

Managing return to school worries for parents and children

Emotional Health Service



**achieving
for children**

The Current Context



- Covid-19 pandemic
- Adjusting to school closures
- Finding a new 'normal'
- Transition back to school will involve a novel setup and new rules
- This can be challenging for all children but may be particularly difficult for children with additional needs including emotional, psychological and social communication difficulties.



Impact of lockdown on children

Increase in children's emotional difficulties; feeling unhappy, worried, being clingy and experiencing physical symptoms associated with worry.

- Children show concerns through their behaviour, play or regression (toileting, sleep issues)
- Difficult behaviour
- Sleep concerns; disrupted routines
- Loneliness and social isolation
- Excessive screen time
- Bereavement
- Exacerbation of existing vulnerabilities

Impact of lockdown on parents

- Health concerns
- Employment concerns
- Financial concerns
- Adjustment to working at home
- Homeschooling
- Changes to childcare arrangements
- Concerns around children's physical and emotional health
- Conflict and family tensions
- Concerns / care for extended family
 - NOW - worry about school return



School return worries



- Will they be safe?
- How often will the school be cleaned?
- How will they adjust to the changes at school with social distancing and hand washing?
- Will they be behind with their learning?
- How will they cope with the learning after being off for so long?
- Will my child with SEN get the support they need to adjust when everyone will be so busy?
- What if they refuse to go?

It is very normal to have these worries!

Remember!

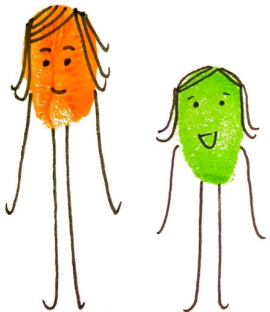
Children are very resilient,
adaptable and generally cope with
change much better than adults!



- Your role as a parent / carer is **very** important
- Talk to your child about Covid-19 - factual and age appropriate information
- Prepare your child for returning to school and what might be the same and what might be different.
- Try not to avoid talking about difficult things, show your child that it's ok to talk and share concerns
- Develop new routines if things will be different (children generally thrive on routine)
- Encourage social support and connection

Reflect on your own feelings / responses

- Children are sensitive to how parents feel and take their cues from you
- Children can learn to fear things from watching others, and from others' responses towards them
- Stay calm and try not to express any strong emotional responses, otherwise the child may think the situation is dangerous and that they can't cope.



- Where possible project an air of confidence

What can you do?

- Start talking about school now & use visuals where possible
- Make yourself available to talk in a low key way (even text!)
- Help your child return to their normal sleep routine
- Support your child to make contact with a friend from school if they wish

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What are schools doing?

- Schools are positive and excited to welcome back all pupils
- Every parent to receive information booklet from AfC and Public Health which supports and reassures about the September return to school
- Booklets or films from individual schools for pupils to meet new staff and understand what's the same and what has changed
- Focus on play, connection & reintegration initially
- Staff to be provided with training on supporting pupils emotional wellbeing in the return to school

Looking After Yourself as a Parent

- Exercise
- Healthy eating
- Taking up new interests and hobbies
- Joining a group or a team
- Chatting, socialising and relaxing with other people
- Learning new skills through education, training or employment
- Ask for support if your own mental health is suffering



What to do if concerns persist?

- Don't panic, the first few days and weeks are likely to be bumpy & exhausting
- Talk to school, attendance is no longer optional, school will want to be supportive
- Use signposting and advice available [Resource Hub](#)
- Let work know that there are concerns, so your manager can support your wellbeing



Resources

- Covibook – an interactive resource designed to support and reassure children aged 7 and under, designed to help children explain and draw the emotions that they might be experiencing during the pandemic: <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>
- Young Minds - Talking to your child about Coronavirus and 10 tips from their Parents Helpline to support family wellbeing:
<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-toyour-child-about-coronavirus/>
- Mental Health Foundation, Coronavirus Guide for young people
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/coping-coronavirus-guide-youngpeople>
- Free videos by Dr Karen Treisman to support relaxation and emotional regulation
<http://www.safehandsthinkingminds.co.uk/covid-anxiety-stress-resources-links/>
- Separation anxiety COVID-19
https://www.stonybrookmedicine.edu/SeparationAnxietyCOVID19_keluskar_reicher_crowell
- Child Mind Institute- Lots of resources on supporting families during COVID-19:
<https://childmind.org/coping-during-covid-19-resources-for-parents/>
- [Back To School Bubble Book](#)
- [Back to school video](#)
- [While We Can't Hug Online Book](#)

Questions?



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