



A parents' guide to Helpful Heroes

Parents and carers can use this booklet to support their child to manage their worries about attending school.



Fill out the activities with your child and discuss it with the school to ensure your child is getting the best support.

'Think, feel, do' cycle

The 'think, feel, do' cycle helps us to understand how what we think can have an impact on how we feel and our actions.

This booklet uses this principle to support your child to understand what they are thinking about school, how they feel about school and what they can do.

Our thoughts are the words and/ or phrases we tell ourselves. Our feelings change all the time and can make our body feel different things.

We can be happy, sad, angry, and scared all in the same day - this is natural and normal.

These feelings can make our body feel different sensations such as feeling sick when we are worried or alert when we are happy.

Our actions are the things that we do.
When we feel happy, we are more likely to do positive things.

'Think, feel, do' cycle example

If your child is finding it difficult to attend school, their 'think, feel do' cycle may look like this.

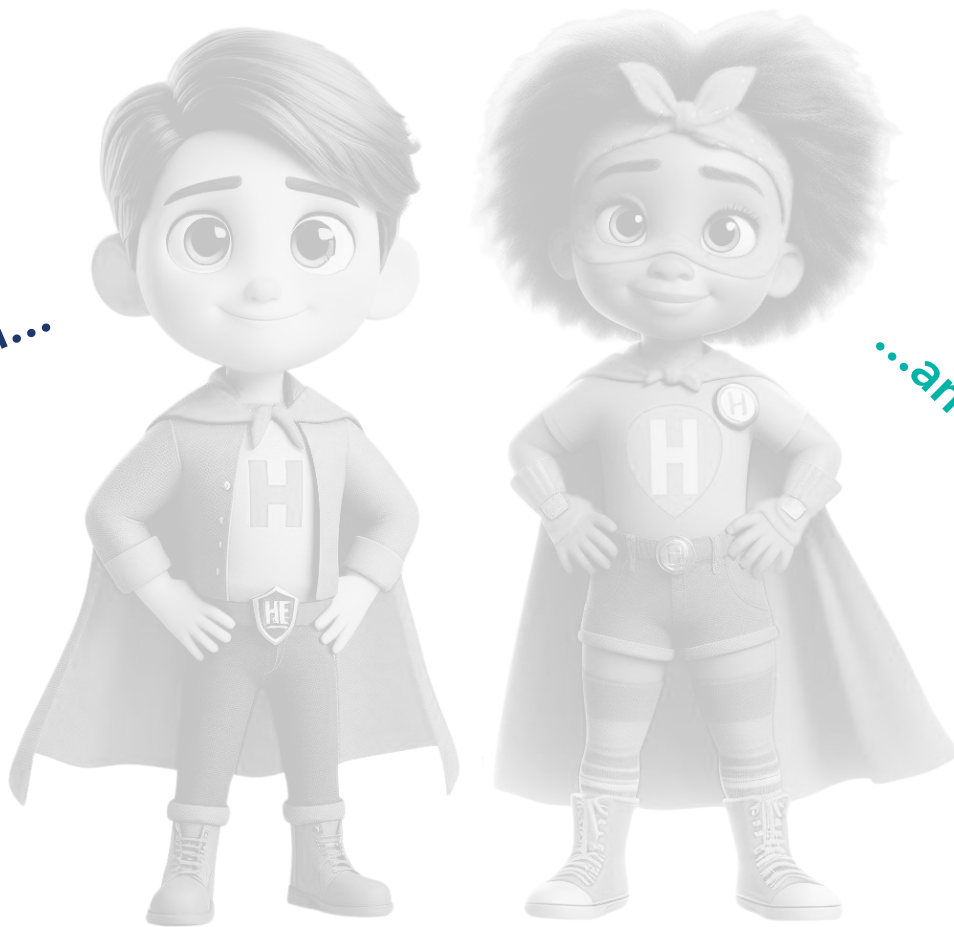


This cycle only reinforces your child's belief and experience that not going to school is the answer to feeling better.

This booklet hopes to help your child communicate their worries, so you can support them to attend school every day.

This page allows your child to express their creativity and helps make this workbook their own.

Colour us in...



...and give us a name! ✨

Ask your child who they feel could help them.

They may want to put their parents' names, siblings, a friend at school, a teacher or create their own names.

What's important is they feel these people can help them with their worries.

Colouring is also a relaxing activity for your child that may help keep them calm when they're feeling anxious.



About me

It's good to start with something positive.

Support your child to think about ideas they could put in each box. They can use words, draw pictures, or stick in pictures and photos.



I'm really good at...



