4 Tips for Managing Reentry Anxiety

Opening the doors is step one in returning students to the classroom. The next steps involve addressing a year’s worth of isolation and anxiety. Here are some tips to help students manage the reentry process.

1. **Create a good learning environment**
   - Set up classrooms to be warm and welcoming.
   - Minimize distractions and obstructions to effective learning.
   - Establish routines that place students in a consistent, familiar structure.

2. **Listen empathically**
   - Give them your undivided attention and show that you’re prepared to hear them.
   - Don’t trivialize or pass judgement on what they perceive as a major life moment.
   - Focus on feelings, not just facts to possibly uncover a different, underlying issue.
   - Allow silence for reflection and they may share additional information or insight.
   - Restate what you heard to give them an opportunity to clarify or expand their message.

3. **Rebuild trust**
   - Set expectations and communicate them clearly and consistently.
   - Find opportunities to connect with students to show they are cared for and appreciated.
   - Encourage students to share their feelings and concerns, and be open to sharing your own.

4. **Acknowledge your own anxiety**
   - Watch for changes in behavior: pacing, clicking a pen, holding your breath, withdrawing.
   - Listen carefully to your anxiety, reflect, and restate what your anxiety is telling you.
   - Engage in a positive outlet that you have committed to yourself.