



## Returning to School after the Coronavirus lockdown –

### Helping your children to worry less and cope well.

If you have any concerns, please talk with your child's teacher or a member of the Inclusion Team:

Mrs Peregrine – SENDCo  
(Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday)

Mrs Testo – Lead Learning Mentor and Family Support  
(Tuesday and Thursday)

Ms Davidson – Learning Mentor and Family Support  
(Monday, Thursday, Friday)

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## Anxiety and worries - How I can help my child?

The coronavirus has given us all a reason to feel anxious and it has changed our lives. Children will have seen how different life has been and the messages to 'stay at home.' However, they are now being told it is time to return to school. They may have very mixed feelings about this; excitement at seeing their friends again, a sense of freedom getting out of the house, plus a sense of anxiety about if it is safe to leave home and their parents.

All children get anxious at times, and this is a normal part of their development as they grow up and develop their 'survival skills'. This is important so that they can face challenges in the wider world. We all have different levels of stress we can cope with - some people are just naturally more anxious than others, and are quicker to get stressed or worried. There are many ways you can help your child to manage their anxiety.

1. Help them to understand the physical feelings of anxiety



## 2. Help them to understand how anxiety might make them behave

### Anxiety presents itself in many different ways...

The desire to control people and events 	Difficulty getting to sleep 	Feeling agitated or angry 
Defiance and other challenging behaviors 	Having high expectations for self, including school work & sports 	Avoiding activities or events (including school) 
Pain like stomachaches and headaches 	Struggling to pay attention and focus 	Intolerance of uncertainty 
Crying and difficulty managing emotions 	Over-planning for situations and events 	Feeling worried about situations or events 

## 3. Words you can use to help

### Words That DO Help



- ✓ "I'm here to listen."
- ✓ "Worries are just thoughts, just feelings. We can get through this together."
- ✓ "You are bigger than your worries. How big does this worry feel?"
- ✓ "You're safe. Let's talk."
- ✓ "What can I do to help?"
- ✓ "Talk to your worry. What do you want to tell it?"
- ✓ "I feel worried too sometimes. I am here for you."
- ✓ "You have my support."
- ✓ "Let's work together, like an anti-worry team."
- ✓ "Step by step, we will calm ourselves down."
- ✓ "This feeling won't last forever. I'll stay with you while we work through it."

✓ "Let's walk. Moving can help make worries go away."

✓ "You are not alone."

✓ "I think you're brave. You're facing your worry."

✓ "Let's make a battle cry!"

I won't let my worries get me down!

I am bigger than my worries!

I am strong and I can do this!

I've got this!

#### 4. Things your child can do to distract themselves from feeling anxious

## Self-Care for Kids

Self-care is when you take time to do things that make your mind and body feel calm and happy. By taking care of yourself often, you are better able to cope with stress or other feelings that you may experience. Read below to learn how you can start practicing self-care!

- 1 Take a Break**

You may have a lot going on in your life such as school, homework, chores, sports, clubs, recitals, or other activities or events. It can be helpful to try making your schedule lighter by taking a little break (if you can) from certain stressful activities.
- 2 Do Your Favorite Things**

Sometimes when we get too busy, we stop doing things that make us feel happy. Make a list of hobbies and activities that you enjoy doing that you haven't been able to do in a while. Make a plan to do the things on your list soon!
- 3 Learn to Relax**

Take some time to do something that relaxes you and calms your mind and body. This might mean turning off electronics and going out in nature. You could also try meditation, yoga, or listening to calming music.
- 4 Take Care of Your Body**

The healthier you are, the easier it'll be to cope with stress and negative feelings. Make sure that you're getting enough sleep every night. Exercise often, and eat healthy meals.
- 5 Be Around People You Enjoy**

Surround yourself with people that make you feel happy. Self-care includes staying away from people that might stress you out or cause you to feel anxious, sad, or upset.
- 6 Share Your Feelings**

It is helpful to find someone to talk about your feelings with often. This could be a counselor, a close friend, or a family member. Talking about your feelings is a healthy way of coping and can help you feel happier.



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#### 5. Other ideas to try

1. Get your child to breathe deeply and slowly, in through their nose for three counts and out through their mouth for three counts.
2. Active relaxation can be doing things such as:
  - drawing or colouring
  - having a bath or shower
  - listening to music
  - playing with friends or family
  - playing with soft toys or pets
  - puzzle books
  - reading
  - watching TV
3. Distract them by focusing on something else.
4. Give them a cuddle or hold their hand if they will let you - touch can be soothing.
5. It can help to talk to your child about finding a safe place in their mind - somewhere that they feel relaxed and happy. It may be a grandparent's or friend's house or a holiday beside the sea which they can picture when 'wrong thoughts' come into their head or they are feeling anxious. Sometimes holding a memento, like a seashell or pebble, can help.

6. If your child is feeling th(e need to check things or repeat certain actions, suggest they count up to 10 before they start checking as a delaying tactic.
7. Encourage your child to notice what makes them anxious. Talking it through can help but your child could also try keeping a diary or a 'worry book'.
8. Make a 'worry box'. Your child can write each worry down and post it in the box out of sight. Small children will enjoy decorating the box too. They can leave the worries in there for, say, a week to see if they were worth worrying about (if not they can be torn up). Alternatively, you could designate a specific 'worry time' for around 10 or 20 minutes, (but not too close to bedtime, or when the child is in bed), so worries can be saved up for that time. This gives the message that we are in control of their worries and not vice versa.
9. Work on positive-thinking. Name their worst case scenarios and think through together how to sort out the situation if it happens, e.g. 'I'm worried that we'll miss the bus.' 'What do you think we could do if that happens?' 'We could get the next bus.'
10. Help them maintain a healthy lifestyle with regular exercise to reduce the levels of stress hormones, good sleeping habits, calm bedtime routines, limited screen or computer time in the evening, and a healthy diet

**Returning to school when Lockdown eases.**

**Please be assured that school is reopening after very careful consideration about the safety of children and staff.**

**Make a simple transition routine with your child & use it at every goodbye:**



"Love you! I'll be here at home time!"



A kiss goodbye with a confident smile that tells them you believe they will have a good day.



Give them a little note or picture from you to give them courage through the day.

**Plan little acts of independence before school starts:**



Get their clothes ready.



Plan the route to school.

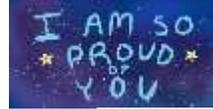


Walk the route to school with you.



Encourage independent learning at home.

**Give lots of praise and encouragement:**



Be clear about what you are praising your child for.

**Highlight the benefits:**

**Friends** School dinners

**Playing outside**

**Learning new things**

**Teachers** Independence

**SPACE TO RUN AROUND**

**Please be kind to yourselves!**

**As parents you have had to deal with so many additional worries in the last few months.**

**Thank you for looking after your children so well and encouraging them to come back to school.**