My favourite things are...



My favourite places are...



I really enjoy...

You may want to return to this page from time to time just to remind them of all the positive things in their lives.

Let's talk about worries

It's important to understand how worries work so that you can support your child.

What is a worry?

A worry is when you feel scared or upset about something, even if it hasn't happened yet.



What does it feel like?

Your child may feel like they've got butterflies in their tummy. They may feel sick or like their heart is beating really fast.



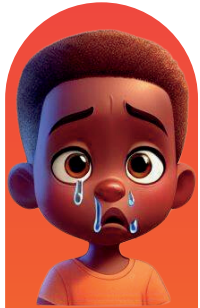
What can i do?

Reassure them that everyone feels worried sometimes and it's okay to talk about it with grown-ups who can help them feel better.



Worry'o'meter

Your child can use the worry'o'meter to rate how they are feeling on the 5-point scale.



Level 5: Very worried

This makes me feel really worried. My body can feel shaky, sick and sweaty and my heart beats really fast.



Level 4: Worried

Most of the time, I find that this place makes me worry. I don't like to go and try to get out of going.



Level 3: Sometimes worried and sometimes calm

This can sometimes make me worry because it changes a lot.



Level 2: Mostly calm

Often when I am here, I feel calm. This space does not make me worry as I feel safe and I enjoy it here most of the time.



Level 1: Calm and happy

I enjoy being here as I always feel calm or happy.

This will support you to understand how your child is feeling and the intensity of their emotion.

The next activity will help you to identify what your child enjoys at school and at home, as well as what they are worrying about.

It's important to focus equally on the positives and worries to help you understand why they enjoy and worry about a particular things.

When filling out these sections, try asking them questions to support them to expand. For example:

“Can you tell me more about that?
Why do you enjoy this?”

“I can see you are worried about this, what makes you worried about that?”

“I would like to hear more about...”

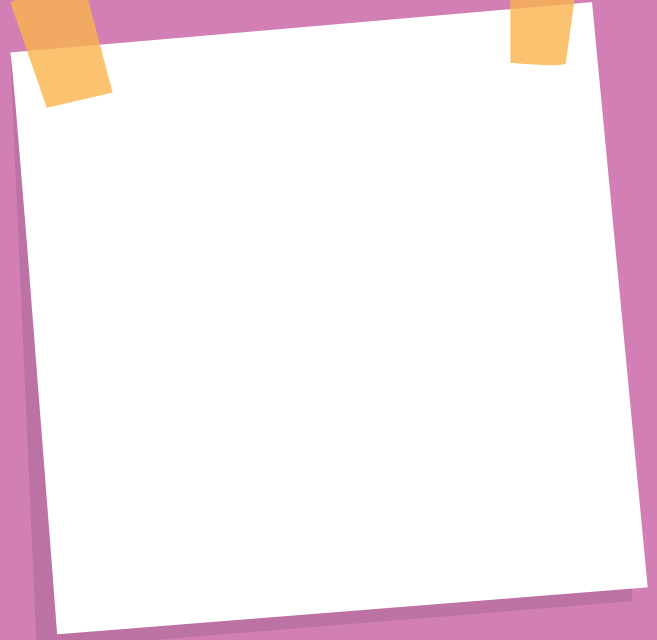
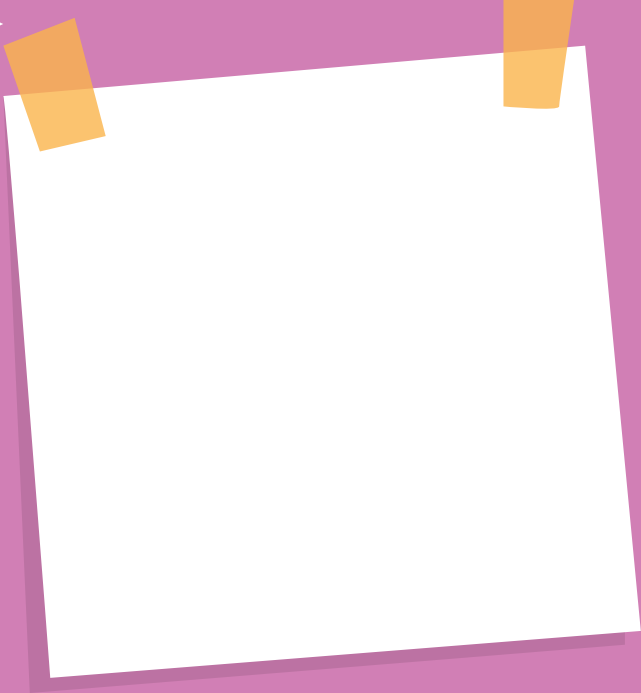


Also ask if they enjoy other things or are worried about other things - get extra paper if needed or just talk about them.

