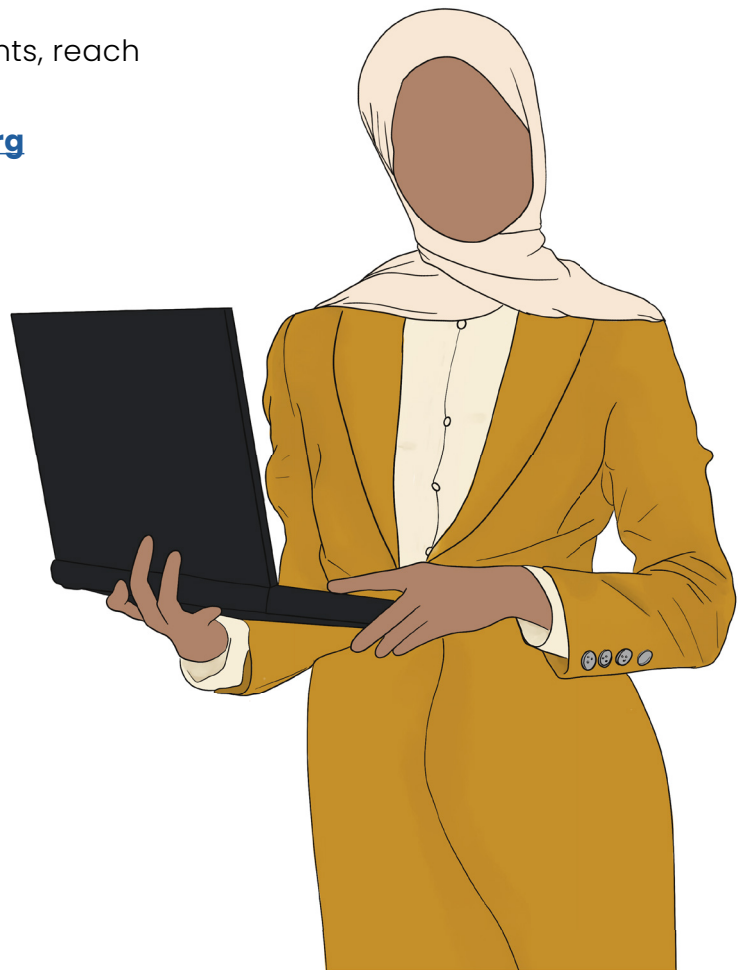


Introduction

Back-to-school season can cause mixed feelings in most students and their families. There is excitement but also a fair share of nervousness. Even before the pandemic hit, statistics showed 1 in 6 kids in America were prone to anxiety issues. And Muslim American students are no different. In fact, they face Islamophobia on top of the problems students across the country are already dealing with. This Revive Pack is dedicated to breaking down some of the issues our Muslim American youth face in schools and providing tips and tools to make this everyday part of their lives a little easier inshaAllah.

If you have any questions or comments, reach out to us:

Revive@MuslimAmericanSociety.org





Offerings

Social Media Campaign: Follow us @ MuslimAmericanSociety on facebook and instagram as we share tips on how to make going back to school easier all month long. If your chapter is looking for a social media plan, please email us at:

Revive@MuslimAmericanSociety.org.



ReMAStered Podcast:

College Dayz: Navigating Challenges on Campus, airing August 8th

Back to Campus School Group Discussion, airing August 22nd



What's Causing the School Blues

Trying to find your place in the world while simultaneously living up to the expectations of all those around you can be overwhelming. Here are some of the major difficulties youth face regarding school.

BULLYING (& CYBERBULLYING)



According to a [report](#) compiled by the **Family and Youth Institute**, 55% of Muslim students surveyed in California said they were bullied in school. With an overall negative perception of Islam and Muslims in the mainstream media, Muslim kids feel this stigma follows them into the classroom, school hallways, extracurricular activities, and online. They feel unfairly scrutinized and targeted for looking and acting according to Islamic teachings. Other students make fun of their dress, supposed country of origin, or how they practice their religion. Fifty-seven percent of Muslim students surveyed reported seeing peers make offensive posts about Islam online. What's further disappointing is learning that these same students report that 25% of bullying comes from school staff members.

