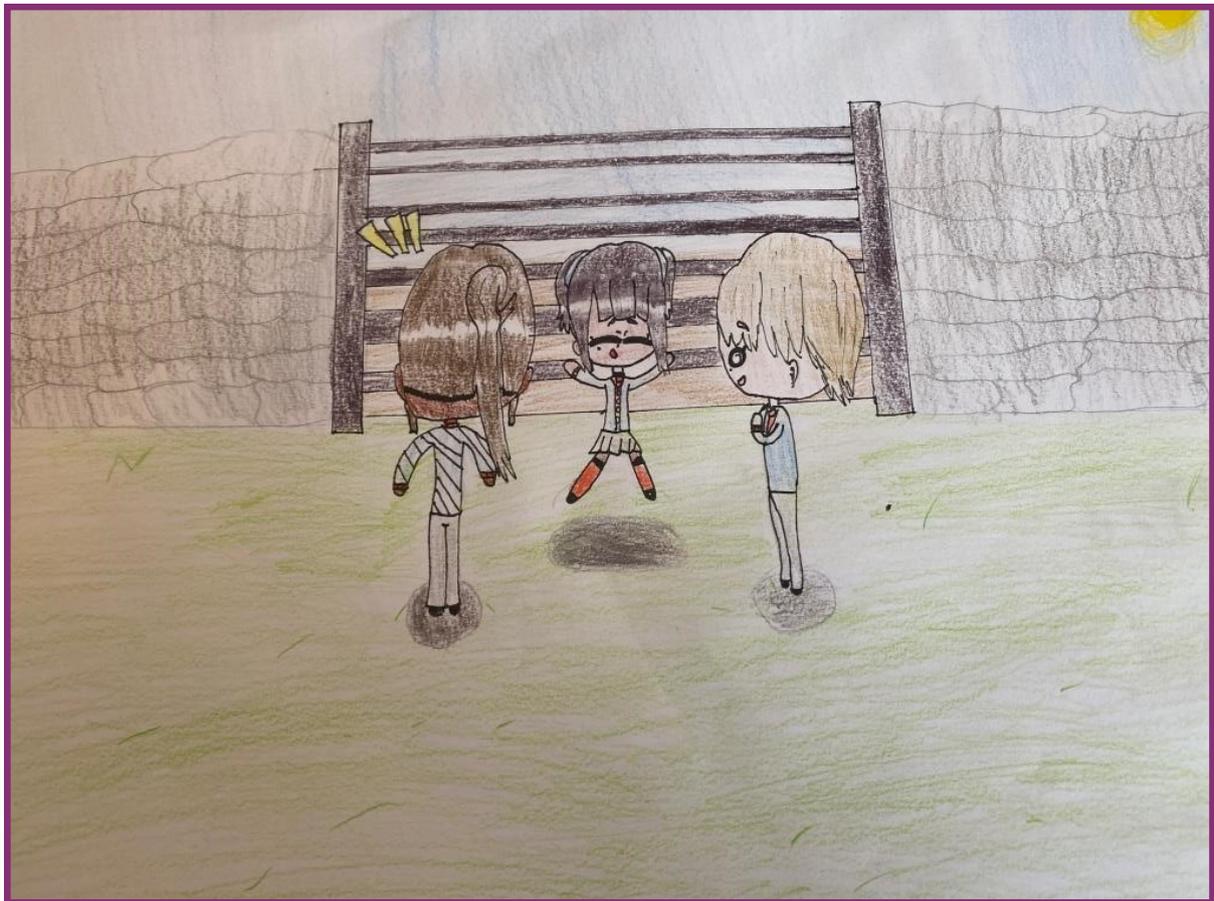


Back to school or college



A pack for young people

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Remember, you can choose which parts of this booklet are useful for you, and ignore the pages which are not useful.



Introduction

Lockdown in the UK started on Monday 23rd March 2020. This meant that schools were closed for most pupils, and many of the activities that you enjoyed doing may also have stopped.

You probably have not been able to see your friends, and some of your family for a long time, and time outside your house was limited.