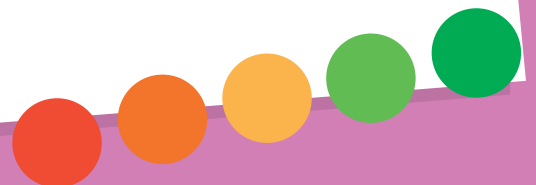
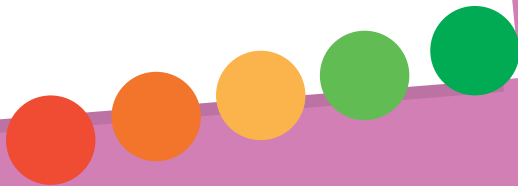
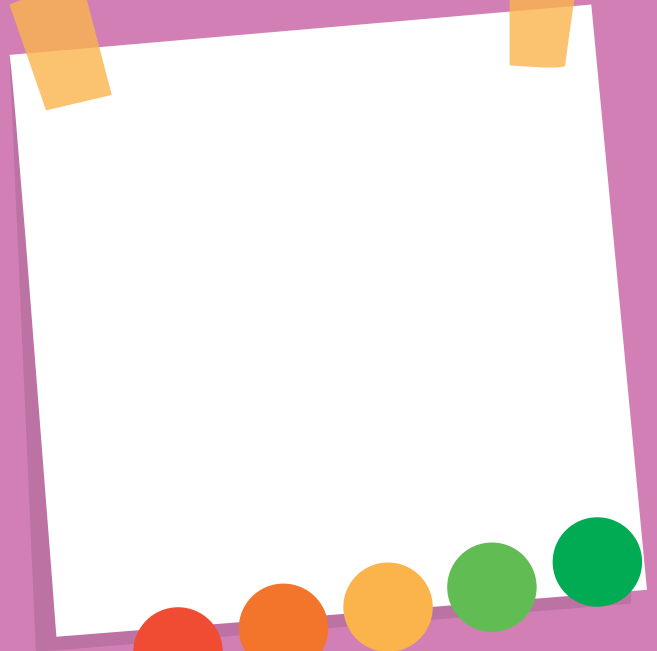
You may be able to use what they enjoy most about school to support your child to attend school.

Discuss the answers with your family and child's school to support them to manage their worries.

What I enjoy most at school

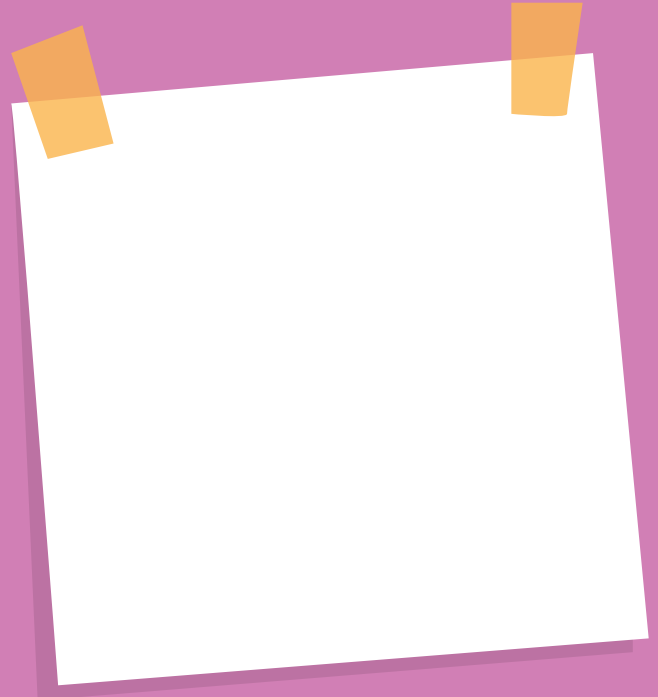
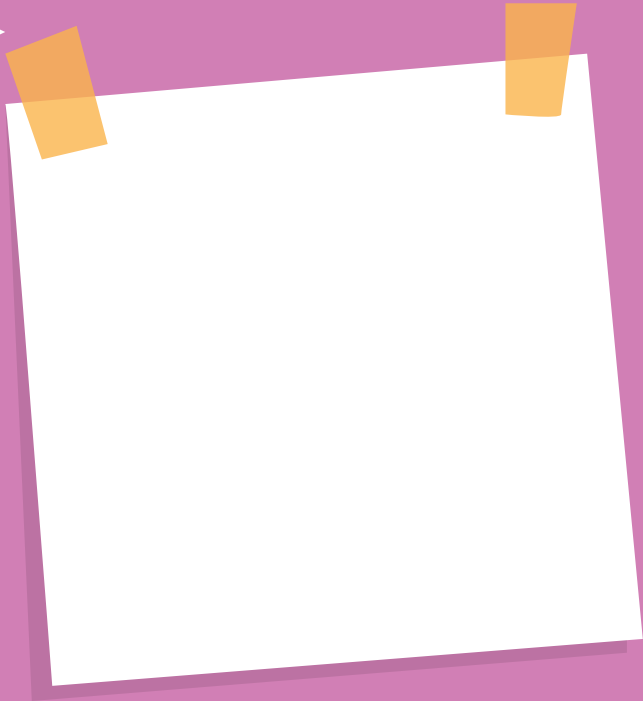


