

# Transition Back to School after Lockdown

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Are you OK  
Kingston?



Are you OK  
Richmond?



# Aims of the workshop

- Introduction
- Common worries when going back to school after an unusual period of absence
- How might anxiety manifest?
- What can we do to help?



# Some common worries about returning to school

## For children:

- The spread of COVID-19
- Understanding the changes in school
- Friendship groups - will the classes change/will their friendships be the same?
- Teachers and Teaching Assistants- be the same? Who they can talk to if they're worried



# Some common worries about returning to school


## For parents:

- The spread of COVID-19
- Their children settling back in happily
- Understanding the new setup
- Keeping up with academic work

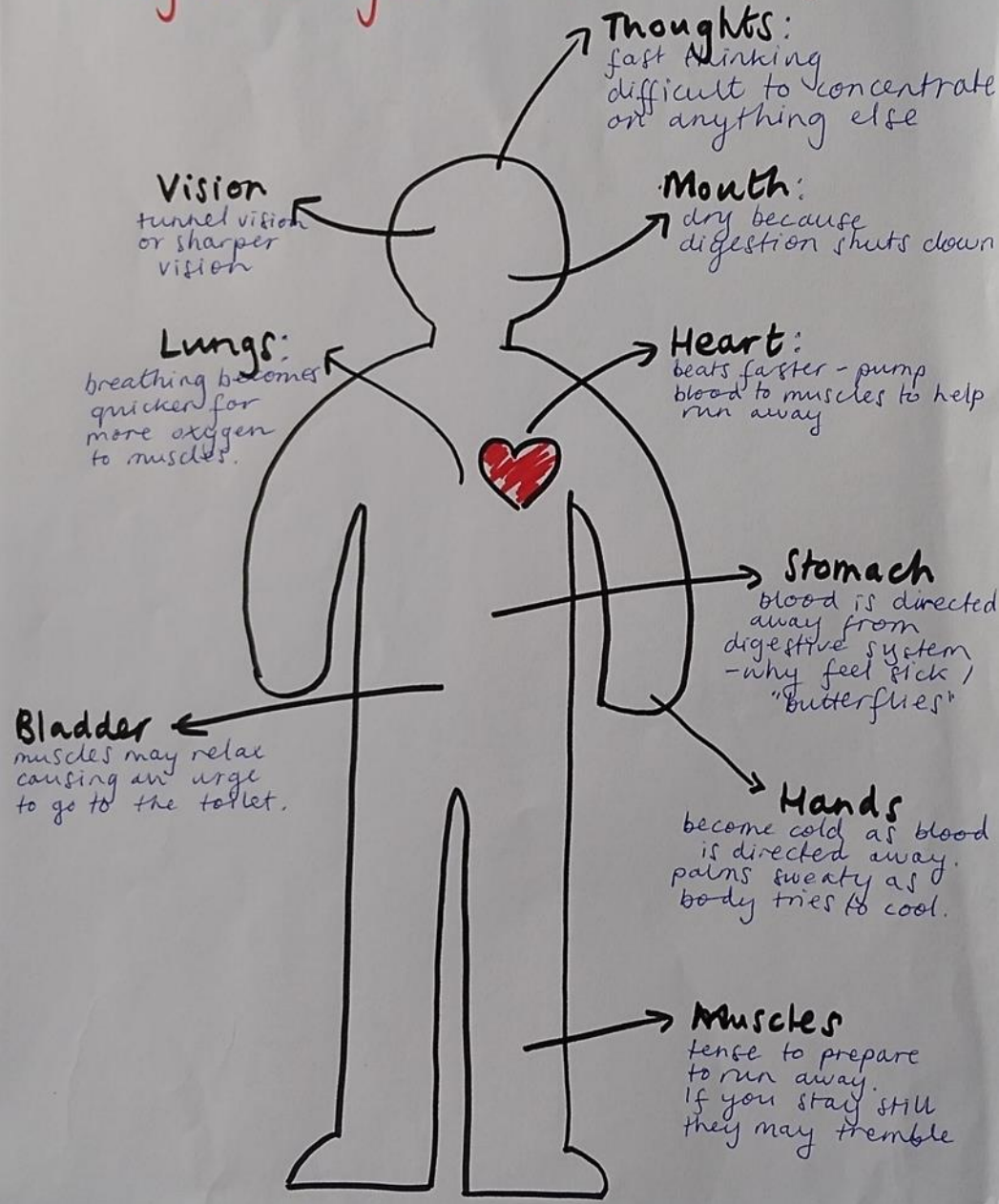


# What is anxiety?

- Anxiety is a **normal emotion**, which can **be useful** in appropriate circumstances.
- **Fight/ flight/ freeze response**
  - Fight - confront the threat aggressively.
  - Flight - you run from the danger.
  - Freeze - unable to move or act against the threat.
- Priming the body for action

$$\text{Anxiety} = \frac{\text{Overestimation of danger}}{\text{Underestimation of ability to cope}}$$


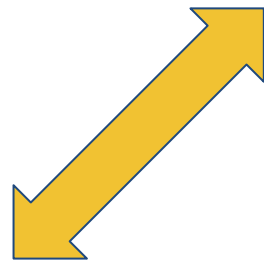
# Fight / Flight / Freeze response



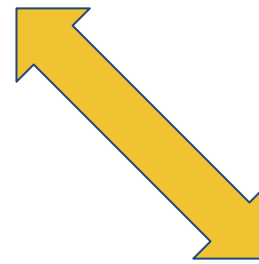
**Situation**



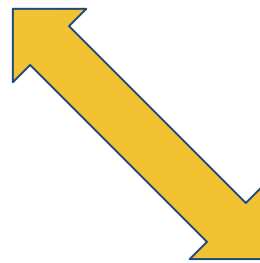
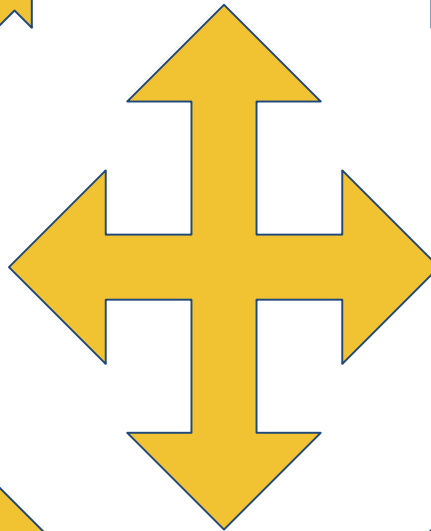
**Thoughts**



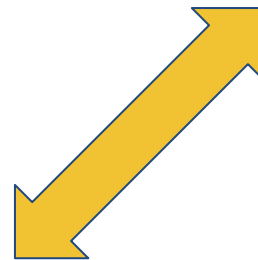
**Behaviour**



**Feelings**



**Bodily  
sensations**



**What can we do to help?**





# Managing your own emotions

1. Children are sensitive to how parents feel and take cues from you
2. Bear in mind that your own experiences inform what you do with your children
3. Where possible project an air of confidence
4. Access support for yourself too



# Routine

- **Get back into a good routine**

When children are stress out and frazzled because they were not prepared for the school day it affects their mood and ability to engage in learning.

Planning ahead and getting them into a good routine saves mental energy and sets them in a positive mood to go to school and engage in learning.

Wake up	7:00
Breakfast	7:15
Put on uniform	...



# Containment: responding to a child's anxiety

- We can help by recognising that they are struggling and trying to understand what's going on for them.
- This can make them feel less alone with their difficulties; and sometimes feel more able to do the things they are worried about.



# ...How?

- **Stay calm**, being aware of your responses and not expressing your fears and worries about the situation in front of your child
- Talking calmly to your child, and **helping** them to unpick and **make sense of what they are worried about**
- Educate your child what they can do to look after their health and talk to them how they can manage the changed situation at school
- Showing the child **you are there when they need you** sitting with them and listening., e.g. with a hug, making them a hot chocolate.