ANXIETY



[70 percent](#) of high school students in a survey said anxiety is a major problem among their peers and [80 percent](#) of college students said they were sometimes and often stressed out according to another **survey**. For Muslim students, the anxiety is [compounded](#) because in addition to the usual academic or social stress young adults face, they also feel they are monitored and discriminated against on campus.

DISTRACTIONS



The digital space is the number one distraction young adults of all backgrounds face today. Whether it's streaming videos on YouTube, scrolling through TikTok, or posting outfits of the day on Instagram stories, teens spend over eight hours a day on screen time, according to a survey by Common Sense Media.



What's Causing the School Blues (continued)

These distractions can lead to [depression](#), [sleeping problems](#) and [low academic performance](#) as well.



TIME MANAGEMENT

With assignments, standardized tests, and extracurricular activities, it can be nerve-wracking for students of all ages to manage everything simultaneously. Add social media into the mix and getting things done on time becomes almost impossible.



PEER PRESSURE

[Ninety](#) Percent of teens report feeling peer pressure in school. This means they feel a pressure to think or act a certain way that others around them will approve of because it's the trendy thing to do. Whether it's a style of dressing, the music they listen to, or the places they want to go to after school, students are easily influenced by one another consciously or subconsciously.



10 tips on Back-to-School Survival



1. **Check Your Intentions**

For Muslims, starting with the right intention is the first step to success. Make or renew your intention for going to school. Remember, doing anything for the sake of Allah becomes an act of worship. So, when returning to school, remind yourself that you're attaining knowledge to cultivate a better world and a closer bond with Him. That's what matters more than worldly trends or popularity.



2. **Visit School Before It Starts**

Most school and college buildings are open days before the official start date. Visiting the school or campus beforehand to familiarize yourself can lessen some of the dread. Read your favorite surah before entering to create a positive association.



3. **Meet with Classmates Beforehand**

Research shows that the presence of familiar friendly faces can help improve students' academic performance and emotional adjustment during school transitions. So meet up with classmates or friends who attend the same school/college before it starts.



4. **Speak Up**

Don't keep your anxiety bottled up. Talk to your parents or friends about your feelings and how they can help. Parents can get their children to share their feelings without pressure by asking indirect questions. E.g., What do you think you'll be learning in science class this year?



5. **Feel Your Feelings Freely**

Accept that starting anything for the first time is hard and that it takes time to settle into things. Your schoolmates are dealing with the same situation. Parents should validate their children's feelings and let them know difficult things get easier with practice.



6. **Check Out Helpful Resources**

Whether going back to school means dealing with bullying, racism, distress, or more, experts like the Family and Youth Institute have specialized toolkits for tackling these difficult issues. Check them out here: thefyi.org/toolkits.



7. **Own Your Muslimness**

Being visibly Muslim can be hard. But it helps to change your perspective. In today's world, many people take pride in what makes them different or stand out. The Prophet (s) said, "Islam began as something strange, and it will return to being strange, so blessed are the strangers." Be proud to be unapologetically Muslim – someone who sticks to their principles through thick and thin! Also, assess your social media usage and unfollow accounts that make you feel bad about your Muslim identity.



10 tips on Back-to-School Survival (continued)



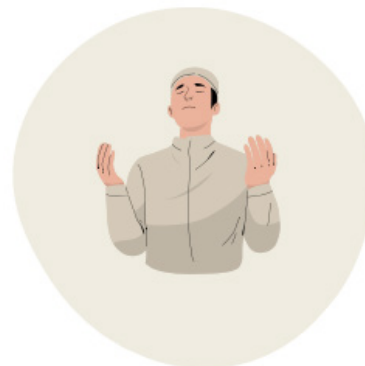
8. **Join a Muslim Student Association (or Start One)**

Look for a Muslim Student Association in school or on campus to find like-minded new friends. They will also likely have accommodations for things like prayer spaces. If none exists, consider banding with fellow Muslim students to start your own. MSA National explains how here: msanational.org/resources.



