



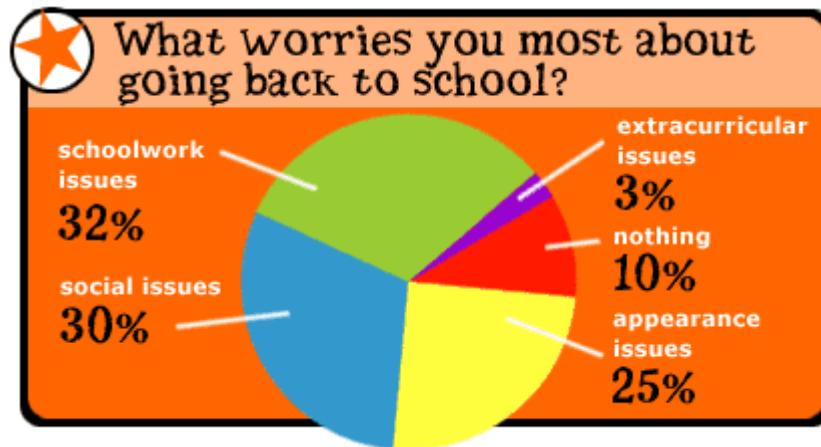
ASK THE Y GUY Survey: What Stresses You Out About School?

The CCYM Y Guy asked 100 teens to tell them what stresses them out about school. CCYM compiled the results and here is the results:

A new school year is exciting. There's that wonderful feeling of making a fresh start, catching up with old friends, and making progress by moving up a grade. But there's no denying that it can be stressful too.

What's Worrying You

If you find yourself preparing for school by hoping for the best and imagining the worst, you're not alone. Here's what we heard from 100 people who took our survey on back-to-school worries.



One third said they worry most about schoolwork. No surprise there. You'll be studying more advanced material, so it's natural to worry about whether you'll do OK.

But not everyone said schoolwork was their biggest worry. **Just as many people said they worry most about social issues like fitting in, having friends, being judged, or being teased.** Since social life is such a big part of school, it's not a shock that social issues are the biggest worry for some people.

Besides schoolwork and social stuff, another category ranked high on the worry list: **appearance**. One-fourth of the people who responded to our survey said appearance issues worried them most of all. If this is you, you've got plenty of company.

Kimberly, 14, told us, "I'm happy about going back to school — I'm bored stiff here! But I'm worried about reputation, teasing, failing, and being a nerd."

So we asked people to tell us how they plan to cope with the things that worry them most, and whether they have advice for others. You can see what they said on the following pages.

Managing Worries About Schoolwork

Rachel, 15, told us, "I'm kinda hard on myself, like I feel really bad if I don't have a 4.0 grade average."

Lots of people are hard on themselves, but worrying can just add to the pressure. Casey, 15, offered this advice: "Stressing too much about it doesn't get you anywhere. It's good to be concerned about your work, but you have to act on that."



Do something that de-stresses you, like drawing or reading a book or listening to music or writing - or, of course, scream in your pillow.

Ann Marie, 14

Here are some of the plans you have for coping with schoolwork:

Zach, 18, said, "Better time management. I need to stop talking with the social butterflies and get to work!"

Michael, 16, plans to "come home, take a quick break, and then get started on my work straight away. Procrastination only brings frustration!"

Katie, 17, offered this advice: "To avoid trouble, do homework as soon as possible and at least start projects the day you get them."

Finding the Right Balance — and Support

Fallon, 16, said, "Finding time for everything is going to be a challenge!"

Daniel, 14, agreed. "I play sports so I have to keep my grades up to play." How does he keep the balance? "Work really hard and lean on my parents for lots of support. If you have parents around that actually take an interest in you, take advantage of that and let them be there for you."



When you are having a tough time, find something you like to do. For me, it's working at the animal shelter. It helps to take your mind off things.

Haley, 14

Relying on other people for support and advice can help balance all the pressures school can bring.

Claire, 15, depends on her brother. "He is 18 and has been through it."