**Pick your moment!**



# Encouraging Brave Behaviour

- Set a positive goal and break into steps using a step-by-step plan
- Attach a reward to each step
- What helpful thought could they use to help them during each step?
- Review after each step is complete – what did they learn? Was it as bad as they expected? Did they cope better than they thought?



# Example

Leah\* (8) is worried about going back to school after lockdown, which mum learns about through talking about her anxieties. She's worried about her friendships, teachers and what school will be like.

Leah rated going back to school as an 8/10 on the fear scale. With her mum, she made a fear ladder with steps to work towards this goal and rewards for completing each step.





<b>7/10 - zoom her teacher with any questions or worries</b>	<b>A family movie night</b>
<b>6/10 - walk with best friend to school and back (socially distanced)</b>	<b>Favourite meal for tea</b>
<b>5/10 - Group zoom with 3 friends for 10 minutes</b>	<b>Bake a favourite cake</b>
<b>4/10 - zoom best friend for 10 minutes</b>	<b>Board game night</b>
<b>3/10 - try on her school uniform</b>	<b>Make a milkshake</b>



# Problem Solving

Leah is worried about returning to school after lockdown and not being placed with her friends in the smaller class

Solution	Pros?	Cons?	Is this plan doable?	Rate this solution 1-10
Zoom friends outside of school	Still get to see her friends Safe to do	Doesn't feel the same	Yes	7





# Remind them of their resilience

**Resilience is the ability to:**

- **Cope with uncertainty**
- **Resist adversity**
- **Recover successfully from traumatic episodes**

When have they shown resilience?

- Starting primary school?
- Learning a new skill such as swimming?

Remind your children about when they have coped well in uncertain times before and how they can learn to manage this new situation.



**What strategies do you already use to help your child relax?**



# Relaxation exercises



## Hands and Arms: *Squeeze a Lemon*

Pretend you have a whole lemon in each hand. Now squeeze it hard. Try to squeeze all the juice out! Feel the tightness in your hand and arm as you squeeze. Squeeze hard! Don't leave a single drop. (Hold for 10 seconds). Now relax and let the lemon drop from your hand. See how much better your hand and arm feel when they are relaxed.



## Shoulders and Neck: *Hide in Your Shell*

Now pretend you are a turtle. Try to pull your head into your shell. Try to pull your shoulders up to your ears and push your head down into your shoulders. Hold it tight! (Hold for 10 seconds). Okay, you can come out now. Feel your shoulders relax.



## 54321 Grounding Exercise



# Other things we can do to help

## Doing things they enjoy!

e.g. reading, listening to music,  
playing with friends, watching a film

## Getting Active!

Exercise can help us feel  
less anxious

## Talking to someone they trust!



# Your relationship to school

- **Maintain a positive attitude towards school/ learning**
  - Irrespective of our experience of education and school we need to promote learning and school engagement both to promote best outcomes in life and mental wellbeing
- **Work through your difficulties with the school:**
  - Any difficulties need to be addressed with the school and avoid sharing it with your child to promote positive attachment to the school
  - Children should be free to learn and succeed instead of being burdened by difficulties between parents and school



# If you would like further support...

## For your child:

- Contact the Mental Health Lead at your school

Young Minds Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544

- Mon-Fri from 9.30am to 4pm

<https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/for-parents/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/>

## For yourself:

- speak to your GP
- Mind helpline 0300 123 3393



# Resources related to Corona Virus

## Talking to children about Coronavirus:

**Child Mind Institute:**

<https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>

**Anna Freud Centre advice for young people/parents & carers/schools & colleges**

<https://www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/anna-freud-learning-network/coronavirus/>

**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>

Dave the dog coronavirus story

Story about what to do while we cannot hug

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2PnnFrPaRgY&feature=youtu.be&app=desktop>







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