

Supporting your child back into school.

After being off school for so long, it is only natural that many young people will be worried about returning.

Here are some tips on how you can support your child to transition back to school life:

- **Talk to your child about how they are feeling** about going back to school and try not to make assumptions. Ask them if they are worried or feel scared about anything, but also if they are excited about or looking forward to something. No matter how your child feels, let them know that it is completely normal to feel a mixture of emotions and that all children will be feeling a mixture of emotions around returning to school. Don't be surprised if your child finds it hard to express or understand their emotions, they have experienced a lot of changes in a short period of time.

See below: [Supporting your child if they become clingy, angry or lash out.](#)

See below [Talking to your child about their emotions.](#)

- **Reassure your child.** During the lockdown we have been told to stay at home and remain socially distant from others. This means children may find it difficult to go back to school because it will be a huge change from what they have been asked to do during the pandemic. Talk with your child about ways they can stay safe at school, such as washing their hands before and after eating, and reassure them that the school are putting measures in place to keep them safe, e.g. bubbles. Take the opportunity to walk by school with your child before the return to help them feel comfortable about seeing the building and walking the route to school. Discuss with them their favourite space within school, their favourite staff members and where they like to play whilst at school to help them have positive thoughts around school.
- **Re-establish a routine to help ease into school life.** During lockdown it is understandable that your family's routine may have changed. Children are likely to have been waking up later or going to bed later. To help them get ready for school, try to gradually get them back into their usual morning and bedtime routines as they get closer to their return date.
- **Don't put pressure on yourself.** The transition back into school is likely to take some time. Lots of children will experience ups and downs. Try your best to support, reassure and comfort them, without putting pressure on yourself to make sure their homework is done or they settle into a new routine straightaway.
- **Think ahead.** As well as reflecting on what has happened during the past few weeks, it is important to help children develop hope and a sense of excitement for the future. At a time like this, it can be hard to feel positive, but identifying the things that they can look forward to will help them to realise that the current situation won't last forever and their feelings will change.
- **Seek support if you need it.** Transitioning back to school after being in lockdown is no easy task. You may find that your child struggles to get back into school or experiences difficulties while they're at school. If this is the case, ***reach out to your child's school** as soon as you can so that you can make them aware of the challenges and work together to support your child. If you are concerned about your child's mental health and you think they need professional support, speak to the school and your GP about the best next step.

***Either your child's class teacher via Class Dojo or a member of the pastoral team (Mr A Hewitt / Miss K Aspinall) on 01942 672614 or 07923220271**

Supporting you child, if they become angry, clingy or start to lash out.

Children are experiencing more emotional outbursts during these strange and ever changing times, which can be very difficult to deal with and understand. Children tend to display emotional outbursts by having tantrums.

Tantrums are a short-term energy releasing behaviours, rather like a boiling kettle letting off steam. A child can become frustrated when they don't understand how they feel and why and have the inability to communicate this.

Lockdown and the inability to go to school and connect with friends and family had led to frustration and anger. Lockdown is an unusual situation, which has meant that children:

- Are socially isolated
- Have had changes to their routine and structure, which is what they need to feel secure.
- Feel anxious
- Have experienced losses, maybe for the first time
- May have seen adults display symptoms of stress

We are not born with self-control and children especially handle unusual situations with a fight or flight response, they have not yet developed a way to regulate their feelings in an acceptable way.

As we return back to school and children experience yet another change they may become emotional overloaded and display anger, become clingy or even start to lash out.

Supporting your child when they are ANGRY?

B.R.E.A.T.H.E

Be calm: Learn to pause before reacting.

Remove: If possible take them away from the situation to help them calm down.

Explain: Tell them you can see that they are angry and you want to help them.

Acknowledge: Validate their feelings, even if you don't understand it. This does not validate their behaviour, it shows empathy.

Talk: When they are calmer, give them the opportunity to talk, while you listen. Don't tell them they are daft or silly, as the emotion they feel is valid to them at this time.

Hug: Give them a hug to provide the security they might need.

Explain: Tell them that their feelings are normal and ask them what they could have done differently.

Helping you child reflect on their actions and thinking about how you react will encourage them to approach similar feelings in the future. This of course will take practice, so please be patient, it is all part of learning.

Supporting your child when they become CLINGY!

Your child may have started climbing into bed with you at night, crying relentlessly when a parent leaves the house, talking in a permanent whinge voice or appear to have regressed a few years.

This can be a very frustrating time for parents especially if they are having trouble getting their child back into school and having to go back to work. Here are a few ideas that may support your child.