As the lockdown finishes, schools will start to re-open and you will have to go back to school, or perhaps even start at a new school. Some young people may already be attending school, but things may still change as more pupils return to your school or class.

This pack has been made to help you think about returning to school, and to give strategies and tips to help you to cope with change.

We hope this will make you feel more confident about returning to school, and to reduce any feelings of anxiety.

Some of the contents of this booklet may be helpful for you, and other bits may not feel helpful. You can use the sections that are helpful, and ignore the bits which are not.



Identifying Emotions

You might have lots of different feelings about returning to school, perhaps you are excited to see your friends, or maybe you feel anxious or worried about going back, some people might be feeling frightened, or stressed about the work they have missed.

Whatever you are feeling, it is a completely normal reaction to change and uncertainty. Everybody will be feeling a mixture of emotions.

Relaxed

Nervous

Angry

Embarrassed

Stressed

Excited

Happy

Sad

Worried

Confused

Shame

Frustrated

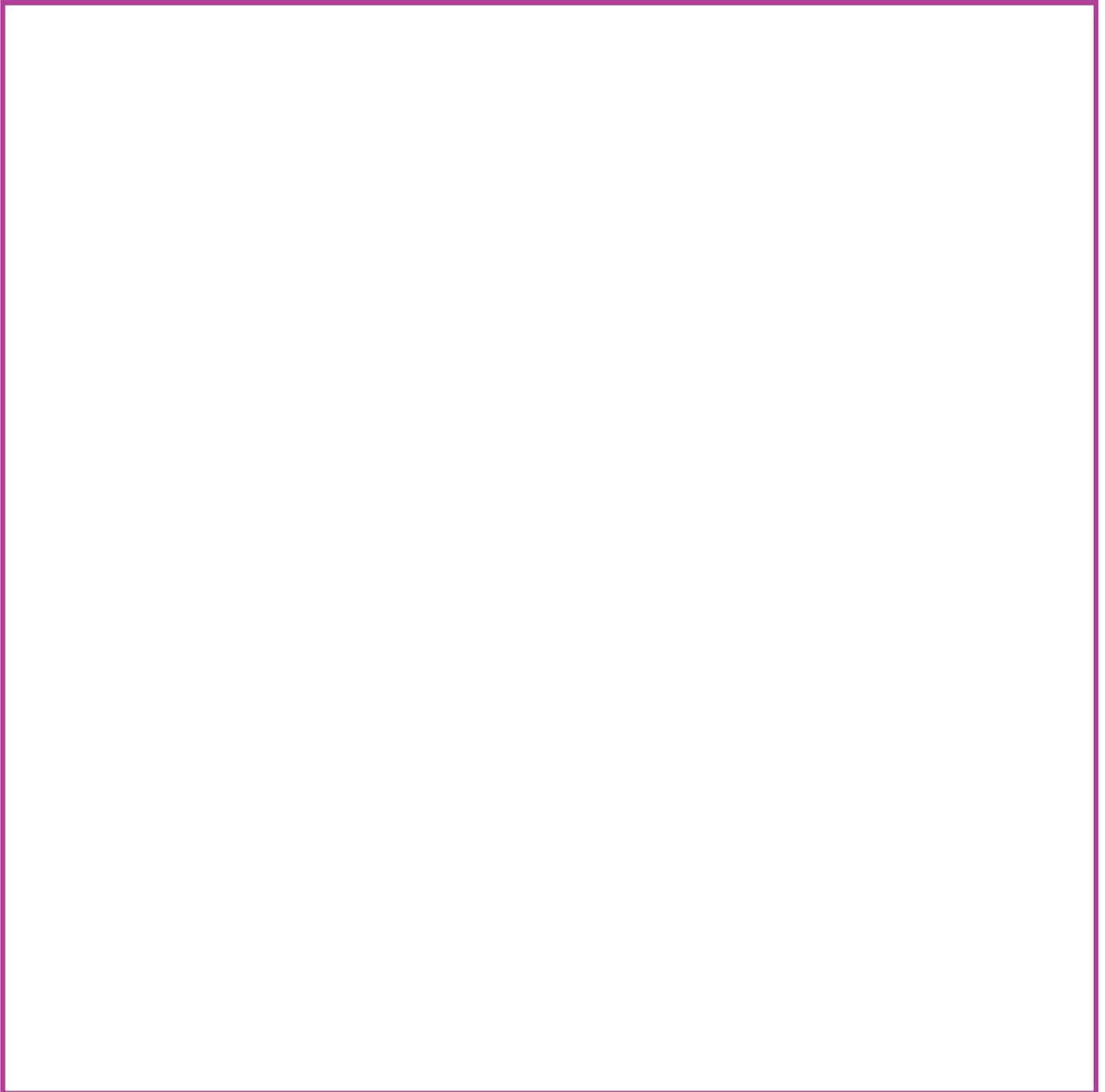
Joyful

Annoyed



Circle or colour in the ones that match how you are feeling about going back to school.

Are there any other words or pictures that describe how you are feeling?



