National Back to School Month

Back to School Month in August gears up parents, teachers, schools, and students for a season of education.

With shorter days, it’s time to dust off the backpacks, fill them up, and plan for a new school year. Preparing children for the new year includes everything from supplies, clothes, checkups, planning schedules, and making new friends. Teachers develop their lesson plans and ready their classrooms for the new, smiling faces.

Despite all the excitement, the expense of going back to school can put a damper on going back to school. Fill-the-bus events, backpack programs, and teacher supply initiatives help to fill the gaps. Organizations around the country pull together to make the first day of school fun every year.

Another resource can be found on the National Day Calendar Classroom page. We will prepare new lessons to add to last year’s wide variety of subjects for every age level.

Whether you’re ready or not, friends, activities, and books are just around the corner. Get ready to learn!

HOW TO OBSERVE

Check your supply list, tour your new school, learn your schedule. Volunteer to show a new student around your stomping grounds. Have some fun before summer is over, too! How do you get ready for back to school? Share on social media using #NationalBackToSchoolMonth.

Power of Internal Customer Service

Imagine everyone treating fellow workers and departments like valued external customers. This practice is called a customer-centric positive workplace strategy. It produces a cascade of benefits, like reduced stress, fewer conflicts, improved productivity, and higher morale. It requires keen awareness but starts with showing positivity in interactions. Crucial is avoiding seeing others as a nuisance (e.g., “Oh no. It’s the folks in the print shop again. What could they possibly want?”). Be empathetic so you hear beyond a request from an internal customer to identify with the need. Be proactive in helping solve problems. Don’t be avoidant or keep others wondering when or if they’ll hear from you again. Keep promises.

Practice Cheerfulness to Find Job Passion

Feeling a lack of passion for a job is not uncommon, but there is a potential fix. Under stress, it’s easy to focus on negative emotions and thoughts in a downward spiral. You are then less likely to see the upside, the things you do that contribute to the greater good—the part of your job you can be passionate about. The good news is that cheerfulness—demonstrating happiness and optimism—is a conscious behavior. You can use it to manage stress and increase job satisfaction. Follow these three steps: 1) Find the part of your job you do like—any aspect you can be cheerful about. If you carry groceries to customers’ cars, focus on how this service benefits customers. 2) Link this benefit to your desire to find happiness in the role you play. 3) Talk up this aspect with others. If you do, you may recognize more meaning in your job. Research shows practicing cheerfulness, along with having positive thoughts and emotions, has big returns. It can build resilience for when the going gets tough. It allows you to feel more in control and less focused on negativity. It boosts desire to fend off negativity. It also helps increase the number of positive relationships you have—people will want to hang around you more, and this can lead to improved employment opportunities and even improved financial outcomes. Happiness is a do-it-yourself project. Use purposeful cheerfulness as one life skill to help you achieve it.

Facing Personal Change

When change is upon us, our attention is quickly drawn to the pain of moving from what is familiar to what is unfamiliar. This occurrence is what fuels fear, anxiety, what-ifs, and worst-case scenarios. This is what you repel. So, coping with change is about wrestling with unknowns. How can you do this? Replace harmful thoughts with positive ones as soon as you become aware of them by imagining good outcomes that will come from the change. Use your mind’s eye to see these results. You won’t see a 180-degree flip immediately, but you will make a big dent in your fearfulness—usually enough to carry you to the next step: looking for opportunities in the change that create new excitement.
**It’s National Wellness Month**

All during August, National Wellness Month focuses on self-care, managing stress and promoting healthy routines. Create wholesome habits in your lifestyle all month long and see how much better you feel!

Research has shown self-care helps manage stress and promotes happiness. Whether you challenge yourself to a new yoga pose or try a different spa treatment, make a small change and impact your health in positive ways.

There are numerous ways to make those small changes, too.

- Increase your water intake.
- Add more fruits and veggies to your meals.
- Monitor your sleep and make adjustments for better sleep habits.
- Join a yoga, walking, or aerobics class.
- Learn to meditate.

These small steps can lead to many more healthy habits in your lifestyle.

**Take Micro-breaks to Empower Productivity**

Micro-breaks are complete detachment from your work for two minutes or less. They are powerful tools for managing stress, improving engagement, increasing productivity, and improving creativity. A micro-break might involve walking to a window to gaze out for a minute or getting a cup of coffee. Proof that micro-breaks work is, for example, spotting needed changes in a letter or authored document upon returning from a distraction. The key is remembering to take the break. For that, experiment with apps like TogglTrack or Nag, among others.

**Ostracized at Work**

Being ignored and excluded at work—ostracized—may be more emotionally harmful than harassment, according to one Canadian study. Although more employees say they are ostracized than harassed, most surveyed don’t perceive these behaviors as serious. Being ostracized has commonly been linked to workplace violence, so there is a compassionate aspect to helping workers feel like they belong, as well as a risk reduction rationale. Have you witnessed ostracism in the workplace? If so, what can you do to create a positive and inclusive workplace for all? [Comments found at the following resource offer insight on the impact of ostracism.](www.futurity.org [search “micro-breaks”])

**August is National Dog Month**

All during the month of August, National Dog Month celebrates our loveable canine pals smack in the middle of the dog days of summer. Dogs are the #1 most commonly owned pets on the planet, and with good reason. Did you know that scientific studies prove our pawsome companions make us happier, less stressed, and more optimistic? The list of benefits to spending time with a dog goes on and on, but it all proves one thing—that a month-long celebration of our furry best friends has been a long time coming.

Whether your dog burrows under the blankets with you at night, plays in the sprinkler, or alerts you to a health need, we know they are constantly improving our lives and making them more fun. Not only that, but the companionship and affection we share with them make their lives better, too. Dog lovers know a life without dogs is a life missing something special, and that’s a fact worth celebrating.

**HOW TO OBSERVE #NationalDogMonth**

This is the easy part. Celebrate with your best pal. Take an extra-long walk. Play fetch or spare an extra Milk-Bone treat. Get your dog the toy he’s been wanting or visit the dog park. Speaking of visits, make your next veterinarian appointment to ensure your pet stays healthy and strong. Donate to your local shelter or to a larger dog nonprofit. You can also volunteer your services. Not only will the dogs appreciate the support, but so will their future human companions. However you celebrate, be sure to use #NationalDogMonth to post on social media.

**NATIONAL DOG MONTH HISTORY**

Milk-Bone brand (The J.M. Smucker Company) founded National Dog Month in 2020 to recognize all the ways dogs make our lives better.

The Registrar at National Day proclaimed National Dog Month to be observed each year in August.