9. **Find A Mentor**

Getting advice from an experienced and encouraging mentor or youth leader can be life-changing. Older siblings or relatives and trusted teachers can serve as excellent mentors. You can also find a mentor and youth group at a MAS chapter near you: masnational.org



10. **Make Du'a**

Du'a is one of the most powerful tools for a believer. Make du'a for ease, good teachers and friends, a safe learning environment, and anything else you need. Have full faith that your prayer will be answered in the best possible way because you asked the One who has power over everything.

We hope these pointers ease some of the tension when it comes to back-to-school season. Is there anything missing you would add to the list? Email us at: Revive@muslimamericansociety.org.



Confidence Boosters

If school has you feeling down, you could use a boost! These ayahs and ahadith will comfort the soul.

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزَنُوا وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

"Do not falter or grieve, for you will have the upper hand, if you are true believers." [3:139]

فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ

"[Then] when you have decided on a course of action, put your trust in Allah: Allah loves those who put their trust in Him. [3:159]

إِنْ يَنْصُرْكُمُ اللَّهُ فَلَا غَالِبَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ يَخْذِلْكُمْ فَمَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَنْصُرْكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

If Allah helps you [believers], no one can overcome you. If He forsakes you, who else can help you? Believers should put their trust in Allah." [3: 160]

فَهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَلِغُ أَمْرِهِ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا

And [Allah] will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allāh - then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allāh will accomplish His purpose. Allāh has already set for everything a [decreed] extent. [65:3]

The Prophet (s) said: "...Seek help from Allah, the Most High, and do not lose heart, and if anything in the form of trouble comes to you, don't say: If I had not done that, it would not have happened so and so, but say: Allah did that what He had ordained; and you saying 'if' opens the gate for Satan." (Muslim, 2664)

The Prophet's (s) advice to a young companion: "Young man, I will teach you some words. Be mindful of God, and He will take care of you. Be mindful of Him, and you shall find Him at your side. If you ask, ask of God. If you need help, seek it from God. Know that if the whole world were to gather together in order to help you; they would not be able to help you except if God had written so. And if the whole world were to gather together in order to harm you; they would not harm you except if God had written so. The pens have been lifted, and the pages have dried." (At-Tirmidhi, 2516)



Keep Your Eyes On The Prize

Many times students get very occupied with academics, part time jobs, extracurricular activities, etc. and forget the importance of prioritizing and maintaining their spiritual health, i.e. their connection with Allah. The ultimate victory is living a life close to Allah and earning His Paradise in the Hereafter. To get there inshaAllah, make sure to:

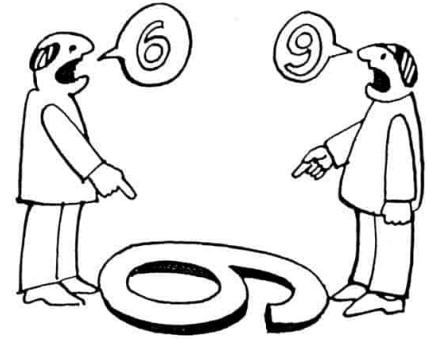
1. Designate time for Quran and Adhkaar daily
2. Seek out and attend Islamic events at your school or campus
3. Commit to a weekly halaqa in your local masjid or on campus
4. Make sure you have a righteous friend that gives you good advice, reminds you of Allah's rights upon you, and is happy to worship together with you





Activities

1. KEEPING THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE



Age Group 10 and up

Materials Small size Jigsaw puzzles (100–300 pieces). Here are some you can purchase online: [Puzzle 1](#) (100 pieces) , [Puzzle 2](#) (300 pieces)

Instructions Have a participant or a group of 2–3 participants work on assembling the Jigsaw Puzzle. Once they are done, reflect on the following questions.