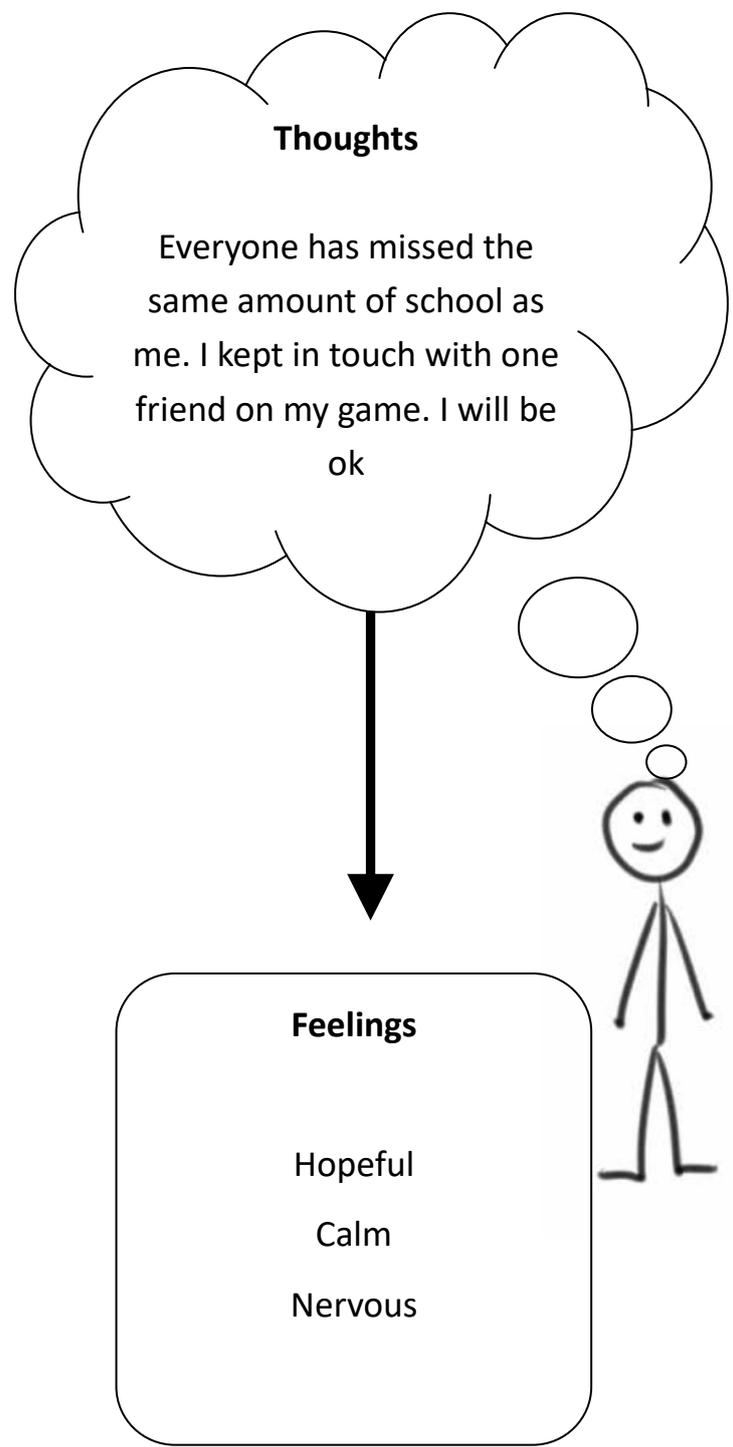
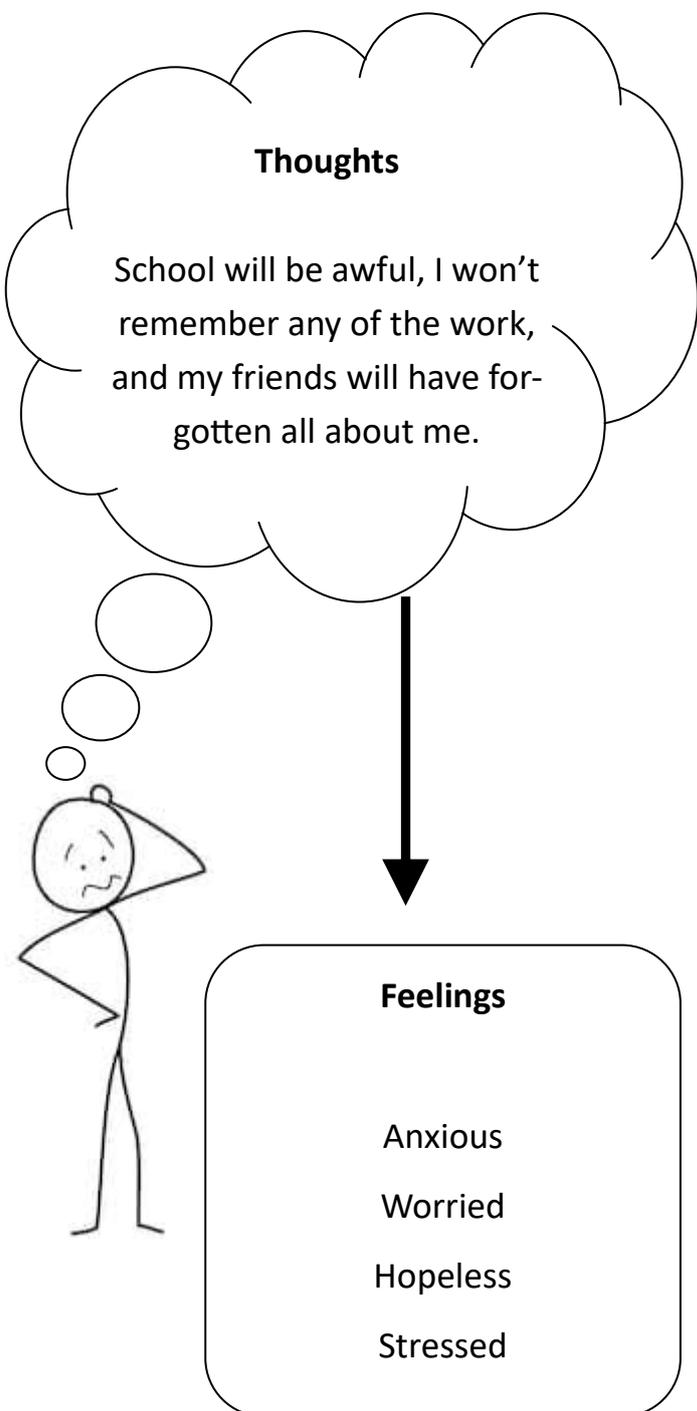
Try talking your family, or someone who you trust about how you are feeling.



Thoughts and Feelings

Our emotions, or feelings, are connected to the thoughts that we have in our head about ourselves and others. If your thoughts about returning to school are all negative, then you are more likely to feel anxious, worried or afraid.

Below are two examples of how thoughts can change the way you feel:



What are your thoughts about going back to school?



Write them down, or talk about your thoughts with a family member, or someone who you trust.

My thoughts.....



How do these thoughts make you feel?



Managing Worries

Worries, or negative thoughts, can get stuck in our head and go round and round. There are two main strategies for managing these thoughts:

1. Switching attention to something else.
2. Challenging negative thoughts.

We will look at both these options over the next two pages.

