



TRANSITIONING BACK TO SCHOOL AFTER LOCKDOWN: MANAGING CHILDREN'S WORRIES

Created by South West
London and St
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Health NHS Trust.
Adapted by the
Children's Wellbeing
Practitioners in the
Public Health Nursing
5-19 (School Nursing)
service in
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PLAN FOR THE SESSION

- Common worries for children when returning to school
- What is anxiety?
- What can we do to help?



COMMON WORRIES FOR CHILDREN RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER LOCKDOWN

I might catch coronavirus

No-one will speak to me

I won't remember the new rules

I might forget and do the wrong thing

What if I don't like it?

I'll get into trouble if I do something wrong

What if I bump into someone / touch something?

What if my friends aren't in the same bubble?

I will miss my mum

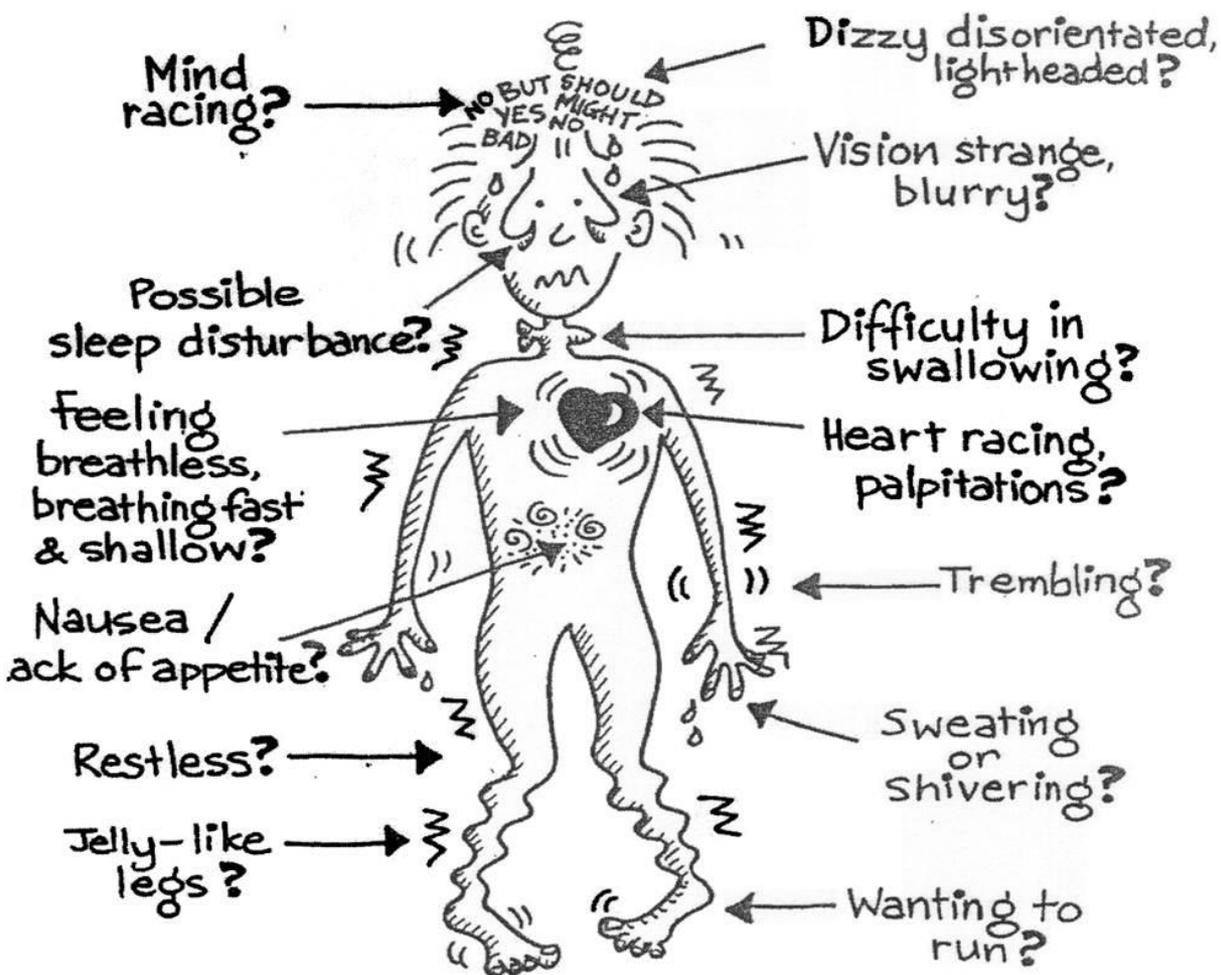


ANXIETY

Anxious Thoughts	Bodily Sensations	Anxious Behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Over-estimate “danger”• Underestimate ability to cope	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Associated with adrenalin - preparing the body for action• E.g. sweating, heart beating faster, trembling, stomach ache	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid worrying situations , so you don’t get the chance to learn if it’s as bad as you think it will be or if you will cope• Seeking reassurance



BODILY SENSATIONS



Fight or flight response

- Our body creates these feelings to prepare us to fight or escape from a situation
- These feelings can be uncomfortable but cannot harm your child





ANXIOUS THINKING

If someone bumps me I will get coronavirus

It will be awful

