

Managing separation anxiety

A quick guide for children and young people



South West Yorkshire Partnership
NHS Foundation Trust

After being at home for so long and settling into new daily routines, it's normal to feel anxious about facing new changes all over again as you go back to school or as your parents or carers return to work. If you're feeling anxious about starting new routines without your parents, carers, siblings or even your pets, we have some tips to help you to manage.



Anxiety

Anxiety is our body's natural response to feelings or thoughts of danger. Anxiety can make us feel **sick, shaky, worried or tired** and can cause changes to our body. It can make us **sweat, breathe faster, increase our heart rate** and cause **panic attacks**.

Anxiety can feel overwhelming, but there are things we can do to **calm down**.

Find out more here:

- [What is anxiety?](#)
- [Managing Your anxiety](#)
- [Breathing exercises](#)
- [Smiling Mind - Mindfulness](#)
- [Taking care of yourself](#)
- [Make a self-soothe box](#)
- [Ask for help](#)



Staying connected

It's important to find ways to stay connected to the people we love at home, especially when we can't see them as much as we're used to. Here are some quick things you can do everyday to make daily separation feel easier:



Send a text or an email to say hi

Ask about each other's day and be honest about how you feel. It's okay to tell someone you miss them.

Plan a fun activity to do together when you're all home. Board games, movie night, baking, crafts, exercise etc.

Plan a day out at the weekend!

Have a meal together



New routines

Planning routines can help us to feel calmer as we know what's happening and when. Use a diary or calendar to write down all the things that are happening in your week.

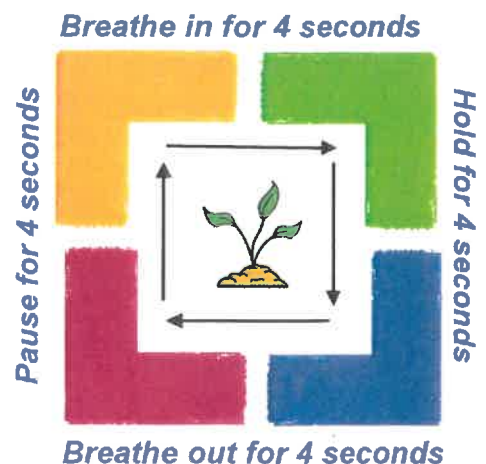
Mark:

1. The times you will feel most anxious, such as when you're away from those at home.



Add in:

1. Things you can look forward to doing with the people at home when you're together.
2. Things you can do for yourself to help you feel calmer and happier when you're apart from others.

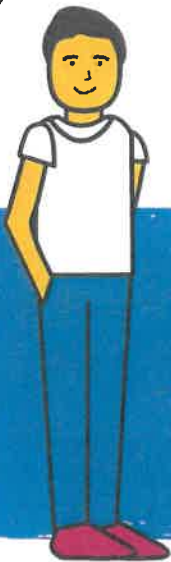


With all of us in mind.

Going back to school

NHS

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Going back to school can be *super* daunting, especially after a long time away. Having a routine again, seeing teachers and friends and learning new things can all feel pretty overwhelming and stressful. It's totally normal at this time to be feeling anxious and low in mood, as well as struggling with sleep and unhelpful thoughts. Sometimes these thoughts can feel pretty powerful, and make it hard for us to concentrate, or make us feel that we don't want to go to school and see our friends. We try to avoid these situations because of how they make us feel.

If you're struggling at the moment with transitioning back to school, then this guide is for you! This guide includes links to self-help support, websites and videos and includes some self-help worksheets for you to complete.



Anxiety

The thought of going back to school can make us feel really anxious.



Anxiety is the body's way of responding to being in danger. The hormone adrenaline is rushed into our bloodstream to enable us to run away or fight, not taking into consideration if the danger is real, or if we just think there's a danger.

But what can we use to help us with our anxiety?

Find out more about anxiety, and techniques you can use to help relieve anxiety:

- [Young Minds – what is anxiety?](#)
- [CBT self-help for anxiety video](#)
- [Worry diary](#)
- [Thought record](#)
- [How to use STOP to control our thoughts video](#)
- [Facing fear and avoidance video](#)
- [Self-help for health anxiety](#)
- [Challenging worrying thoughts worksheet](#)
- [Postpone your worry worksheet](#)
- [Letting go with mindfulness worksheet](#)
- [Accepting uncertainties worksheet](#)

Sleep

If we are struggling with anxiety, low mood and unhelpful thoughts about going back to school, it can be really difficult to sleep! Here are some links to help us when we are struggling with sleep.



- [Self-help for sleep](#)
- [Mindful breathing](#)
- [Relaxation technique](#)
- [Sleep diary](#)
- [Sleep music](#)
- [Guided meditation video](#)

Low mood

People who are feeling low in mood tend to think very negatively about themselves, the future and the world around them. If you are feeling low in mood, you might be struggling to concentrate on school or be avoiding meeting up with friends. Follow the links below to learn more and help to lift your low mood:

- [Information about low mood/depression](#)
- [Low mood self-help video](#)
- [Increasing activity worksheet](#)
- [Increasing activity video](#)
- [Low mood thought record sheet](#)
- [Weekly activity schedule](#)
- [30 day positive challenge](#)
- [Positive steps to wellbeing video](#)
- [Finding meaning video](#)
- [Noticing the positives video](#)



Unhelpful thoughts

Sometimes our thoughts can be unhelpful. Unhelpful thoughts can cause negative feelings and negative behaviour, and may stop us from feeling like we are able to go to school or do our school work. For example, we may think we are "rubbish at maths" and so we stop trying in maths lessons. So how can we break this cycle?

- [Information on unhelpful thinking patterns](#)
- [Fact or opinion video](#)
- [Thought challenge sheet](#)
- [Thought challenging video](#)
- [Responding to thoughts video](#)
- [Different perspectives](#)
- [Fake news](#)
- [CBT self-help for anger video](#)
- [Self-help for stress video](#)



Useful apps

- Headspace
- Stop, breathe and think

- What's up? A mental health app
- Relax Melodies
- Calm

With **all of us** in mind.