1 Switching attention.

Distraction. This means doing something to try to keep my mind off my up-setting thoughts. It is difficult for anyone to really focus on thinking about two things at once. Concentrating on something else, e.g. a computer game, or watching a funny film, can block out my worries. If I am not listening to my negative thoughts there is nothing to keep my negative feelings going.

Being 'mindful'/staying in the present

Focussing my attention on something that is real and is happening right now, rather than focusing on my thoughts. This could be focussing on the noises I can hear, or concentrating on an object in my hand. I could try making a list of:

- 5 things I can see right now
- 4 things I can hear right now
- 3 things I can touch, and reach out and touch them, right now
- 2 things I can smell
- 1 slow, deep breath.

Then focus on your breathing, before shifting your focus of attention onto something different.....

2

Challenging negative thoughts.



JUDGE*

Statement / Belief: what's on trial?

Rate your belief that this is true (0 - 100%)



Look at the evidence for:

The Defence*	The Prosecution*
What tells you this statement/belief is true? What <u>hard factual</u> evidence is there?	What tells you this statement/belief isn't totally true, all of the time? What is opinion and what factual evidence is there? Consider what others (witnesses) would say.
.....
Summarise the defence's comments	Summarise the prosecution's comments
Rate your belief in this summary (0-100%)	Rate your belief in this summary (0-100%)

Review the Evidence & Judge's Summing Up*

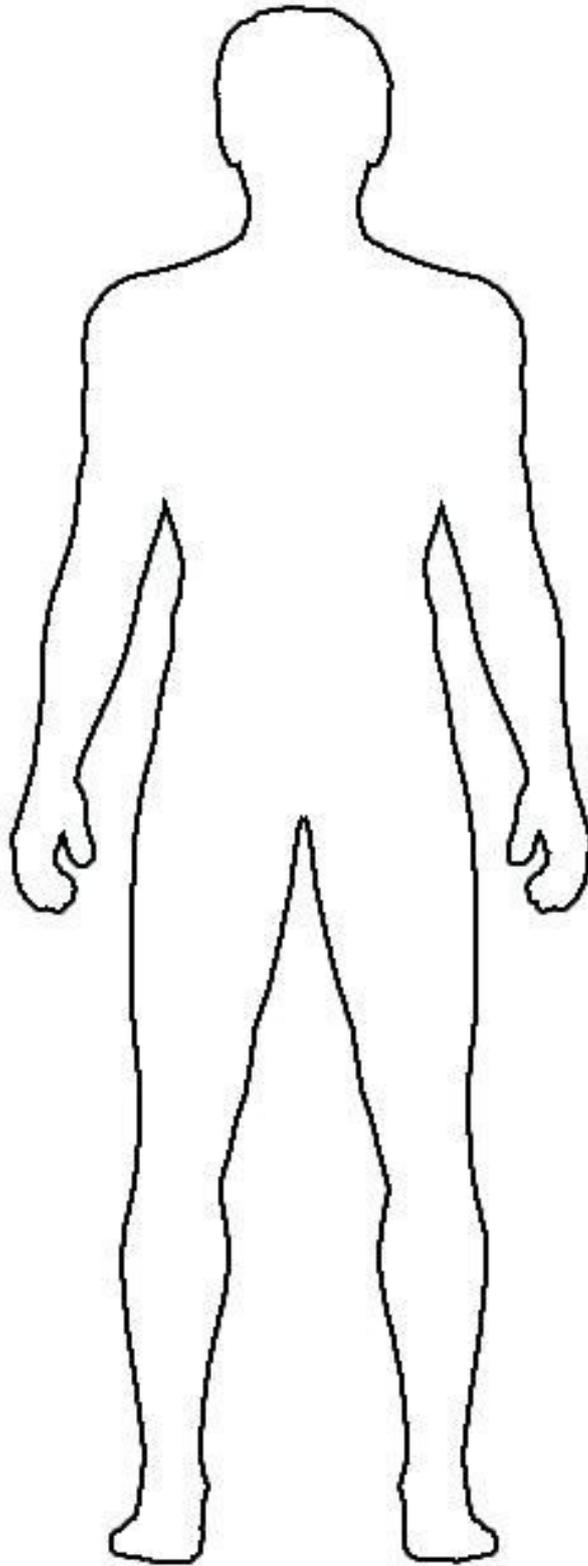
Find a closing statement that is based on the evidence, realistic, rational and balanced.