Dana, 14, advised, "Use the guidance counselor. That's why they are there."

Chelsea, 16, said her teachers were a big help when she was trying to catch up in school: "Since I asked for help I've felt more relaxed and more normal so that now it doesn't bother me as much as it did."

Balancing school with life's other demands means staying healthy. Lots of people told us their goal for the school year is to eat well, get plenty of exercise, and lots of sleep so they'll be primed to succeed.



Try to find your ultimate soother. I found mine: music! Whenever things worry me, I put my headphones on and forget about my problems for a while.

Ashlee, 14

Managing Social Pressures and Problems

When it comes to the social scene, making new friends is one of the biggest worries people mentioned. Lots of people said that friends would be in different classes or even at different schools.

Jessie, 15, said, "I'm going to try to make new friends and talk more. Don't worry about being awkward because others are too. Lots of people are good at being cool, but they are insecure too."

Finding a safe, welcoming group is a great foundation for dealing with the ups and downs of school. Jessie's advice: "It's important to have your own little or big group that you can hang out with."

Lolo, 14, explained how "My best friend left last year, and I'm worried about who I'll hang out with." Her strategy is: "Don't hang out with anyone who has a good social image but who is mean. Try to find someone who will really be your friend."

Lots of people are concerned about drifting apart from friends and breaking away from existing friendships to start new ones.

Jen, 16, told us, "I have not talked to my best friends all summer. I don't want to be their friend anymore, but they don't get that."

Leanna, 14, said, "I am stressed about the groups and who I am going to sit with because I have different friends in different groups."

Tim, 14, worried about "making new friends without ex-friends spreading rumors."

Brittany, 15, who worried about dealing with "rude old friends" offered this advice: "Be nice to everyone. You never know who you may need help from in the future."

And Amina, 14, said, "There are these really jealous girls and they are always stressing me out." She found that just being nice to them can make a lot of difference: "They will be amazed at how you treat them and maybe loosen up some."

Using kindness to stop meanness in its tracks is one good way to deal. Jessica, 16, has another strategy for coping with rude people: "I just ignore them. It drives them crazy when you don't act or seem like you care about anything they have to say."

Some of you worry that the things you did in the past will influence how people see you now. Tina, 15, told us, "My best friend and I were in a car accident last year when we decided to go to a party instead of school. So I am worried that my peers and teachers will think that I am irresponsible because of that incident."

Amanda, 14, said her way of dealing with rumors and gossip is "to hold my head up high, smile, and try to create a new reputation for myself. Change the negatives into positives!"



I go out and run.

Shane, 14

Looking Good

How we feel about the way we look is closely tied to social issues, feeling comfortable, and being accepted.

Codi, 14, said, "I am not usually a shy person, but starting high school in a new school is scary. I don't know anyone other than those on my soccer team. I am afraid that once they see me out of my soccer clothes and in my skater cut-up clothes they won't want to talk to me."

"At my old school, I was the most popular girl," said Emily, 14. "Now I'm starting to get acne and developing." Dealing with body changes is a big issue for lots of people.

It's natural to worry about appearance, but most people said they try to keep things in perspective.

Casey, 14, said, "A year from now, will what you worried about really be a big deal? Other stuff is going to happen."

Lots of you recommend getting the support of a friend, parent, or counselor when you're feeling down about your appearance.

Keisha, 15, said, "Don't worry about it so much. And when your family and friends say you look great, accept the compliment, because it's true!"

Mickie, 14, told us she has no worries about starting school, but she does have this advice for looking good on the first day: "Wear clothes that fit your style. Don't wear something that makes you look like a poser."

And Lia, 14, reminds us, "If you're worried about your clothes and how you look, just remember that it's what's on the inside that matters."

We couldn't agree more.

The Conference Council on Youth Ministries (CCYM) is the Youth Ministry for the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Questions should be emailed to: CCYM@bwcumc.org or to Pam Bowen: pbowen@bwcumc.org