

Acorn Psychology Services

Transition Back to School – Part 1

As we write it is still unclear when children will return to school and from the information available at the moment appears like school will look different for quite some time even when they do begin to return. With so much uncertainty, lack of clarity and fear around children returning to school and our lives beginning to look something more like 'normal' we wanted to think about how we can support school staff, parents and children to begin to prepare for a return to school, whatever that might look like.

Children will be returning to school from many very differing experiences of lockdown, some will have found the experience positive, having extra time with their families, time away from the potential social, emotional and sensory experiences of school, to have a period of down time will have been a welcome relief for some. These children may find returning to the usual routine and systems of school challenging. Other children will have had a much less positive experience of lockdown, they may have found the loss of routine and structure and access to social interaction very difficult. Some may have found learning at home difficult or may have had experience of someone they know having had the virus or, sadly losing their life. Many children will have experienced the adults in their lives feeling anxious, will have seen the news unfold day by day with reports of how many people in our country and around the world who have lost their lives. We cannot expect our children to return to school at the same point at which they left it, in terms of the curriculum but also in terms of their social, emotional and mental health.

All of our children, their parents and our school staff have experienced loss, of routine and structure, of a social network, of opportunity and of freedom, to name but a few, and this can impact heavily on our mental health. Anxiety, trauma and bereavement may have emanated from that loss for many. This leaves school staff, our children and their families fragile and we must consider this as we prepare for a return to school.

How can Teachers Help Themselves, and Each Other...

- Manage your own stress – get enough rest, eat well, talk to people you trust, reduce outside demands, set aside time for yourself, use relaxation strategies or mindfulness
- Have a school buddy with whom you check in with (and on!) for support
- Listen to each other's experiences
- Be kind, make each other a hot drink, be available and be present

How can we Help and Support our Children...

- Try to learn about and understand each child's experience of lockdown – a sheet is attached which may help explore this topic, alternatively, some ideas for sentence starters to explore this are below:

The hardest thing for me was/is.....

A thing I enjoyed was ...

A challenge I have overcome....

A new skill I have learned...

Right now I feel...

What I hope for in the future...

Things I have appreciated most about my family/friends....

Areas of Key Importance: (we will explore each of these in more detail and provide resources to assist with these areas next week)

- Relationships – re-establish and strengthen
- Create a feeling of safety in classrooms and in the school as a whole
- Help children to understand and regulate their emotions
- Set out clear expectations, scaffold learning and provide clear feedback
- Understand that all behaviour is communication

How can we Help and Support our School Communities...

Listen to their lived experiences of lockdown

Reassure them that school is a safe place for their children

Hold a community act of remembrance where the difficulties are acknowledged, and connection reaffirmed.

Everything has been very different recently due to the outbreak of coronavirus. You might be missing school, or you may be enjoying your time at home. You will be going back to school at some point, although we don't yet know exactly when this will happen. School is so important as you learn skills that will help you achieve your goals in the future. Have a think about the following questions...

What (or who) have you missed while not being at school?

Do you have any worries about returning to school?

What have you been doing at home that you could tell an adult at school about? Who would you tell?

What are you looking forward to doing when you return to school?

What do you like most about school?