

Supporting Children
With Their Transitions

Handout



Understanding change and transitions within primary school and into secondary school

What students are worried about?

- Homework being too hard
- Being late for class
- Being isolated
- Not making friends
- Being bullied
- Detention
- Not being in class with friends
- Not fitting in
- What people think of them
- Losing friends

It is normal to worry about these things as a child transitions into another phase in their life. However, anxiety can become a problem if these feelings persist and disrupt a child's life and it is very important to seek help from your school or GP.

Change and Transition

- Change is a normal part of life and can provide opportunities for children to develop their resilience, through gradual steps towards children's fears and worries regarding changes.
- Unfortunately, if a child struggles with a transition it can have a negative impact on their wellbeing and academic achievement moving forward
- So, It is pivotal to ensure that the transition process is well thought through and the right people are involved in the transition. Successful transitions are more likely to happen when they involve parents, children, and secondary school teachers.
- It is important to create a space for your child to speak about their concerns and for you to be open about your experiences of change/transitions. Normalise their concerns!
- Your child is likely to feel vulnerable through the process of change so it is important to sustain and build their self-esteem through developing skills in real life situations (such as transition to secondary school) together with praise and positive affirmation.
- This may also be a difficult time for you as a parent navigating your own barriers. Be sure to get the right support for yourself and speak to the new

school to support your needs in helping your child such as an interpreter if you are not fluent in English.

Being ready for school – Preparation

How to support your child to be school ready

When getting school ready it is important to support new routines with regular practice such as travelling to and from school. Start new routines approx. two weeks before school begins, e.g. bedtime timings and routines, organizing homework and equipment.

Lastly, encourage independence and be mindful of technology and sleep hygiene

Five practical tips to get started



1. Less Contact with School

Secondary schools will vary in how they involve parents in Year 7 transition, but most will offer events for new pupils, induction days and transition meetings/parents' evenings. Make sure you attend and take the opportunity to meet key staff, fellow parents and learn how to stay plugged in to school communications.

Find out who your child's Form Tutor and Head of Year will be. One of the biggest changes to get used to at secondary school is the shift from one class teacher to a variety of subject teachers. Knowing who to reach out to when you need to, is crucial.



2. Friendships and Relationship Building

Whether your child is moving to a school where they will know plenty of others or not, set aside some time to discuss friendship building and the importance of managing new relationships in the first few weeks of term.

- Encourage your child to keep an open mind and avoid looking for that one 'best friend' in the first few weeks.
- Instead, support them to find the confidence to be open to getting to know as many people as possible before fixing themselves to a particular group.

- Joining a lunch time or after school club can be a good way to make new friends. Encourage your child to find out what clubs might be on offer and to try a couple they like the sound of.
- Keep up any activities they were doing before the move to secondary school to keep friendships going.



3. Money & Mobiles

- If your child does not already have a mobile phone now, it may be time to get one in place. Many primary school leavers will already have smartphones and be mobile savvy but, not all of them.
- The consideration should not just be whether your child should have a mobile phone but what type: smart-phone with data or a more basic model for calls and texts only?
- What is the school policy on mobiles? Schools will have given teaching on E-Safety guidelines as well.
- [UK Council for Child Internet Safety](#) offers [helpful guidance](#) on this.
- The role of money is also worth considering. How much cash will your child need each week and how do you expect it to be spent?
- A family agreement or contract on these issues can be an effective way of establishing clear parameters from the outset.



4. Journeys and Routines

- Make sure your child is well-informed and confident about their new journey to and from school. This is especially important for children travelling to and from school alone for the first time.
- If public transport is involved, take a few practice journeys, and talk about contingency plans. What would happen if...? This is a good way to pre-empt possible stressful situations before they arise.
- Carrying cash and a mobile phone for the first time needs to be carefully managed to avoid attracting unwelcome attention.
- It is also wise to get your child back into a good bedtime routine the fortnight before term starts to avoid a big shock to the system.



5. Embrace the Independence

- One of the biggest ways parents can support their children to make the move from Year 6 to Year 7 is to recognize and accept that it represents a change in childhood independence.

