Nottinghamshire Healthcare
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RETURN TO SCHOOL COUNTDOWN

Cut out each activity, fold and place in a box/jar/container. Each day, choose at least one activity to complete. If you don't have a printer, just choose at random.



Write down the things you're looking forward to about returning to school



Write down the things you are worried about when you think about returning to school



Write down the things you will miss about working from home



Identify one thing you have achieved during lockdown



Write a list of all the people in school who can support you when you return to school



Draw or write about an ability or strength you have. Start with "I can..."



Write down three questions you have about returning to school



Identify three things you are grateful for – If one of these relates to a person, tell them!



Draw or write about something you admire about one of your friends or a member of staff (e.g. always does their best, a good friend)



If restrictions permit, go for a walk with a friend. Share your worries and anxieties and what you're looking forward to



Draw or write about one of your hopes for the future



Choose a "hopeful" song or, if you're really into music, make a "hopeful" playlist



Arrange a video call with a friend. Share your worries and anxieties and what you're looking forward to with them



Share a story about lockdown with a friend. This could be written, drawn, a comic strip, a voice recording, etc.



Complete the Anna Freud "Reflecting on lockdown" activity

If you think you might benefit from further support, please ask your school's Mental Health Lead about the Mental Health Support Team. You can also call 0115 854 2299 or go to nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/camhs-self' if you'd like to self-refer

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RETURN TO SCHOOL COUNTDOWN

These are the things you can every day to help improve your return to school



Identify your emotion/s about returning to school. If this is difficult, use emotions cards or the feelings wheel to help (these can be found online or you can ask your school)

- If you've been getting up late, start to get up a little earlier each day
- Take care of your personal hygiene
- Get dressed and make yourself presentable
- Make a short, achievable list of goals for each day. Don't make one huge list that rolls over each day. It's better to make a short list and, if you achieve it and want to do more, take something from tomorrow's list. Make expectations small and manageable.
- Reward yourself for the things you achieve
- Make a list of "What ifs" and identify whether these are worries that can be resolved. If they can, make a plan of action. If they can't, try talking to somebody about them and then physically throw the worry (list) away!

Top 10 bedtime tips

- Try to go to bed at the same time every night; this helps your body to get into a routine
- Follow a bedtime routine that is calming, such as taking a warm bath or reading
- Keep a "worry list" by your bed. If you think of any worries, write them down and save them for tomorrow
- Relaxation exercises, such as light yoga stretches, help to relax the muscles. Do not exercise vigorously, as it will have the opposite effect!
- If possible, use your bed just for sleeping — not doing homework, reading, playing games, or talking on the phone.
- A tidy room makes for a tidy mind... and a restful night's sleep! De-clutter your bedroom and create a space that's clean, neat and simple.
- Avoid using smartphones, tablets or other electronic devices for an hour or so before you go to bed
- Remove clocks from the room or turn them to face the wall. Keep your phone away from your reach while you're in bed
- Limit foods and drinks that contain caffeine. These include some sodas and other drinks
- Listen to relaxing music or sleep stories (these can be found online or on apps).



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TIPS FOR PARENT/CARERS & SUPPORTING ADULTS

These are some things you can do each day to help improve a young person's return to school

When a person identifies worries, concerns, questions, anxieties, it's important to listen and take them onboard. Instead of "you're too young to worry about that", try "I can see how that would make you feel worried". Instead of "you don't need to feel sad", try "it's understandable that this would make you feel sad". Instead of "just forget about it", try asking them what their feelings are about it.

Acknowledge

One of the most straightforward ways of acknowledging an emotion is to name it. Naming an emotion can help to stop the emotion in it's tracks and can open up a conversation about how the young person is feeling. It can be helpful to use a prompt, to help a person identify their emotions. For younger children, try searching online for "children's emotions cards". Teenagers might prefer to use a "Feelings wheel", which can also be found online.

Validate

Although a young person's response to an emotion may not be acceptable (hitting out, avoidance, bad language, etc.), it's important to validate the emotion/s that they're feeling. People do not act out for no reason; it's a response to a thought or feeling. Validation acknowledges that these feelings exist and that they're real for them. Tell them that you understand how that could be (e.g.) upsetting, annoying, frustrating, etc.

Normalise

Normalising an emotion is helpful because it lets the young person know that emotions are something that everybody experiences and that there's no shame in having them. It's also important that they learn that emotions are not to be avoided, as they're a normal part of life and they all serve a purpose. It's OK to share your own emotions with the young person. Whilst we don't want to transfer our worries onto them, we do want them to know that we understand what it's like to have these emotions and that they're a part of life. We do need to make sure, however, that we don't diminish their emotion. We're not trying to say, "everybody feels that way, so it's not really so bad", we're trying to say, "this is a normal emotion, which everybody experiences at times, and it's normal for you to experience it too". We need to make sure we validate before we normalise, otherwise the person can feel as though their emotions are being diminished or ignored.

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