



SPECTRUM STRONG

AUGUST

2026

A NOTE FROM THE SPECTRUM STRONG TEAM

Can you believe it's already August? It feels like summer just began, and now we're already sharing back-to-school tips in this month's newsletter! Whether your family is eagerly anticipating the new school year or feeling a mix of excitement and uncertainty, we hope you'll find this month's resources helpful as you prepare for the transition.

Before we look ahead, we want to thank everyone who joined us for our Family Music Day Camp! We had a fantastic turnout, and it was such a joy to see families laughing, connecting, and enjoying music together. Watching children and caregivers create memories side by side reminded us why building community is at the heart of everything we do.

August is shaping up to be another exciting month for Spectrum Strong! We're thrilled to be part of National Night Out on Tuesday, August 4, at Lakefront Park. If you're planning to attend, be sure to stop by our booth and say hello—we'd love to meet you, answer questions, and connect with your family.

We're also excited to participate in the North Hudson Pepperfest Parade on Saturday, August 15! We hope to see lots of familiar faces cheering along the parade route. If you'd like to walk with Spectrum Strong in the parade, there's still time to join us! Simply send us an email, and we'll be happy to share the details.

As always, thank you for being part of the Spectrum Strong community. We appreciate your support and look forward to connecting with many of you at our upcoming events. Wishing you a wonderful August!

Upcoming Events

SATURDAY, AUGUST 15
PEPPERFEST GRAND PARADE
11:00-1:00

SUNDAY, AUGUST 23
END OF SUMMER FAMILY PICNIC
11:00AM-1:00PM
BURTON FIELD



Shining A Spotlight On: End of Summer Family Picnic

Join us as we celebrate the end of summer together! We'd love to see your family at our End of Summer Family Picnic. Bring a picnic lunch, spend time with other families who truly "get it," and enjoy a relaxed afternoon of connection and fun. In addition to the playground, we'll have games and activities for both kids and adults to enjoy. As a special treat, Spectrum Strong will be providing a sweet treat for everyone!

Sunday, August 23, 2026
11:00am-1:00pm
Burton Field, Hudson, WI



Our Lending Library helps connect families so gently used adaptive equipment can continue making a difference.

If you'd like to donate an item:

📷 Snap a photo

📝 Send us a short description

💻 We'll add it to our website and connect you with a family when someone is interested.

Together, we can make supports more accessible—because every child deserves the tools they need to thrive. ❤️

BACK TO SCHOOL: HELPING YOUR CHILD TRANSITION WITH CONFIDENCE

As summer winds down, many families begin thinking about backpacks, school supplies, and new routines. For autistic children, however, the transition back to school can involve much more than buying new shoes. Changes in routines, environments, expectations, sensory experiences, and social demands can all require significant energy to navigate.

The good news? There isn't one "right" way to prepare for school. Small, thoughtful supports that honor your child's individual needs can make a meaningful difference.

Begin Shifting Routines Gradually

If bedtime and wake-up times have drifted over the summer, start adjusting them about one to two weeks before school begins. Making small changes of 15–30 minutes every few days is often more successful than making a dramatic change overnight.

Remember that flexibility looks different for every child. Some children adapt quickly, while others need more time—and that's okay.

Preview What to Expect

Uncertainty can be stressful. Helping your child know what to expect can reduce anxiety and increase confidence. Consider:

- Visiting the school or playground before the first day.
- Walking or driving the route to school.
- Looking at pictures of the building, classroom, teacher, or bus.
- Reading a social narrative about the first day of school.
- Talking through what a typical school day might look like.



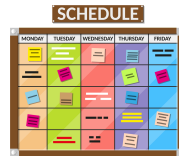
The goal isn't to rehearse every possible situation but to help your child build familiarity with the new environment.

Create Visual Supports

Many autistic children benefit from seeing information rather than only hearing it.

Helpful visual supports might include:

- A morning routine checklist
- A backpack packing list
- A visual schedule of the school day
- A countdown calendar until the first day of school



Visual supports can increase predictability and reduce the cognitive load of remembering multiple steps.

Support Emotional Preparation

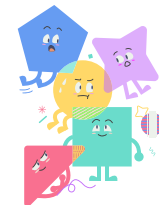
Back-to-school emotions can be complicated. A child may be excited about seeing friends while also feeling worried about new expectations or unfamiliar routines. Instead of trying to "fix" those feelings, acknowledge them.

Try saying:

"It's okay to have lots of different feelings."

"New things can feel exciting and overwhelming at the same time."

"We'll figure this out together."



Feeling understood often helps children regulate more effectively than being told not to worry.

Refresh Important Skills Naturally

Rather than creating long practice sessions, weave school-related skills into everyday life.

You might practice:

- Opening lunch containers
- Putting on shoes or a backpack
- Following a simple morning routine
- Waiting briefly while taking turns
- Asking for help using speech, AAC, gestures, or another preferred communication method

Short, positive practice opportunities are often more effective than repeated drills.



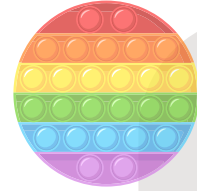
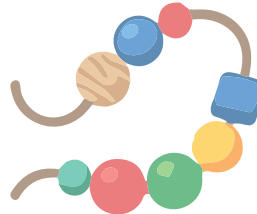
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Prepare for Sensory Needs

Every school environment has unique sensory experiences, and sensory preferences may change depending on what is happening around a child. A child who enjoys loud music or tight hugs at home may need quiet, space, or different sensory supports when they're feeling overwhelmed at school. Consider talking with your child about what helps them feel regulated and sharing those supports with the school.

Helpful items might include:

- Noise-reducing headphones
- Sunglasses or hats for bright lights
- Chewable jewelry (if appropriate)
- Fidgets
- A preferred comfort item (if allowed)
- Access to movement or quiet breaks



Supporting sensory regulation isn't about eliminating challenges—it's about giving children the tools they need to participate in ways that work for them.

Build a Collaborative Partnership with School

Your child knows what works best for them—and you know your child best. Sharing that knowledge with educators creates a stronger team.

Consider letting the teacher know:

- Your child's interests and strengths
- Communication preferences
- Sensory supports that help
- Signs your child may be becoming overwhelmed
- Strategies that are effective at home



Starting the year with strengths rather than challenges helps everyone build positive relationships.

Remember That Regulation Comes Before Learning

The first days and weeks of school are a period of adjustment. Your child may come home exhausted, need more downtime, eat differently, or have less energy for activities after school. This doesn't necessarily mean school is going poorly—it often reflects the significant mental, social, sensory, and emotional work involved in adapting to a new environment.

Whenever possible, prioritize connection over correction. Offering opportunities to decompress, move, enjoy preferred interests, or simply relax can help refill your child's energy.

Progress doesn't always look like a perfect first day. Sometimes it looks like making it through the day, asking for help, trying something new, or returning the next morning.

Every small step counts.

A Final Reminder

There is no perfect back-to-school plan because there is no one-size-fits-all autistic experience. The most effective support is individualized, compassionate, and responsive to your child's unique strengths, preferences, and needs. As parents, you don't have to have all the answers. Simply showing up, listening, adjusting, and partnering with your child makes an incredible difference.

At Spectrum Strong, we're cheering your family on as another school year begins. We hope this year is filled with growth, connection, understanding, and moments that remind every child they belong exactly as they are.



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