- Face to face parental contact with school staff will reduce significantly. Your child will have to navigate a varied school timetable, a wider range of homework tasks and several wide-spanning deadlines.
- As a parent, the best thing you can do is empower your child by laying the groundwork of preparations over the summer and then taking a step back to support from the side lines and encourage them along this new adventure with optimism and positivity.

Enjoy your summer – make some plans



Students often experience an academic ‘dip’ because of transition from primary to secondary. When thinking about how to avoid this Year 7 decline, a study conducted by Oxford University found that ‘Reading for pleasure is the only out-of-school activity linked to higher chances of getting to university and finding a professional career.’ (2011)

The Challenge will launch in libraries in England and Wales and will take place in Summer 2021 - <https://summerreadingchallenge.org.uk/>



Building resilience – 5 ways to wellbeing

The 5 ways to wellbeing can help how to support your child's mental health during the various changes that occur through going into Year 7. Below are pledges that you can complete with your child.

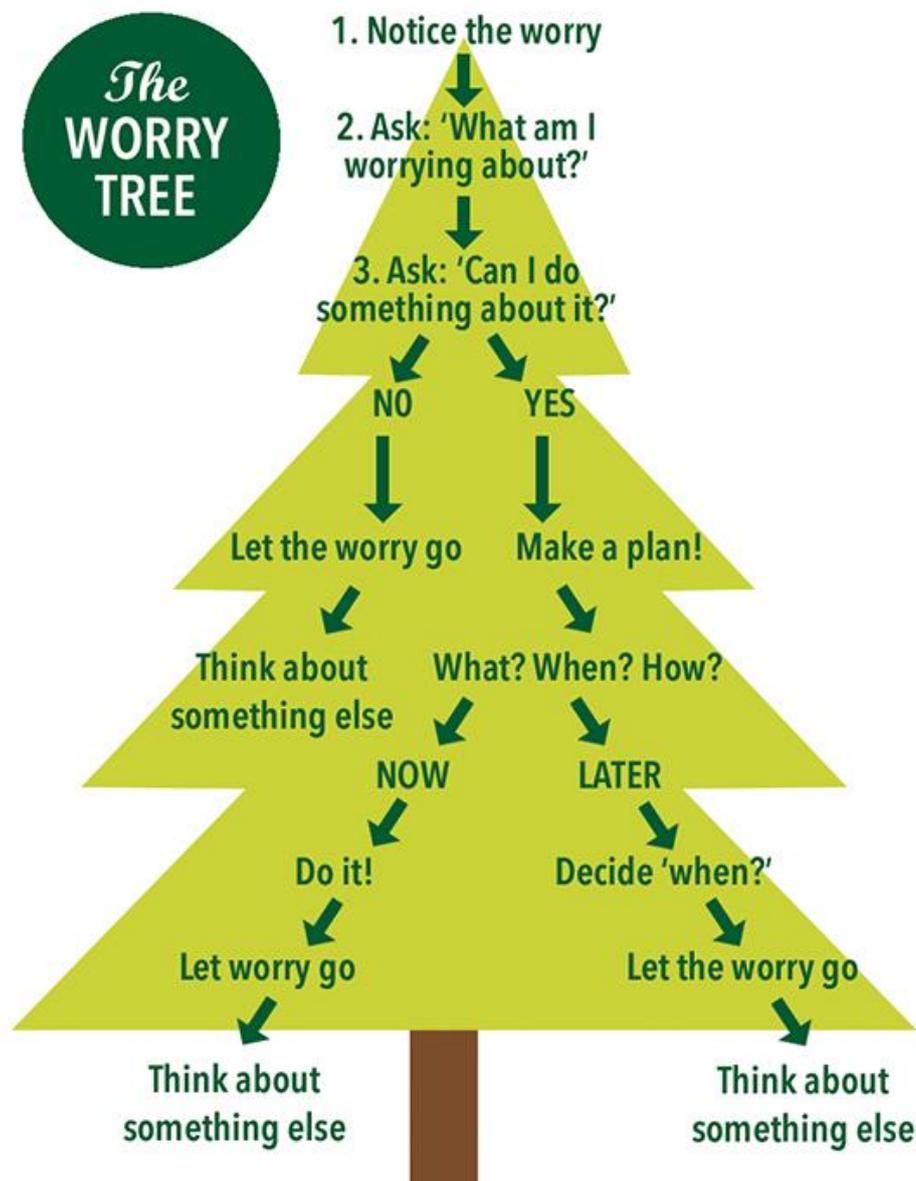
		PLEDGE e.g. I am going to get in touch with a friend I haven't spoken to in a while
	BE ACTIVE Discover a physical activity you enjoy. Go for a walk, or a run, cycle, play a game, or try some gardening.	
	KEEP LEARNING Try something new, rediscover an old interest, sign up for a course, learn a new recipe.	
	TAKE NOTICE Catch sight of the world around you. Be present. Try some mindfulness – what are the sights, smells, sounds, tastes, and feel of things around you?	
	CONNECT Connect with the people around you, friends, family, and neighbours. Building these connects will support and enrich you every day	
	GIVE Do something nice for a friend or a stranger – give someone a compliment, do them a favour, or even give someone your time and provide a listening ear.	