- **Routine:** Routine and structure provides a sense of security and expectations. Routine does not have to be a strict one and restrict your life. Simple things like breakfast, lunch, dinner and bedtimes at the same time will provide a good start.
- **Be present:** Give your child some uninterrupted parent-child time. Read a book, watch a film, play a game.....something that is all about them.
- **Try to be calm:** Children are very good at picking up on others emotions and feelings that make them feel uneasy in time of need.
- **Limit their exposure:** To news and hearing talk about what is going on. They are aware of the virus and the changes, they are aware of how to keep themselves and other safe. Hearing about it constantly will only add to any anxiety they may have about themselves and others.
- **Remember:** Children need a sense of community and even though they are back in school, this is still limited.

Information taken from the Grief Recovery UK website.

Talking to your child about their emotions.

When you talk calmly to your child about emotions, this shows you value their feelings while guiding their behaviours. It takes time and patience, it's not necessarily easy, but worth the effort if you persevere.

Five steps to talking to your child about their emotions.

1. **Be aware of your child's emotions:** This can be difficult sometimes but try and see the world through their eyes and uncover the emotion. Use their body language as a guide.
 - a. **Developing emotional awareness:**
 - i. Recognise when your child is upset, sad, angry, afraid, happy etc.
 - ii. Stand in your child's shoes when they are struggling with an emotion and see things from their perspective.
 - iii. Listen during their play to find clues about what makes them anxious, scared, proud or happy etc.
 - iv. Share your emotions, when it's appropriate.
 - v. Remember, your child is learning about emotions from watching adults and how they handle them.

2. **Recognise that emotions are an opportunity to connect:** The best time to teach your child about emotions is during the experience when the feelings are real. This means sharing the moment with them before those emotions grow to a high level, as talking about them helps reduce the intensity. This teaches children that issues can be sorted out when they are small.
 - a. **Connecting:**
 - i. Pay close attention to your child's emotions – don't dismiss them or avoid them.
 - ii. See emotional moments as opportunities to connect with your child.
 - iii. Encourage your child to talk about emotions and try and share in their feeling.
 - iv. Share your own feeling, when appropriate.
 - v. Tell your child that it is ok.....then offer guidance in sorting out the feeling, by using words like "Tell me how you feel" "I have felt like that once" "You can't hit somebody when you feel that way" "What else could you do?". This makes the child feel safe and accepted.

3. **Listen with empathy:** Listening and empathy are 2 very important steps when helping your child deal with an emotion. This reassures them that they are not alone and lets them know that feelings are ok. Reflecting children's feeling back to them is comforting ("I see that made you really sad"), and puts the parent in a better position to help.
 - a. **Listening:**
 - i. Encourage your child to share what they feel ("Tell me what happened" / "Tell me how you feel")
 - ii. Reflect back your child's feelings by saying "It sounds like you are feeling....."
 - iii. Don't dismiss emotions as silly or unimportant.
 - iv. Listen in a way that helps your child and pay attention to what they say and reflect back, "You didn't like it when you heard that. That made you angry".
 - v. Find a way to show your child that you understand what they are feeling.

4. **Help your child name emotions:** Children will not always know the name of the emotion they are feeling, they don't know how to make sense of complicated emotions like jealousy, hurt, fear or worry. Research shows that when you can name a feeling, you can handle them better.

Naming emotions is tricky, children can feel mixed emotions, just like adults, so you need to look for clues.

a. **Naming emotions:**

- i. Start to name emotions early-even before your child can talk. (“Oh you look really mad”)
- ii. Work hard to identify the emotions your child is feeling, instead of telling them what they should be feeling.
- iii. Listening is a way that helps your child know you are paying attention.
- iv. Find a way to show your child that you understand how they feel, don’t judge or criticise the emotion.

5. **Set limits and find good solution:** Learning positive ways to express emotions is important. It is challenging to accept children’s emotions while setting limits on inappropriate behaviour, but setting limits is the first step to good problem solving.

a. **Problem solving:** This takes practice. First help your child to figure out what their needs are or what they want next. Then help them generate their own ideas about how the problem could be solved. (“What do you think you could do?”). Try not to judge their ideas at this point. Lastly talk about how these ideas will work (“How do you think that will work?”), help them pick an acceptable solution.

b. **Finding good solution:**

- i. Discipline misbehaving children for what they do, not for how they feel.
- ii. Use this time as ‘teaching time’ to help your child understand emotions, give them a name and explain why their behaviour is unacceptable.
- iii. When you child has a problem, help them (a) think about what they want to see / happen (b) think of several ideas for doing this and (c) pick a solution.

Remember:

- Be patient (It is important that you are able to regulate your own emotions before you can help your child. Getting angry when talking to them about their response to anger will not help. If you feel you are not fully in control of your own emotion at the time, seek support).
- Be honest with you child.
- Avoid making critical comments.
- Build on small successes to boost your child’s confidence.
- Be aware of your child’s needs, both physically and emotionally.
- Identify what your child enjoys and what they don’t.
- Avoid siding with the enemy when your child feels mistreated, even if they brought the action on themselves. Just support them calmly through recognising their own emotions and actions at the time.
- Empower your child by giving them options and respecting their wishes.

Tips taken from Emotion Coaching Model.