How much do you believe that this statement is true? (0 - 100%)

**Insert client's name*

Your emotions, or feelings, can affect how you feel inside your body. For example, when you are anxious, you may get a headache, feel sick, your heart might beat faster, or you may sweat more.



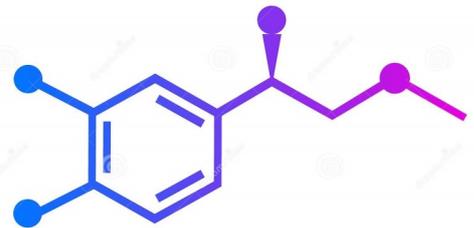
What happens to your body when you feel anxious, worried or afraid? Draw or write it on the picture.

Fight or flight?

Our thoughts tell us that we are in danger!



Our brain processes the 'danger' signals.



The hormone Adrenaline is released to prepare our body for danger.

adrenaline

Adrenaline tells our body to get ready to **Fight**, or to run away **Flight**. This makes our heart beat faster to deliver more oxygen to our muscles.



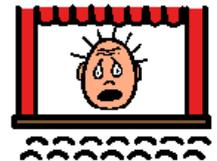
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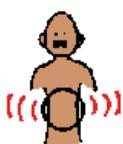
This biological mechanism in our bodies has developed to try to help us survive in dangerous situations. This would have been particularly important for early humans who faced real danger most of the time (e.g. from sabre-toothed tigers).



We can still get the same adrenaline response even if we experience a situation as threatening (i.e. stressful), but are not in any actual danger, e.g. doing an exam, entering a room of new people. Sometimes when might experience a number of different stressful situations in a day and our feelings of stress and tension can really build up.



The effects of adrenaline on our bodies can feel unpleasant (e.g. feeling sick, breathing fast) but are not dangerous. We are not ill. These unpleasant physical feelings we get when we are anxious or angry can keep the anxious and angry emotions going.



One way to try to control anxious and angry emotions is to try to reduce the physical feelings that go with them. We can use relaxation ideas to try to calm our bodies reactions.

Relaxation

Using relaxation strategies to calm your body will send a message to your brain that you are safe. This will help to calm anxious thoughts and feelings.

Listen to music	Go outside	Use a mindfulness app or do meditation
Play a sport or jump on a trampoline	Play with your family pet	Read a book or magazine
Watch something funny on TV	Do some baking	Hug someone in your family
Play with some sensory toys	Draw, paint or be creative	Look at photographs which make you happy
Practice a deep breathing exercise	Do some colouring in	Have a bubble bath

Wellbeing

Positive Emotion

What are the things which make you feel good, and give pleasure and enjoyment?

Engagement

What are your hobbies and interests? What keeps your brain distracted from worries?

Relationships

Who is important in your life? How can you keep in touch with them?

Meaning

What is important in your life? How can your interests help others or the world around you?

Accomplishments

What are you good at? What are your strengths? Feel proud of what you have achieved.



Add your own ideas on the next page.....



Ask someone to help you to complete the boxes below and add ideas of things which are important in your life to increase your positive wellbeing.

Positive Emotion

Engagement

Relationships

Meaning

Accomplishments

Friendships

You may feel nervous about seeing your friends again. Perhaps you kept in touch with them on social media, or on the phone. Maybe you haven't had any contact with people from school for a couple of months. On the next page is a social story which talks about friendships.

Below is some ideas that you might find helpful to get you started when you do see friends at school.

Seeing friends again - helpful ideas

Here are some things that will help me when I see my friends again

- Smile
- Ask them to join in with something they're doing
- (Sometimes I might want to wait to see what my friends are doing first. Then I can find out what game they are playing and can ask to join in)
- See whether they tell me anything. I can then say something back.
- Find out what they have been doing at home
- Find out what they liked doing at home
- Talk about any interests / things we both like doing
- Ask if they want to do something at breaktime or lunchtime
- Be friendly and helpful
- If I am stuck, I can tell an adult and they might be able to help me to join in.