Additional resources to help with anxious feelings

Worry time and the Worry Tree

Your child may have worries during the day that they can't do anything about at the time. Set aside a convenient time in the day for a 15 minute 'worry time' to revisit their worries and do some problem-solving with them.

After writing their worry down, they can only think about the worries only at worry time. After doing this, it may be helpful to use some distraction techniques to re-focus on what you are doing in the here and now. During worry time refer to the worry tree and evaluate with your child whether they can do something about the worry or not.



Worries and problem solving

During worry time you may realise that your child is worrying about something that is an actual problem and that they may be able to find a solution to it.

It can help to develop a structured way of working through a problem. As your child begins to overcome some of their problems, it may help them feel better. You can support your child improve their problem-solving skills by learning to apply the steps outlined here.

1. Identify the problem

The first thing to ask your child is, "what is the problem?" Try and encourage them to be as specific as possible. For example: "I am going to miss this deadline."

2. Come up with possible solutions

Ask your child to list every way that they can think to overcome their problem. Don't worry about how unrealistic an idea seems. Write down anything and everything. The best solutions are likely to be the ones they think of themselves. This is because nobody really knows your child's situation as well as they do. It may help to consider:

- How they might have solved similar problems in the past.
- What their friends or family would advise.
- How they would like to see themselves tackling the problem.

3. Choose a solution: list the pros and cons

Next, together with your child, select the best solution from the list. Think carefully about each option. It is useful to go through all the reasons 'for' and 'against' each idea. How practical are they? How helpful are they? What would the consequences be? This will help you to make a good decision and select the best solution.

4. Break down the solution

To help carry out the chosen solution, it can be useful to break it down into smaller steps. This can make it easier and more manageable to follow through. The number of steps required will vary depending on the solution and how complex it is.

5. Encourage your child to try out the solution and review the outcome

Support your child to follow the steps required to carry out the solution. Simply take them one at a time. Remind your child to go at their own pace and do not allow themselves to feel too rushed. Once they have completed all the steps, you should then review the outcome with your child. If your child has successfully resolved their problem then great, if the problem still exists then encourage them to not give up.

- Is there another solution on the list that you could try?