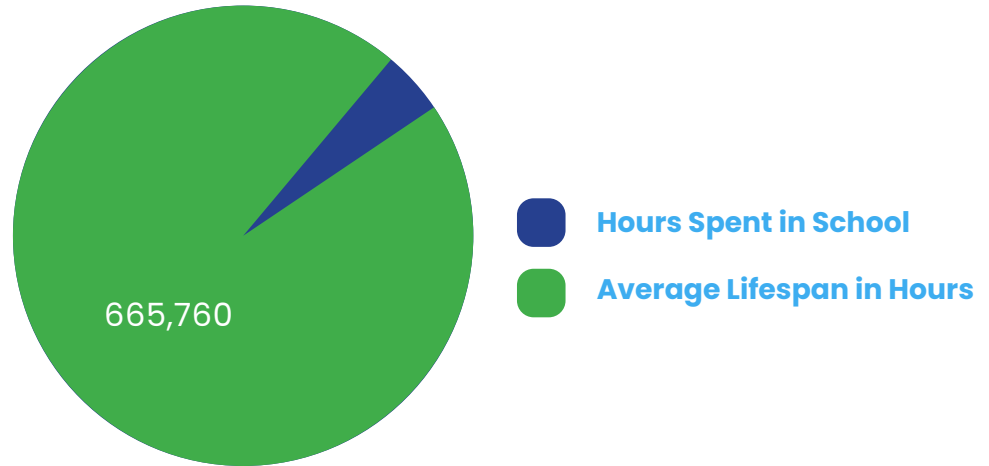
- Reflection Questions**
- How long did it take you to complete the Puzzle?
 - How long did you spend completing 5% of the Jigsaw Puzzle?
 - Did you know that your schooling only makes up, on average, 5% of your lifetime?
 - Do you think your worth should be tied to 5% of how you lived your life?
 - Do you have the urge to prove yourself to fit in with people at school? Is this taking up much of your time and energy, and is it worth it?
 - Has this exercise helped put life in perspective for you?

- Discussion**
- Being perceived in a certain way by schoolmates might be one of the most important goals for youth. After all, most schools tend to have a strict internal hierarchy, and no one wants to be considered a ‘weirdo’ or ‘loser’ by their peers. Living through that can feel overwhelming, causing youth to lose themselves as they endlessly try to impress those around them.
 - Did you know that a student spends, on average, 23,040 hours of their life in school (Kindergarten through College)? That might seem like a lot, but it’s less than 5% of the lifespan of an average American. Keeping things in perspective matters.



Activities

Discussion



- Don't needlessly worry about what others think of you or how you can change yourself to live up to their expectations of what is socially acceptable or cool.
- This time in school will pass, and then you will find yourself in a new place with new people to please.
- As Muslims, we strive to live up to the expectations set by Allah and His messenger (s) only. Remember, people come and go, but Allah always remains.
- The life of this world is not even a dust particle compared to the Hereafter, which lasts for eternity.



Activities

2. WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Age Group 13 and up

Instructions Read the question below and think about how you would respond. Share your answers with others and also discuss the answer provided below.

**What
would
YOU
DO?**



SCENARIO #1: You're in your final year and your buddies say let's all go to Prom together. What do you do?

- You might be thinking it's harmless to go if you're simply attending with friends and not a girlfriend or boyfriend. However, the atmosphere of Prom is one devoid of any modesty where you will end up witnessing indecency. Not to mention the whole environment promotes "hook-up culture" in the guise of lighthearted fun.
- The fear of missing out on fun with friends is real. But it's important to remember that for anything we sacrifice for the sake of Allah, He replaces it with something better.
- Tell your friends that you're not interested in (or comfortable) going to Prom. Simply put, it's not your thing. Politely decline without feeling insecure or embarrassed. You have a right to uphold your boundaries and there's no shame in that.
- Instead, you might consider holding your own graduation get together during that time or invite them for a day out at another time to do your favorite activities together.
- Be confident about following the commandments of your faith with the knowledge that you will be rewarded with endless lavish parties with your loved ones in Paradise inshaAllah.
- Is there any other way to handle this situation?



Activities

2. WHAT WOULD YOU DO? (CONTINUED)

SCENARIO #2: As a hijabi playing basketball, your coach blows her whistle and pointedly asks you if you have to wear “whatever that is” on your head. What do you do?