The teacher will be cross with me

OVERESTIMATE CHANCE OF DANGER

UNDERESTIMATE ABILITY TO COPE

I won't manage

I won't be able to talk to anyone

I can't do it



ANXIOUS BEHAVIOUR

Ask lots of questions

Hit others

Clingy or
withdrawn

Crying

Say things they
don't mean

Avoidance

Outbursts



SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD'S RETURN TO SCHOOL



HOW TO FIND OUT WHAT MY CHILD IS WORRIED ABOUT

It is useful to know what your child is worried about:

- Explore their worries by asking questions such as:
 - “You seem worried, would you like to tell me about it?”
 - “Is there something in particular that is bothering you?”
 - “What do you think might happen?”
 - “What seems particularly tricky?”

- If they find it hard, give it your best guess and normalise:
 - “Lots of children going back to school might be thinking about....., is that something that you’ve been wondering about too?”





HOW TO FIND OUT WHAT MY CHILD IS WORRIED ABOUT

- Listen carefully:
 - Show your child you care by listening without interrupting
 - Don't rush to jump in with solutions or advice, try to just listen until your child feels you've understood
 - They may not know why they are worried, that's also ok
- How realistic is the worry?
 - What is the evidence FOR this worry?
 - What is the evidence AGAINST the worry?
 - Then, ask what they would say to a friend who had this worry?
 - What could be a more helpful balanced thought?



WORRY TIME

If you notice your child is worrying constantly throughout the day you may want to introduce worry time

It is important to allow your child time to discuss their worries and for you to understand them

Ask your child what the best, worst and most realistic outcomes of their worry could be