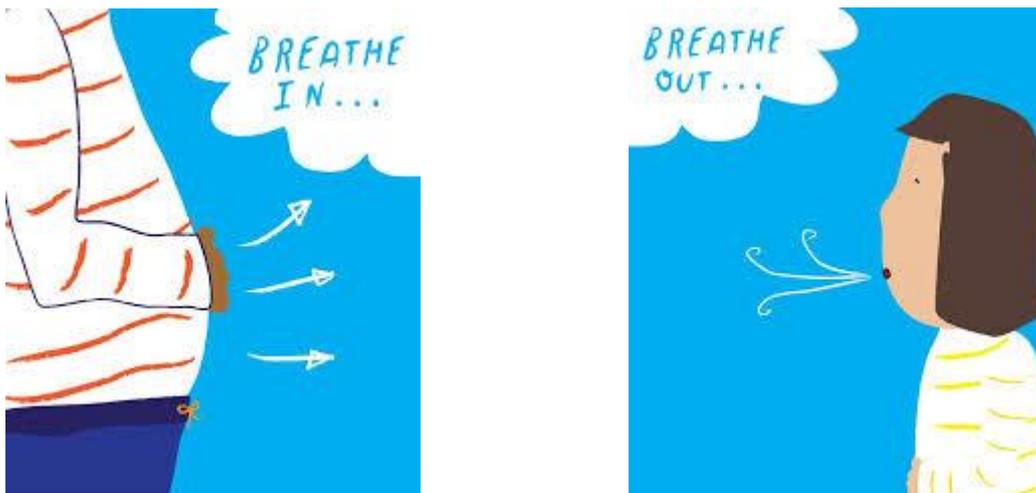
- Is there a different solution that they have yet to consider?
- Can they ask someone else if they have any ideas or advice?
- Can they combine any of your solutions?

Deep belly breathing

Breathing plays an essential role in anxiety. Practising techniques to control your breathing can reduce general feelings of anxiety. It is helpful to practice doing this at a quiet time when you will not be disturbed.

It can be done sitting up or lying down. It is important to breathe with your diaphragm and not your chest (you will know you are doing this correctly as you will feel your tummy rise and fall).

You might find it helpful to imagine letting go of your anxieties with each breath. Imagine the worries dissolving or floating away.



1. Put one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach
2. Take a deep breath in slowly through your nose for 7 seconds; both your hands should rise gently as you breathe
3. Hold the breath for 2 seconds
4. Release your breath slowly for 11 seconds
5. Practice

Want to watch videos on some of the topics covered today? Hammersmith, Fulham, Ealing and Hounslow Mind have developed a video site where you can find useful content on mental health and emotional wellbeing topics.

Below are links to some suggested videos.

Top phrases for calming anxious children



<https://www.my-mind.tv/mindtv-landing/EAdkJW4aKVUo?programme=792b40bd-ba3f-426b-a812-93d43c26e953&redirect=93024891-29FB-CC78-27CB-BC2708E2417B>

We all have mental health



<https://www.my-mind.tv/mindtv-landing/KTMKuIQ82D4v?programme=ba843811-50be-4bcb-9048-d2bb089550aa&redirect=4FE8761D-BCB5-BA8D-08ED-72550DDCE4C4>

Empathy vs sympathy



<https://www.my-mind.tv/mindtv-landing/EAdkJW4aKVUo?programme=41a3f16e-e1c0-4517-a6ee-ba31acf8a9e0&redirect=9EA10129-d08aa0d4b9a2&redirect=9EA10129-BA87-5AAE-B3F5-7427756874EC>

Providing emotional support to your child



<https://my-mind.tv/mindtv-landing/EAdkJW4aKVUo?programme=41a3f16e-e1c0-4517-a6ee-ba31acf8a9e0&redirect=ADD19986-2BAB-10F4-4B7E-2C6F17781B3E>

Signposting and Further Support

If you are concerned about your or your child/children's mental health, please speak to your GP

For Yourself

IAPT Services through NHS choices: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/adults/iapt/>

To find a private therapist:

BACP: <http://www.bacp.co.uk/>

UKCP: <https://www.psychotherapy.org.uk/find-a-therapist/>

Mind Info Line: provides an information and signposting service. Open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays) 0300 123 3393. Ask about:

- mental health problems
- where to get help near you
- treatment options
- advocacy services

Samaritans: Free phonenumber: 116 123, alternatively you can email at jo@samaritans.org

YoungMinds Parent Line: detailed advice, emotional support and signposting about a child or young person up to the age of 25. Call for free on 0808 802 5544 from 9:30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. <https://youngminds.org.uk>

Anxiety UK Infoline: Helpline 03444 775 774 is available from 9.30am – 5.30pm Monday to Friday, or you can email support@anxietyuk.org.uk

