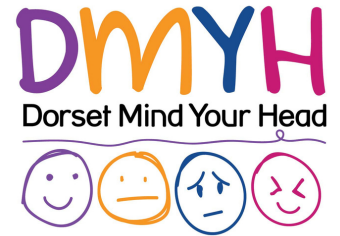


Supporting young people in their return to school



Returning to school or transitioning to a new school or year is a unique experience. Change is often a positive experience, but it can be challenging too. This toolkit is designed for parents and carers of young people to support yourself and others through this period of change.

Is your child worried about returning to school?

Sometimes they might not want to talk about it, but for many young people they may have apprehensions about returning to school for a number of reasons. As parents or carers we may tell them that it is going to be okay, but encouraging them to talk will help them understand and make sense of their worries. Here are some worries that young people have spoken about when talking about returning to school.

- Going to a new school without their friends.
- The thought of making new friends, being rejected.
- Changing class groups.
- Changing teachers and getting to know them.
- Specific lessons.
- Worried they are not good enough and will get behind in their work.
- Bullying and social isolation.
- Worried about getting changed for P.E or doing physical activity.
- Striving for perfection or having high expectations of yourself or others.
- Changes to routines.
- Leaving parents/carers for periods of time.

Why they might find it hard to talk

Young people may not think their parents or carers will understand how they are feeling or worry that you are too busy or that they don't want to burden you. It takes strength to open up and be vulnerable and this can be a difficult step for them to make. Especially if they are worried that their concerns are silly or that they will be laughed at or misunderstood.

Talk with your young person

Sometimes starting the conversation can be difficult and it can be hard to know where to start. Being open to having this conversation about how they are feeling is a positive first step. Here are some tips for helping you know what to say.

- Actively listen. It can be easy to want to jump to solutions but it is important to take time to let them explore and express how they are doing.
- Regularly check in, they might not want to talk about this all in one go, so it's good to keep coming back to conversations.
- Sometimes they don't know why they're upset and feel pressure to try and know so they might make stuff up...sometimes they just need a hug.
- Normalise difficulties so they don't feel like they're the only one going through this. Let them know we all experience worries and that school is a change and that it is normal to be apprehensive about that.
- Talk to them about support available to them such as friends, teachers, tutor, family.
- Identify any risk factors (e.g. unhealthy relationships, bullying, perfectionism)

Getting them ready for school

- Recognise what the young person finds difficult about routine.
- Going to bed at a reasonable time so they get at least 8 hours sleep.
- Switching off devices an hour before bed.
- Eating well/having breakfast.
- Make sure they have everything ready for school ahead of time.
- If they are going to a new school, doing a dry run of the route to school can give them a sense of control before they start.
- Arrange to meet someone to walk with on the first day.

Helping them develop coping strategies

Explore with them what has helped in the past when they are struggling. This could be: being with close friends and family, safe places to spend time in, hobbies and interests.

Help them make a list of who they can go to with the specific worries they have identified. This may include help and support within the school.

Using distractions when emotions become too overwhelming. This may be different depending how they are feeling. For example:

Angry

Something physical, rip up old newspapers, break sticks, make noise (playing an instrument or loud music), clean bedroom, punch a pillow, squash cans – anything that does not involve another person.

Sad

Something soothing, hot bath/shower, hot drink, read a book, listen to soothing music, anything that makes the person feel taken care of, keep a diary of all the things you are good at/having others write on post-it notes what they believe is good about you, write a poem.

Feeling unreal

Using any of the senses to reconnect, squeezing ice, chewing something hard, brush skin with a toothbrush, stomp feet, take a cold bath, snap wrist with a rubber band.

Wanting to see blood

Draw on skin with red pen, use food colouring, freeze food colouring into cubes so when squeeze see red, use red plasticine, smear it on to the skin, use make up to create fake injuries.

Want to pick scabs

Painting on nail varnish and picking it off, cool candle wax and peel off.

Expressing feelings differently

Draw or paint feelings or keeping a diary can help identify triggers and potential ways to manage them. Know when things are feeling out of control and start keeping a note of who or what you can turn to for support.

Self-care for you and your young person

It is important that you stay mentally healthy and this will put you in the best position to support your young person. The 5 ways to wellbeing is proven to keep your body and mind active and healthy and improve the resilience to be able to cope with life's challenges.

5 ways to wellbeing

The most important thing is to make this work for you and your young person. So the way that you and your young person do the 5 ways to wellbeing is individual to you and depends on your values and interests.



Signs your young person may need extra help

- Sadness, irritability, loss of interest, avoiding others.
- Confusion or disorientation, fear, paranoia, panic attacks.
- Excessive worrying, anger, violence .
- Trouble coping with emotions, self-hatred, feeling worthless.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits.
- Seeing or hearing things others can't.

If you are concerned that your young person is showing any of these signs there is always help and support and that you are not alone.

Where can you go support?

Young Mind offer a parent helpline and webchat service. You can call or message for free on 0808 802 5544 from 9:30am - 4pm, Monday - Friday.

Shout offer a 24/7 support textline on 85258.

Samaritans provide 24/7 support line on 116 123 that you can call.

For specific support for your young person:

Childline

Gives help on a wide range of issues – you can call and email them; post on message boards and chat to a counsellor online.

- Call 0800 1111, currently 9am to midnight,
- Or email them securely from your online Childline account.

The Mix

Provides information and support for under 25s. Provides a Crisis Messenger, helpline and 1-2-1 provides information and support for under 25s. Call free on 0808 808 4994, 7 days a week from 3pm to 12am. You can also email or 1-2-1 message on their website.

Kooth

Provides FREE, safe, anonymous support for children and young people. You can live chat or message the team of counsellors, join discussion boards and use a daily journal to track your feelings. On their website at kooth.com.

Dorset Mind Your Head services

Wellbeing Check-in

- Regular check-ins with a trained volunteer via online calls.
- For ages 11-25 years.
- For up to 6 months.

Counselling

- Weekly counselling sessions with a trained counsellor online or in person.
- For ages 11-18 years.
- For up to 6 sessions.

Wellbeing n' chat groups

- Weekly activity and wellbeing groups with a trained mental health facilitator.
- For ages 11-18 years.
- Run in 8-week blocks

.Email dmyh@dorsetmind.uk to find out more and register your interest.

Remember

Young people are the experts on themselves.

Don't try to tell them what to do, rather help them find a way to help themselves.

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