- You’ve just experienced a microaggression. What’s that?
It’s defined as “a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group.”
- Your coach might not have meant to put you on the spotlight or demean your hijab, but did so anyway. How do you respond?
- Immediately correct her by saying “Do you mean my headscarf? It’s called a hijab.” Let her acknowledge this correction.
- Next confidently assert your principles. “Yes, It’s very important to me and I absolutely do not feel comfortable removing it.”
- This should most likely diffuse the situation. But if she insists it’s some kind of an issue or prevents you from playing, get your parents or a community leader involved to sort out the situation.
- Do you think there’s another way to handle this case?



Activities

2. WHAT WOULD YOU DO? (CONTINUED)

SCENARIO #3: You're taking a college history course, and are told the reading for the next class is a critique of Islam from an ex-Muslim. What do you do?

- Don't panic. You might be wondering if you have the knowledge to refute the claims made in this critique. "Can I really defend my faith in front of my professor and classmates?"
- It is natural to be nervous, but take a deep breath. Allah has presented this opportunity to you to give dawah, and He will also give you the courage and wisdom to do so successfully inshaAllah.
- Remember as a Muslim you are an ambassador of Islam and have inherited the legacy of the prophets to call people to Allah's cause.
- Get down to business by identifying all the author's arguments. Talk to people of knowledge or use trustworthy resources from online to counteract the author's claims. You will find that a lot of the author's arguments are baseless.
- Make dua Allah gives you strength and eloquence, and then during class counter the critique with facts you've collected from the Quran, Sunnah, scholars, and normative Muslim experience.
- You will be surprised at how sincerity, proper research/planning, and sticking to your principles will make you exude confidence in the eyes of your peers and professor.
- Is there another way to deal with this scenario?



Activities

3. TIME MANAGEMENT FOR WELL-BEING

Credit: From [University of Minnesota Extension website](https://www.extension.umn.edu/).



Age Group 11 and up

Materials Blank sheet of paper, pencil, pie chart handout, and crayons or colored pencils or markers

Instructions Introduce the activity first. Today we are going to do an activity that will help us manage our time better by helping us think about what we do each day and how we spend our time.

1. For the first step, each person will make a list of everything they do on an average school day.
2. Next to each item write down how long you spend doing that thing. Don't forget important things like meals, sleeping, or showering. Allow youth 5–10 minutes to complete their list of tasks.
3. Then group similar tasks together to see how much time is spent on different types of activities. Ask each person to look through their list and make groups of activities. They can make as many groups as they want. Examples might include a group for school and homework, a group for chores, or a group for free time.
4. Once youth have grouped their lists, introduce the blank pie chart. The pie chart will be used to represent each of the different groups and how much of each person's day they spend on them. For example, if someone spends 12 hours sleeping, they would fill in $\frac{1}{2}$ of the chart for sleep. If they spend 6 hours at school, they would fill in $\frac{1}{4}$ of the chart for school.
5. Give youth 5 minutes to color in their pie chart. Help with adding up time or figuring out fractions as needed.



Activities

3. TIME MANAGEMENT FOR WELL-BEING (CONTINUED)

Reflection Questions In large or small groups, ask youth to share about their pie chart.

Reflection Questions

1. Are you surprised by the size of any part of your pie chart?
2. Which slices of the pie chart are most important to you? Does it seem like those slices are the right size based on how important they are to you?
3. Which activities in your day have to be done for you to feel your best?

Application

1. Ask youth to identify when they have the most energy or are in the best mood: in the morning, afternoon or evening.
2. More difficult tasks, or things we don't enjoy doing, can often be easier to get done when we have the most energy. Looking back at their lists, which items could they do during their peak-energy time?
3. Give youth five minutes to time block an average day by listing out when they will do each task. A standard to-do list tells you what you need to do, time blocking tells you when you're going to do it. Remind them to think about what time of day works best for studying or exercise, for example.
4. Encourage youth not to plan all their time. There will always be unexpected things to do or unplanned interruptions. If you plan 75-80% of your available time, there will be extra time to complete tasks you didn't expect, or those that take longer than you expect. You can build in buffers or mini-breaks between tasks.

Invite youth to share their schedule and answer these question in small groups or the large group:

- What things on your schedule do you look forward to the most?
- How much time do you spend doing self-care (activities that make you feel good)?
- Who can support you in managing your time well?
- What's one change you are going to try for better time management?