Seeing my friends again

Being at home has meant I have not been able to see my friends much

When I go back to school I will see my friends again

I may have different feelings about seeing my friends

I may have missed my friends and be happy and/or excited to see them

I may feel a bit shy; nervous or worried seeing my friends again

I may feel I have forgotten how to be with my friends

All of these feelings are okay

It is natural for it to feel a bit strange when I see my friends again

It is okay for me to get used being with my friends

When I see my friends I can ask them how they are. If I have missed them, I can tell them that

I can practice some different things I might say when I see them again in the classroom; at lunch time or at break time

My parents can help me practice what I might say

Things I might say:-

Hi! I missed you!

Hi! How are you?

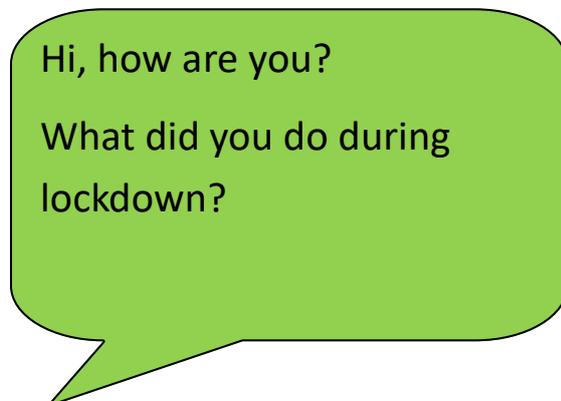
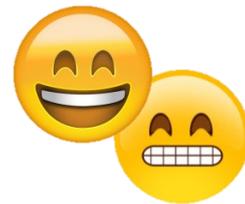
What are you doing? Can I join you?

Can we sit together at lunch time?

Can I join in your game (at break time)?

I can be really pleased if I say something nice or show I am interested in spending time with a friend.

I will soon get used to being with my friends and other young people again.



Sensory ideas

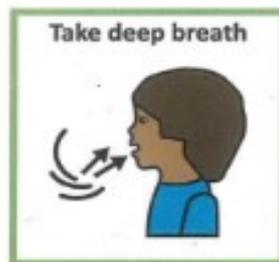
Calming strategies for Home



- Crawling under & over blankets
- Obstacle Course
- Star jumps
- Rolling across the room wrapping up in blanket Burrito
- Trampoline



- Squeezing bath toys
- Wall push-ups
- Carry something heavy
- Wheelbarrow walks
- Playdough
- Digging in the garden
- Theraband
- Making bread / kneading dough



- Chewy snacks ie jam on toast
- Crunchy snacks ie raw carrot or bread sticks
- Blowing games / bubbles
- Warm drink



- Wrap up tightly in a blanket
- Sandwich between cushions
- Give yourself a hug
- Wrap in warm towel
- Tactile box



- Use natural light when possible



Use soft tone of voice



- Calming sounds ie Rain Rain App
- Soft voices
- Reduce noise

Getting going

It can be hard getting back into a routine when you have been at home for so long. It might be helpful to plan out your school routine before you go back.

- I can think about what I need for school before I go back!
- I can think about what time I need to get to school.
- I can then work out with my parents what I need to do get ready beforehand.

On the night before, set alarm for:



Get up at:



Get ready: draw or list what I have to do



Leave home at:



Travelling to school: draw or write about how you'll travel to school and who with



Arrive at school at:



Having a plan, and getting organised can help you to feel calmer, and more in control of the situation.