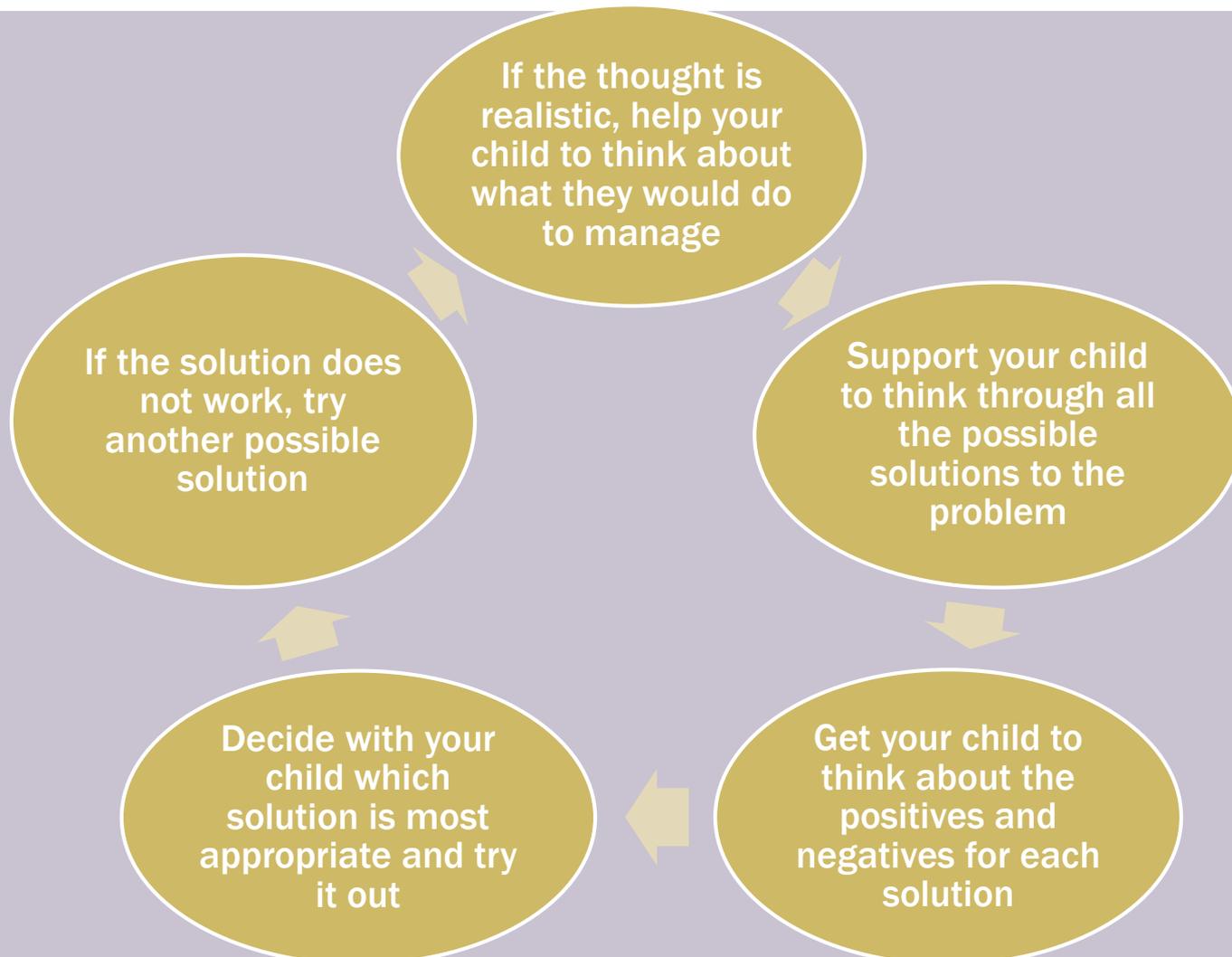
Have worry time regularly so your child knows they always have space to openly talk about their concerns

If your child is young, they may prefer to talk to a 'worry monster' rather than directly to you

DO NOT have worry time before bed as your child may go to bed thinking about their worries and this may affect how they sleep



PROBLEM SOLVING





SLEEP

- After a long break from school, sleep routines and structure are important
- During the summer holidays your child may have had a later bedtime than during term-time
- Develop and maintain good sleep hygiene to support your child's return to school



SLEEP HYGIENE

Sleeping environment

Bedtime routine

Technology

Exercise

Caffeine

Food



STEP-BY-STEP PLAN FOR CHILDREN STRUGGLING WITH RETURNING TO SCHOOL

If your child is struggling and/or refusing to go back to school, practicing practical steps can be useful:

- Getting up and dressed in uniform
- Practice the school walk/commute, see the school from the outside
- Get out more in general e.g. go with parent to the supermarket or for a walk
- Make links with the school if you think you need more information about the new structure for the school day



