

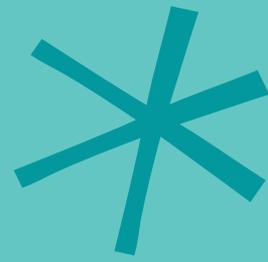
Tips for helping your child return to school if they feel anxious...



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Validate their anxiety



Let your child know that feeling anxious about returning to school or starting school is OK. Avoid saying things like, 'it will be fine' or 'don't be silly' and validate their feeling.

"Starting a new school year can make you a bit nervous."

"It's been a while since you've been at school, so it will feel strange."

"This is your first year at school so you're feeling nervous."

Normalise their anxiety.

Let your child know that you feel worried sometimes too. Use the example of a similar experience, such as when you returned to school as a child, or starting a new job etc.

Teach them about the brain and anxiety.



It's empowering for children to understand why they feel worried or nervous. Explain that change doesn't always feel comfortable which puts us into fight or flight mode. So our brains like to resist change, but actually we can decide for ourselves if change will be a positive thing!





Guide positive thinking.

Talk about the positive things that will come from being at school.

If they have specific worries you can guide them around those with questions such as:

- what is most likely to happen?
- what if it goes well?

Turn negative thinking into positives e.g.
I'm not in the same class as my best friend.

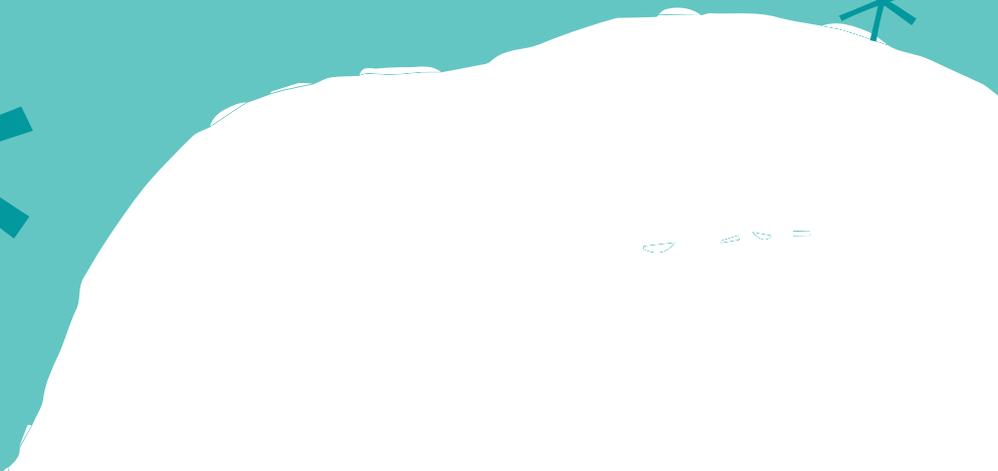
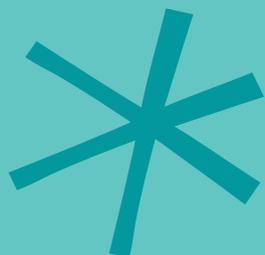
↓ becomes

I'm not in the same class as my best friend BUT I've got the chance to make some new friends.

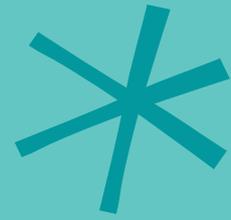
Teach your child to use their body posture to induce feelings of confidence. When they hold their head up, shoulders back etc, they will automatically feel more confident.

Prepare.

- Prepare your child for the logistics so they can visualise their school day.
- Do the walk or drive to school.
- Prepare them for changes that will be in place due to the pandemic.
- Try on uniform.
- Prepare younger children with any images from the school website/information that has been sent of classrooms or staff.
- Role Play with younger children.
- Start to reintroduce routines closer to the start dates.
- Start to talk about school in everyday conversations in a positive and light way.



Make use of wellbeing tools



Use affirmations daily between now and starting school (and beyond) to boost positive subconscious thinking.

Teach some breathing techniques your child can use at home and at school.

Teach some calming/grounding techniques and make sure they know which ones can help them (we love a weighted blanket and essential oils)

Plan a way for your child to feel connected to you when at school. Something small they can keep in their pocket or sewn on to their top. Or lunch box notes.

Make an action plan now for specific worries so they feel prepared and empowered with a 'go to' strategy.

Give them time to unwind after school



Once they've started school, try and give them time to relax and decompress from their day. They've been in a totally different environment for such a long time and it's understandable that being in school again will raise the adrenalin levels.

Try to ease back in and give them a predictable routine, quiet activities at the end of the day and encourage good sleep.



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