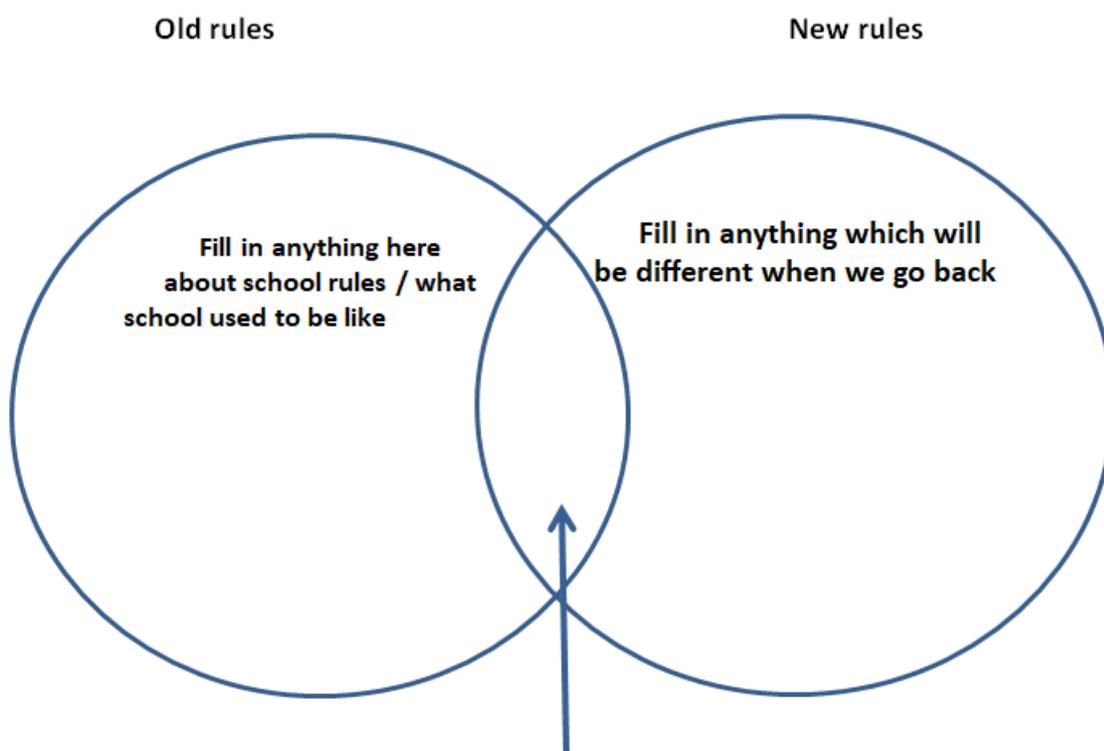
Same or different?

Some things will be the same and some will be different when I go back to school.

It is likely that my teachers, the other children and me will have to spread out and not stand so closely together when we go back. We might need to do this for some time. This is because being close to people can help the flu (Corona virus) spread / pass from one person to another more quickly.

My parents and teachers will help me to understand what is staying the same and what may have changed. They will help me understand and talk to me about:

- The timetable (Structure of the day)
- Wearing uniform
- Lunchtimes
- Classroom sizes



Where the two circles overlap put in anything / where the schools rule remains the same

My Plan



Ask your family or a trusted adult to help you to fill in this page with a plan for going back to school.

What works well for me at school?

Who can I ask for help at school?

What can I do for myself if I feel anxious or worried?

Questions

Are there any questions that you would like to ask your teachers before you go back to school? Some other young people have asked these sorts of questions.....

Will I be in the same classrooms as before?

Will I have to stay 2 metres away from everyone?

Who will my teachers be?

I have important exams next year, how will my teachers help us catch up?

What if someone in my year group gets sick?



There is space on the next page for YOU to write down any questions that you have. You or your parent can then share these with your school, and they will probably be able to answer.

All schools have had to make special plans to make sure that everyone is as safe as possible when they come back to school. Nobody wants anyone to get sick, and everyone is working as best as they can to make schools safe, healthy places to learn.

Don't forget that we know that children are very, very, VERY unlikely to be seriously ill, even if they do catch COVID-19.

If you have any questions for your school,
write them here, and either you or your
parent can share them with your
teachers.....



Picture by Tian Patel, age 6

This resource represents a multi agency collaboration within Manchester. Contributors include Specialist Speech and Language Therapists; Educational Psychologists; Clinical Psychologists; Specialist Learning Disability Nurses; Occupational Therapists; and parents across the city.