Activities

4. THIRD PERSON SELF-TALK

Age Group 10 and up



Instructions This is an individual activity to do on your own time. Next time you're having a hard time dealing with something, talk to yourself in the third person and advise yourself how you would advise a friend. Learn more about this strategy in Dr. Jason Moser's book [Middle School Superpowers: Raising Resilient Tweens in Turbulent Times](#).

Example Instead of saying, "I fell in front of the whole class. I'm so embarrassed! Everyone will think I'm a loser," say, "Ahmed fell in front of his classmates. He's embarrassed and is afraid they will think he's a loser." This will make you step back and analyze the situation more rationally rather than emotionally. Why would everyone think Ahmad is a loser just for accidentally falling?

- Reflection Questions**
- How did assessing and advising yourself in the third person give you a fresh perspective on your problem?
 - Did you find that you were less hard on yourself this way?
 - Will you continue to use this method in the future? Why or why not?



Social Media Toolkit

Use the graphics and captions below to raise awareness about Back to School issues and tips on how to make it easier for teens and college students.

School's about to start!! Here are some simple tips we've put together to make Back To School survival easy.

SHARE these with a friend or school mate who can benefit from these tips - and remind them that school's just around the corner. Link to graphics:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ALm8QWJqZ2wSvGd8PiyHNo8qzeDhpW4C>

[#backtoschool](#) [#school](#) [#college](#) [#university](#) [#campus](#) [#friends](#) [#study](#) [#studying](#) [#MAS](#) [#MASnational](#) [#tips](#) [#backtoschooltips](#) [#survival](#) [#schoolsurvival](#)





Resources

Books



MAS Publishing

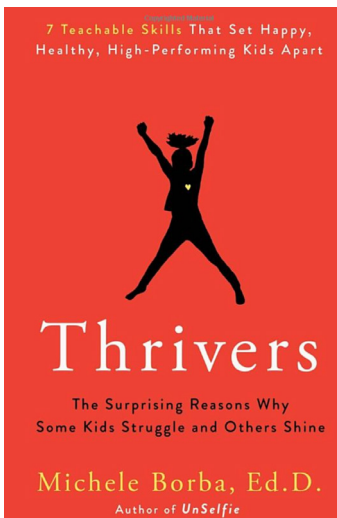
The Youth Tarbiya Guide You've Been Looking For is Here!

Cultivating Character empowers you with thought-provoking material to develop your young Muslim's identity.

Order your copy today: [MASNational.org/CC](https://www.masnational.org/CC)

Cultivating Character

www.masnational.org/CC



7 Teachable Skills That Set Happy, Healthy, High-Performing Kids Apart

Thrivers

The Surprising Reasons Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine

Michele Borba, Ed.D.
Author of *UnSelfie*

Thrivers:
The Surprising Reasons Why Some Kids Struggle and Others Shine

<https://a.co/d/b8tTqSg>



"I cannot overstate the value of this book...a must-read for anyone raising, educating, or caring for middle school students."
—Jack Shonkoff, PhD, author of *Unstoppable: Under Pressure and the Enduring Lives of Teenagers*

Middle School
SUPERPOWERS
Raising Resilient Tweens in Turbulent Times

PHYLLIS L. FAGELL, LCPC
AUTHOR OF *MIDDLE SCHOOL MATTERS*

Middle School Superpowers:
Raising Resilient Tweens in Turbulent Times

<https://a.co/d/7wXLYwP>



Resources (continued)

Statistics

<https://www.thefyi.org/toolkits/>

<https://research.com/education/student-stress-statistics>

<https://childmind.org/article/classroom-anxiety-in-children/>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/social-media-mental-health-anxiety-depression-teens-surgeon-general-rcna85575>

Self-Help

<https://www.msanational.org/resources>

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/bam/child-development/back-to-school-resources.htm>

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Health/aftercareinformation/pages/conditions.aspx?hwid=ug6046>

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/07/25/health/middle-schooler-self-image-wellness/index.html>

<https://extension.umn.edu/youth-learning-and-skills/daily-time-management-wellbeing>