EXAMPLE OF A STEP-BY-STEP PLAN FOR CHILDREN STRUGGLING WITH RETURNING TO SCHOOL

Step	Anxiety (out of 10)	Reward
Have parent park outside school gates and walk in on my own	8	New toy/game
Have parent park outside school gates and walk in with a friend	7	Extra time on game
Have parent walk me half way to school gates	6	New book/magazine
Parent to walk with me to the school gates and I walk into school	5	Play at the park
Get dressed in uniform and do full journey to school	4	Film night
Get dressed in uniform and do half the journey to school	3	Choose dessert
Get dressed in school uniform and stay at home	2	Milkshake
Set alarm for school wake up time and get up	1	Sticker

* Your child's plan may look different depending on their age and difficulties/worries*



MANAGING YOUR OWN EMOTIONS

- Children are sensitive to how parents feel and take their cues from you
- Try to project an air of confidence about your child's return to school, even if you feel worried yourself. Try to stay calm and confident yourself
- Try to remember that your worries are not necessarily your child's worries, they may not be feeling the same
- Share with family/friends if you feel you need support with the transition back to school

COMMON PARENT RESPONSES TO ANXIETY



■ Reassurance

- Children can become reliant on reassurance and depend on adults saying “it’s ok” to feel safe
 - Ask questions instead: try to help your child work out whether their worry is realistic or not.

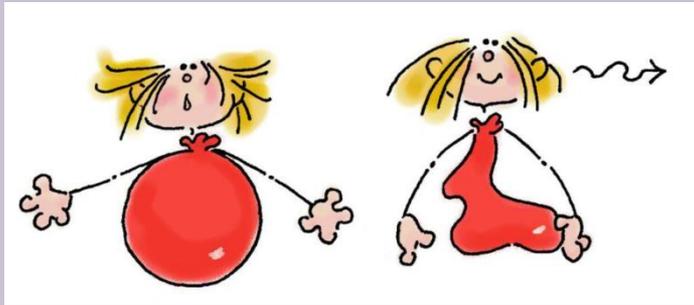
■ Avoidance

- Stepping in to protect children from all their fears means they never get the chance to learn they can cope and find out if their worries were as scary as they thought
 - Instead, notice and praise sensible or brave behaviour
 - Encourage them to face their fears in small, manageable steps



RELAXATION

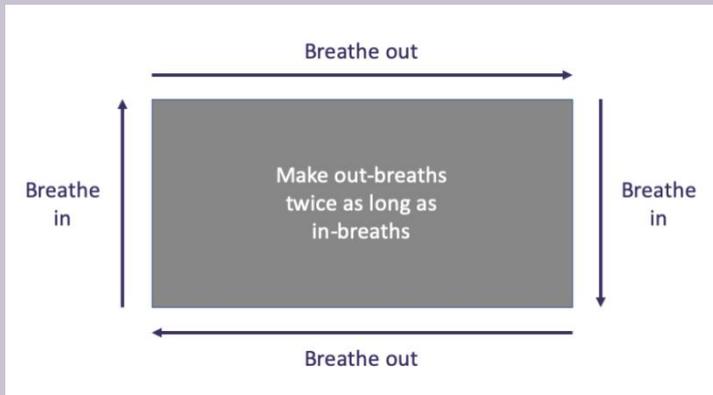
Balloon Breathing



Breathe in

Breathe out

Rectangle Breathing



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5 4 3 2 1

SLOW DOWN & CALM DOWN
FIRST- TAKE 3 SLOW BELLY BREATHS!

5 List 5 things you can SEE

4 List 4 things you can FEEL

3 List 3 things you can HEAR

2 List 2 things you can SMELL

1 List something you like to TASTE

FINISHED? - TAKE ANOTHER 3 SLOW BELLY BREATHS

It is important to practice these with your child when they are calm so they are more easily accessible when they are anxious



- Thank you for listening, we hope this workshop has been helpful.
- After you have tried all the strategies we have discussed, if you think your child needs more support with fears and worries, a referral to the school nursing team can be made via: <https://www.hct.nhs.uk/our-services/school-nursing/>