What I worry about at school

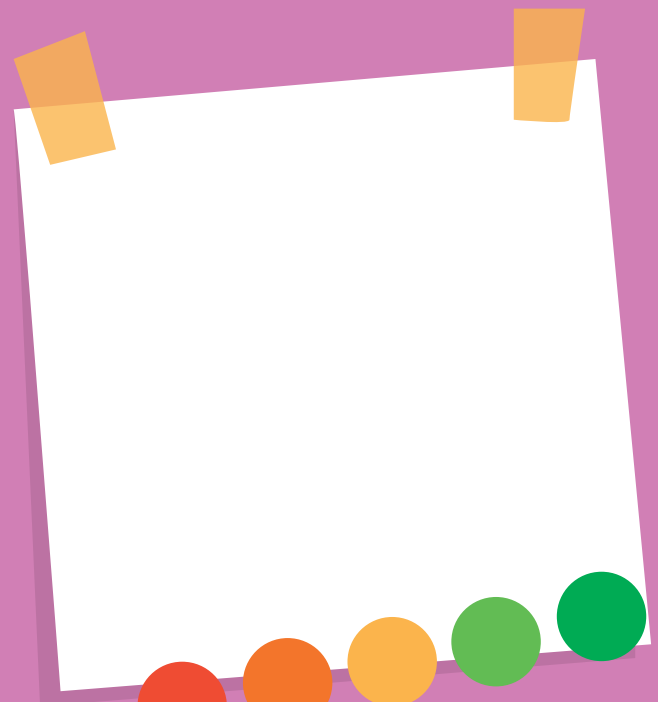


Your child can write, draw or talk to you about these sections and use the worry'o'meter to communicate their worry levels.

What I enjoy most at home



What I worry about at home



Your child can write, draw or talk to you about these sections and use the worry'o'meter to communicate their worry levels.

Fight, flight and freeze

When you feel really worried, your body can do three things:
fight, flight, or freeze.



Fight

when you feel like
you want to shout or
become angry.



Flight

when you feel like
you want to run
away as fast as you
can, like a bunny
hopping away from
danger.



Freeze

when you feel like
you can't move at
all, like a statue
standing very still
or feel like you
want to hide.

There are three basic responses to worries, it's good for your child to realise that these are all normal and part of everyday life. It's ok to feel like this, it's what we then do next that is important.

Helpful Exercises

Here we have showcased some mindfulness exercises that help the mind focus on other things to reduce anxiety and keep them calm.



