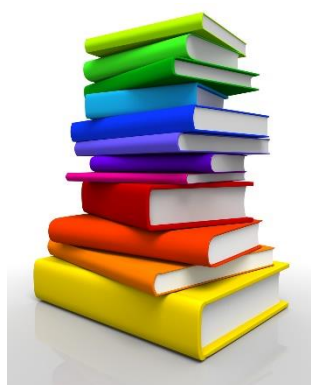




## Preparing for the Return to School



Whilst it is still uncertain how schools will be re-opening in September it is important that we start to prepare our children for their return to school. Many children may be very excited about the return to school having missed their friends and the structure that the school day provides. However for some children this can lead to some anxiety and confusion both for those returning to school and for you as parents. Schools themselves are going through their own challenges leading to everyone feeling uncertain.



In this latest Newsletter from your School's Family Support team we have provided some advice on how to support your children in preparation for their return

We have also included a range of quiet activities you can do at home during the summer. These calmer activities can help support you and your children if feeling anxious and can help support you to look after your emotional wellbeing

The following are some useful websites that can also help you to support you and your child's wellbeing.

[www.healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk](http://www.healthyyoungmindsinherts.org.uk)

[positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-for-children-kids-activities](http://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-for-children-kids-activities)

Visit [www.gadeschoolsfamilysupport](http://www.gadeschoolsfamilysupport) for more information.



## **Preparing your Child for Returning to School**

### **Be Calm**

Your child will take their lead from you and be reassured if you are steady and matter of fact. Whilst you may not be feeling calm and might be unsure and anxious about how they will manage within the new school environment, reassure them that the school are doing everything they can to keep everyone safe and also reassure them that it will be good to go back to school and to see the teachers and some of their friends.

### **Be Positive**

Remind them of all the ways they have learnt to keep themselves safe: washing their hands regularly, sneezing and coughing into their elbow, not hugging others and staying in their own space. Whilst they are used to doing this prepare them for the fact that they may still need to continue to do this when they return to school. Speak positively about how the school will have been working hard to prepare for all children to return. Whilst you may not be feeling 100% positive about any return to school, do not share this with your children. This will re-inforce any anxiety they may be having and will add to any reluctance to return to school. It is important that you build up this positive message early so that your children will not become school refusers.

### **Be Supportive**

Some children may struggle with separation anxiety, particularly as they have been at home for a significant time now, and may not want to return to school. Reassure them that many children will be feeling that way and it is normal to be feeling anxious after such a long time away from school. Remember each child's anxiety will be unique and stem from different sources. Anxiety is a natural feeling and helps us to protect ourselves. However, many children and young people will need support to help manage their anxieties at this time. Acknowledging it's ok to feel anxious ahead of this big change and during this time is very important.

Practice some relaxation and de-stressing techniques such as meditation, deep breaths, mindfulness and timeout for things they love, as well as getting outdoors for some exercise. Anxieties may link to the virus itself, changes of routine, different cohort of friends or adults in school etc. Identify the route of the anxiety before planning how to support your child best. Offer your child opportunities to ask questions about what is happening and any questions they may have about the return.

It is also important that you show you are supportive of the school. Whilst you may not fully agree with some of the measures they are putting in place, unless they are safeguarding concerns, it is important that you show your child you are supportive and be positive. If you do have concerns share this with the school and not your child.

### **Be Curious**

These are strange times and children's imaginations may run away with them. Listen and try not to dismiss or minimise their fears but validate how they are feeling. Reassure them by saying such things as "It's completely fine to feel like that at the moment" or "I can really understand why you would feel like that". Offer them support about what they could do to feel better, "What could you do, or what could we do, that would make you feel better".

### **Be Thankful**

Help your child think of things they are looking forward to; being with their friends, seeing their teacher, favourite activities, but be mindful some of these may not be available for them. Reassure

them that whilst school may be a little bit different for a while, they will still be able to do some fun and interesting activities.

**Be Prepared**

Support your child to be aware of changes that may have happened to their classroom environment and the school in general. Help them to rehearse any new routines that school may have shared. Gradually begin to re-adjust your morning routine to become more like a school day routine. Set the alarm earlier each day and encourage breakfast/getting dressed in sequence and within a timescale.

*Information courtesy of [traumainformedschools.co.uk](http://traumainformedschools.co.uk)*

**Quiet Activities**

Activity	Yes	No	Maybe	Done
Send emails/letters/pictures to your friends and family				
Play some board games and jigsaws				
Teach them to braid hair				
Handwriting practice – to do lists/ shopping lists etc.				
Read to the children/get them to read to you				
Have a movie day				
Look through old photos and memory boxes				

## Emotional Wellbeing

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Maybe</u>	<u>Done</u>
Have a tablet/console/phone free day				
Mindfulness exercises				
Pamper time (have a bath/take time to relax)				
Gratitude treasure hunt (see below)				
Resilience bingo (see below)				
The five senses exercises (see below)				
Research and find your favourite positive quote				
Make a worry bag/jar/box and write or draw your worries and place inside				
Learn a new skill or try something new				
Stay active				

### Gratitude Treasure Hunt:

Something that makes you feel happy

One thing you love to smell

Something you like to look at

One thing that tastes good

Something that is your favourite colour

Something that makes you smile in nature

One thing that is very useful for you

One song that makes you happy

Something to give to someone else to make them smile

### **Resilience Bingo**

Find one item that makes you feel calm and happy

Think of a time you felt really happy

Take a deep breath in and breathe out slowly

Give yourself a hug

Get a drink of water and look after your body

Find a place at home that makes you feel calm and happy and sit there for a minute

Tell someone you love how important they are to you

STOP! Take a minute to think about what is happening

### **The Five Senses Exercise**

Something you can SEE

Something you can HEAR

Something you can TASTE

Something you can FEEL

Something you can SMELL