



Supporting the Children in Returning to School

March 2021

As we transition children back into our classrooms, here are some top tips for a smooth return to school.

1. Uncertainty

We are still in very uncertain times and although it would be great if we could make COVID disappear– we can't (not yet anyway). Children, like us adults, must learn to tolerate some uncertainty. This skill can help us to manage worry.

2. Normalising

It is also normal to feel wobbly about the situation we find ourselves in and about returning to school. Change makes most people feel a bit strange and worried. Some people find this harder than others. It's ok for your child to feel a little nervous about coming back.

3. Modelling calmness

Parents may also have worries about their child returning to school. If you do, please get in touch with us. Be aware of how you model your own concerns when speaking to your child about returning to school. Speak to your child when you feel calm yourself as this will help to reassure them.

4. Listening and validating

Listen to your child. Hear what their concerns are. Acknowledge their feelings and let them know that it's ok to feel like this and that you'll help them to explore ways to feel better.

5. We don't have all the answers

It's ok to not have the answers. In fact, it's better not to pretend that you know. There are still things about the road ahead that we are unsure about. It's possible we may come back to school, and that some bubbles may still close for a short period of time.

6. Limit news and address misinformation

If your child is worried about getting unwell or making someone else unwell, agree to investigate some facts together in an age appropriate way. For example, you may look together at the facts in the news, but limit the amount viewed and address any misinformation the child has.

7. Focus on possible strategies

Help children to focus on possible strategies. Ask them how they adapted to the lockdown. What helped? What might help them now adapt to going back to school?

There may be some things that immediately can be done to problem solve the concerns raised. For example, 'I am worried about seeing my friends again'. See what you can do beforehand, such as try contacting a friend to speak over Zoom in advance of school starting.

8. Prepare them for what to expect

Helping children to prepare for change is a key step in tackling any transition. Talking openly about when and why things will happen, helps children to make sense of the world around them. It is important to make sure that they know what is going to happen as far as is possible so that there are no surprises. Try to talk to your children as much as possible about what to expect when they return to school.

Use the social stories on the school website to help. Encourage your child to join in with the 'Returning to School' Zoom sessions.

9. Get Back into a Routine

Getting back into a routine can be a great way to prepare for a return to school. Bedtimes and waking times may have changed during lockdown; try to adjust these gradually so that children are ready for the school day.

It may help to begin to get the practicalities ready for school – for example get uniform ready and choose packed lunch items. Our school routine will be the same as when they left, both morning drop off and afternoon pick up.

10. Encourage your child to talk

Sometimes, children can find it difficult to talk about how they are feeling. They may not have the words or know what to say. It can help to offer prompts and open questions as a starting point for conversations. Here are some suggested questions that you could ask your children to help them talk about their feelings about going back to school:

What are you looking forward to?

What might be hard?

What do you think will be ok?

Encourage them to ask questions. The social stories on the school website might offer a good starting point.

11. Taking care of themselves and others

Encourage children to think about their own mental health including eating healthily, exercising and doing things they enjoy.

12. Don't put pressure on yourself

The transition back into school is likely to take some time and children may experience ups and downs. Try your best to support, reassure and comfort them, without putting pressure on yourself.

Remember you need to look after yourself too.

Remember it took us time to adapt to the lockdown, and it will take time to adapt back.

The team at Godinton are here to help so if you have any questions or if there is anything that we can help with, please just let us know. We are all in this together.

Websites that might help with the return to school

Young Minds— a charity to support the mental health of children and young people

https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/coping-with-anxiety-about-going-back-to-school/?gclid=Cj0KCQiAhP2BBhDdARIsAJEzXlGPx6yjoD3SYjxQsP7sywKbiQnKB4_DHTw_MaSD-zAaYUAM7OpWWLcaAq26EALw_wcB

Barnados— a charity to support children's welfare

https://www.barnados.org.uk/support-hub/back-school-strategies-coping-feelings?gclid=Cj0KCQiAhP2BBhDdARIsAJEzXlHWwfuXNa27G3GpBvcUdlZcnaIrNPiHYf_bwde4ca36vlnpP37CQjUaAhzvEALw_wcB

NSPCC – a charity to support children's welfare

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2020/june/returning-to-school-after-coronavirus-lockdown>

The Mental Health Foundation

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/returning-school-after-lockdown/support-pupils-return-to-school>

Winston's Wish— A charity to support bereaved children, young people and their families

<https://www.winstonswish.org/preparing-children-return-school/>

Place2be— mental health support

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/our-services/parents-and-carers/>