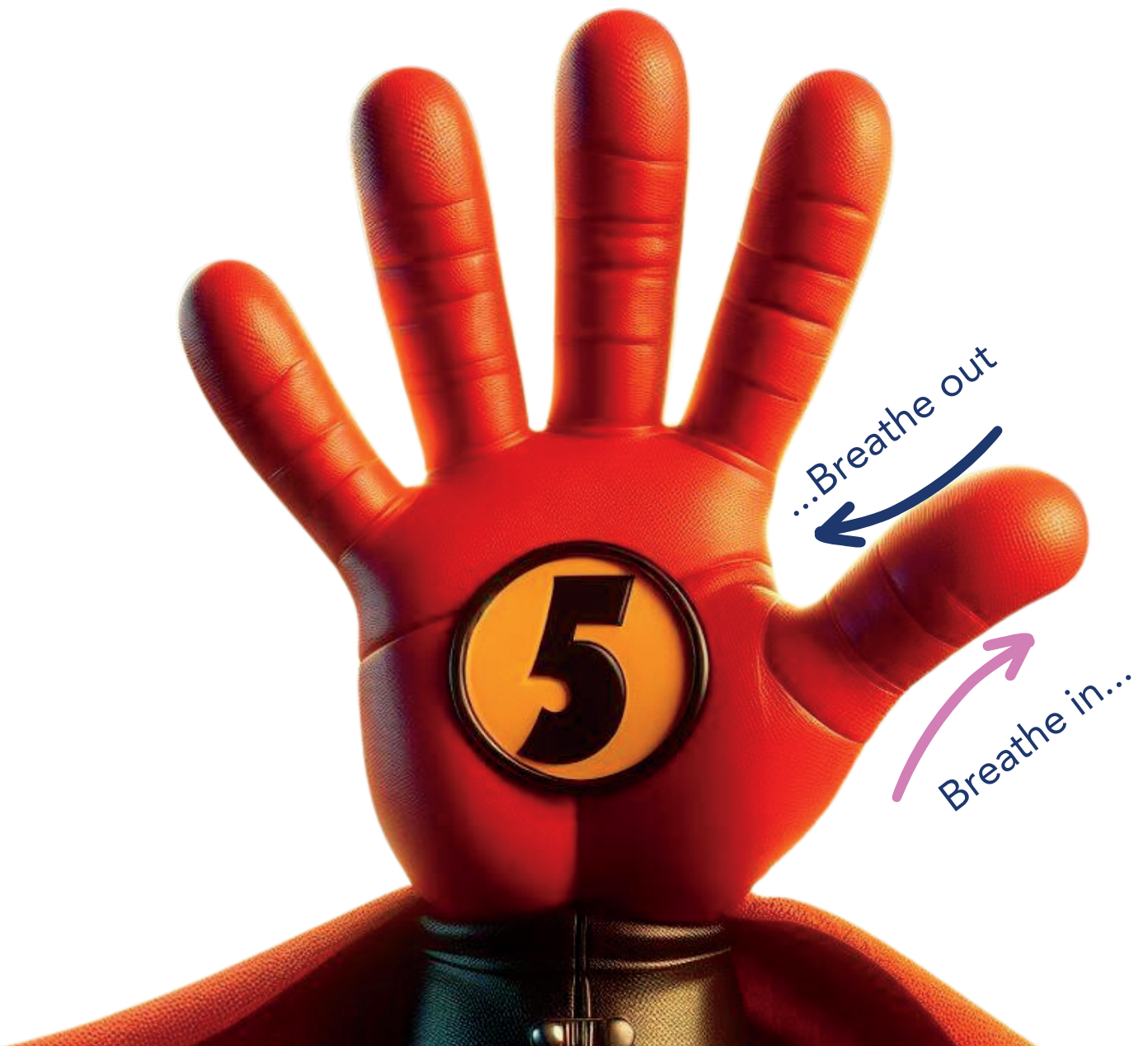
In a quiet room, sit with your child to do some of these exercises together and ask them how they feel after them. These can then be done on their own to help keep them calm in anxious situations.

Five finger breathing

Breathing exercises help us by sending a message to our brain to relax.

Ask your child to put their hand on their tummy, when they slowly breathe in, they should feel their tummy get bigger like when we blow up a balloon.

Then, tell your child to breathe out slowly and they should feel their tummy deflate just like when we let go of a balloon.



Grounding

Grounding can help you to move your mind away from the worries and into the present moment. If your child is not able to taste or smell anything they could name their favourite smell or taste.



Name 5 things you can see



Name 4 things you can hear



Name 3 things you can touch



Name 2 things you can smell



Name 1 thing you can taste



Try doing this when you are out and about with your child as a game you can do together, then remind them they can use it when they are feeling worried.

My HERO plan

- You can use the booklet to support you to complete the hero plan.

My worry...

To keep calm, I will...

My worry...

To keep calm, I will...

Work with your child to identify what they are worried about and how they can manage this worry.

Helpful links for **parents**

- **Action for children:** This is an emotional [website service](#) to refer to if you feel your child needs further support with their emotional wellbeing.
- **Guidance booklets:** The Staffordshire educational psychology service have developed detailed [guidance booklets](#) about school non-attendance that you may find useful.
- **NHS five steps to mental wellbeing:** Visit the [NHS website](#) for a number of helpful mental health tools and support for your yourself and your child.
- If your child's worries are having an impact on their life at home or at school, it may be helpful to talk to your GP.
- If you need urgent help with your child's mental health, you can call **111** for advice or call your GP to book an appointment. If there is an immediate risk of significant harm, go to A&E or call **999** for an emergency response.

If you feel you need some additional support, click on the yellow links or follow the advice to contact your GP.