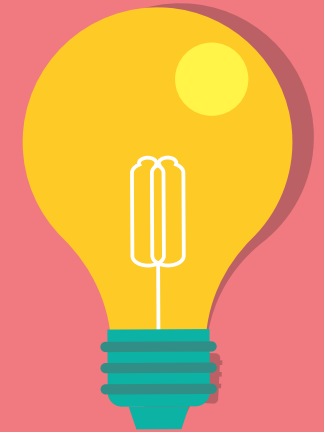


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Returning to School **After Lockdown:**

Kooth's Tips and Advice
for students



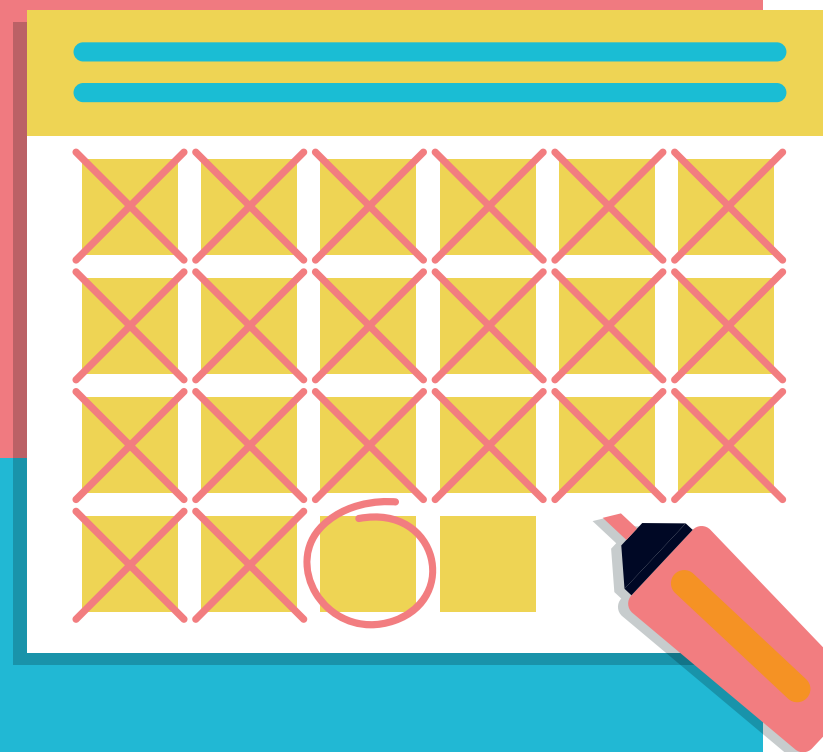
■ Introduction

Where have the last six months gone?

As summer winds down, unfortunately so do the long, lazy days of sleeping in and planning activities around your own relaxed schedule. Whether you're starting Year 6 or about to embark on your final year, heading back to school can be a heady mix of excitement, relief, stress and nerves. And this year, not only will you be expected

to adjust to a new timetable, new teachers and perhaps even a new school, you'll also be faced with having to adjust to a brand 'new normal' - whatever that looks like. If you find yourself struggling to wrap your head around these big changes, remember that you are not alone.

Here are a few tips to help you prepare emotionally for going back into the classroom again ...



■ It's good to talk!

The pandemic has affected us all in different ways and it's important to remember that if you're feeling anxious or worried, opening up about how you are feeling and what you have experienced (good or bad!) can be a really helpful step in acknowledging that things are different and also finding new ways of managing.

“Whether it's with friends, family or trusted teachers, allowing yourself to share your thoughts with others rather than bottling things up will help you to make sense of things,”

says Dr. Lynne Green, Chief Clinical Officer, Kooth.



■ **Treat yourself like you would a friend**

If a friend was going through a difficult time and needed support, think how you would treat them and then extend the same courtesy to yourself.

“Sometimes it’s much easier to cut other people slack than ourselves, says Dr Green. “Remember, it is ok to not feel ok; you are human and you deserve some TLC.”



■ One size doesn't fit all!

It's important to remember that there's no right or wrong way of doing things. What is helpful for your peer groups will not necessarily work for you so take some time to consider your own situation and coping style.

“Try not to put pressure on yourself to conform to something that doesn't make any sense for you, says Dr. Green. “Also have patience for others who may want to approach things differently - you are all unique.”



■ Self-control can be overrated!

With so many things out of our control right now, it's extremely important to feel that we do have some degree of control over our lives. However, sometimes, your sense of control can actually be worse if you tighten the reins too much, explains Dr. Green.

“Control what you can and let go of what you can't; we are all learning to adjust to a new 'normal' and accepting some level of uncertainty can be liberating.”





■ A positive mindset can move mountains!

Keeping a positive mindset in the midst of a pandemic is easier said than done, but thinking positively can help us be better equipped to handle difficult problems.

“Holding on to the belief that you can cope and things will be ok will not only help you to feel better, it will also encourage more positive behaviours,” explains Dr Green. **“This will increase your confidence and self esteem and ultimately result in improved mental health and sense of wellbeing.”**



■ **Negatives can become positives!**

It would be an understatement to say that 2020 has been incredibly challenging. But even when things are feeling hopeless, we can often find strength and new directions if we think creatively. Perhaps you've spent more time with your family, reconnected with a friend or baked the best banana bread in the Western hemisphere.

“Many young people will have found new career options, new friendships and new hobbies as a result of COVID-19 - if you look for positives, you will find them”, says Dr. Green.



■ Perspective is Key

During these uncertain times, maintaining a sense of perspective can be invaluable.

“The more we are surrounded by chaos and fear, the easier it is to lose perspective and see everything through a negative lens”, explains Dr. Green. **“Focusing on the things that are going well and the things that you can control will help you maintain that all important perspective that will promote a sense of balance in terms of your wellbeing.”**



■ Hold on to your healthy habits

Covid-19 has likely challenged and changed ways in which you eat, exercise and socialise - restaurants were closed, clubs, gyms and sporting activities were paused and social gatherings were severely limited. Now is the time to start picking these back up as appropriate in line with new guidance, says Dr Green.

“Whether it’s going for walks with friends or re-joining sports clubs, these sorts of activities help us to maintain a good work/life balance which will in turn enhance your mental wellbeing.”



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