Helplines Partnership: For more options, visit the Helplines Partnership website for a directory of UK helplines <https://helplines.org/helplines/>

For Your Child

Anxiety UK Infoline: Helpline is available from 9.30am – 5.30pm Monday to Friday, 03444 775 774 or you can email support@anxietyuk.org.uk

BEAT: eating disorder charity. Information on types of eating disorders, recovery information, support information including helplines & downloadable resources. www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk Helpline: 0808 801 0677, Studentline: 0808 801 0811, Youthline: 0808 801 0711

CAMHS: is the name for the NHS services that assess and treat young people with emotional, behavioural or mental health difficulties. Most local CAMHS teams have a website where you can look up how to get access to their service.

Hope Again: support for children and young people experiencing grief and bereavement. Helpline. www.hopeagain.org.uk, 0808 808 1677

Kooth: free online counselling support for under 25s. www.kooth.com or download the Kooth app

Mind: A-Z information for mental health, including treatment options, self-care, information for family & friends, & useful contacts www.mind.org.uk

The Mix: information & support about mental health for under 25s. Professional and young person blogs and advice over a wide range of topics. Helpline, crisis messenger, 121 chat, email. www.themix.org.uk, 0808 808 4994

NSPCC: charity fighting to end child abuse. Information, resources and further support, stories. www.nspcc.org.uk, 0808 800 5000

No Panic: offers advice, support, recovery programs and help for people living with phobias, OCD and any other anxiety-based disorders. <https://nopanic.org.uk>, 0844 967 4848

Papyrus: charity to prevent and help young people thinking about suicide. Information & support, hopeline for under 35s. www.papyrus-uk.org/hopelineuk, 0800 068 4141

Samaritans: 24/7, free helpline for anyone. 116 123, www.samaritans.org.uk

YoungMinds: mental health charity for children and young people. Information and resources for young people & parents, including parents helpline and young people crisis messenger and helpline. <https://youngminds.org.uk>, Text the YoungMinds Crisis Messenger for free 24/7 support across the UK if you are experiencing a mental health crisis. If you need urgent help text YM to 85258.

Mental Health Support Team (MHST) Support In Primary Schools

What support can we provide?

- 1:1 support for parents/carers of children who are feeling anxious or showing challenging behaviour
- Whole class workshops for children supporting emotion regulation
- Drop-in service for parents/carers
- Psychoeducation workshops for parents and carers

Aims of 1:1 support for parents/carers

- Education Mental Health Practitioner's (EMHP's) provide guided self-help for parents/carers. Guided self-help aims to **empower** parents/carers to develop the **tools and skills** necessary to help tackle the difficulties their child is experiencing as a family
- EMHPs **work together** with parents/carers to develop **coping strategies** to manage their child's distressing thoughts and **increase resilience** to future problems
- Parents/carers will play an active part; reading materials before each session, **practice strategies** at home and **problem-solve** with the EMHPs support
- If you're interested in a referral to the MHST for 1:1 parenting support, please speak to a member of staff in your child's school or scan this QR code:



Drop-in telephone service

- We are providing drop-in telephone sessions to help parents and carers with concerns around their child's mental wellbeing
- Each phone call lasts for up to 20 minutes – please note this is not a counselling service
- Language Line Telephone Interpreting Services are available
- Please speak to a member of school staff for information on how to access our drop in service or scan the QR code below.



Mental Health Support Team (MHST) Support In Secondary Schools & Colleges

What support can we provide?

- 1:1 support for children and young people who are feeling anxious or low in mood
- Targeted group work for students
- Drop-in service for parents/carers
- Psychoeducation workshops for parents/carers and students

Aims of 1:1 support for children and young people

- Education Mental Health Practitioner's (EMHP's) provide guided self-help for children and young people. Guided self-help aims to **empower** children and young people to gain the **tools and skills** necessary to tackle difficulties themselves
- EMHPs work together with children and young people to **develop coping strategies** to manage distressing thoughts and **increase resilience** to future problems
- Children and young people will play an active part; reading materials before each session, **practice strategies** at home and **problem-solve** with the EMHPs support
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