

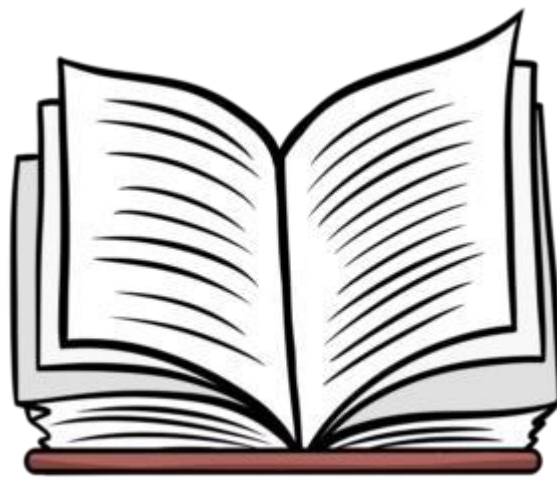
# Using Pupil Voice to Support Difficult Questions and Anxiety Questions and Anxiety

Handy tips and strategies for  
SENCO's, school staff and parents  
during times of disruption and  
uncertainty.

Through times of uncertainty children and young people respond to different situations in different ways. As adults we can support them through by starting with their questions, thoughts and feelings.

This booklet aims to address how to find out how they are feeling and use some strategies that will support them.

Also included are some links to useful resources.



**Is your child  
the following?**

**saying any of**

What will have  
changed at  
school?

Is anyone going  
to wear any  
masks?

Will we be able to  
touch anyone?

Will we have  
to do  
separate  
break times?

Will I be able to sit  
at my desk again?

Will things ever get  
back to 'normal' and  
how they used to be?

Can I catch  
Coronavirus from my  
friends or teachers at  
school?

Can we play  
normally with our  
friends?



Write down any questions / worries they have here



Key things we should and shouldn't do when responding to our children:

### SHOULD

Listen

Take their  
questions  
seriously

### SHOULDN'T

Tell them everything is  
going to be fine when  
we don't know as  
adults if it will

Rescuing  
reassuring and  
overprotecting

Supporting children with fear and anxiety begins with changing our language.

Here are some examples;

### Positive Language Alternatives

Calm down	→	How can I help?
It's not that hard to stay apart	→	I know you can do things that are sometimes hard
I explained this yesterday	→	Maybe I should show you again
This is so hard	→	This may take some extra time and effort
Don't get upset	→	It's ok to feel sad
Stop crying	→	I can see this is hard for you.
I'm over this	→	I'm here for you
You're ok	→	Are you ok?
Do you need help?	→	I'm here to help you
Be quiet	→	Can you use a softer voice?
Don't hit	→	Please be gentle
That's enough	→	Do you need a hug?
Stop shouting	→	Take a deep breath, then tell me what happened

Consider adult language we use.  
Can you change some of your responses into a green response?

When children ask questions and you recognise they are seeking answers avoid saying, 'of course that won't happen,' or 'everything will be fine.'

Instead **empathise**, 'I can see that is really worrying you, I think that might make you feel scared',



Then **validate**, *'I have been feeling like that, It's OK/normal to be worried'*

Changing our language and answers can be a powerful way to support children and develop their understanding of their own feelings.

Use the steps in the script below.

Key Point: Use the **word** for the emotion you think they are feeling

**Step 1 Recognise the emotion.**

- 'I can see that you are **worried** and I think it's because you are finding coming back to school tricky/difficult and **scared** that you might catch the corona virus'
- 

**Step 2 Normalise the emotion.**

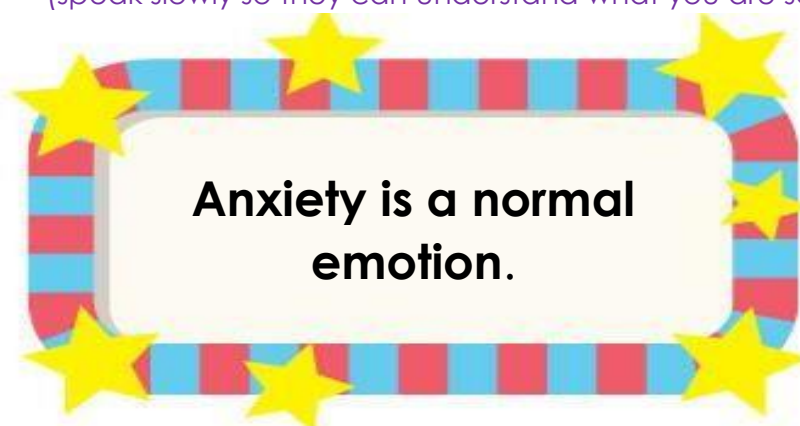
- 'and it is ok to be **worried**, but it is not OK to (list the behaviors) e.g. kick the door
- try to hurt your brother/sister'
- run off

**Step 3 Actively Listen to them.**

Listen if they tell you how they are feeling, allow them to tell you that you have labeled the incorrect emotions if they feel this is the case.

**Step 4 Support in Problem Solving and set boundaries for behaviors.**

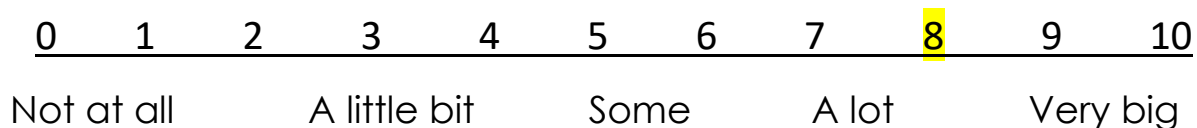
- 'I am going to help you feel a bit calmer and remind you of how we can keep ourselves safe, e.g. hand washing routine, confirm an understanding of social distancing rules.
- (speak slowly so they can understand what you are saying)





You can put the worry on a worry scale 1 -10 for the size of each worry.

What am I worried about - '**Will I be able to touch anyone?**'



Then check out and rate the fear – how scary? And how likely?

Check out the fears

What does Tom notice about the different ratings?

Returning to school	How scary?	How likely?
Everyone will catch Coronavirus	8	2
Someone will cough on me	10	4
I might have to sit somewhere different	6	9

“  
**Can you use the 3 c's to change the thought?**  
”

**Catch the thought** – 'Will things ever get back to 'normal' and how they used to be?

**Check It out** - We don't know the full answer to that question. Some things will need to change to keep everyone safe.

Some things are out of our control.

**Change** – These new ways are keeping everyone safe and they will feel ok after a while. I am going to try these new ways.

1. **Catch** what is the thought?
- 2 **Check** how useful or accurate is that thought
- 3 **Change** what thought would be more helpful







Use these questions to talk through worries in more detail. Help them to consider other points of view. Example questions in black and responses in blue.

What is Happening?	What is he/ she thinking?	Evidence and Alternatives?	What happened at the end?
	<p>Why are you worried?</p> <p>What do you think will happen?</p> <p>What is it about (this situation) that is making you worried?</p>	<p>What makes you think that (this situation) will happen?</p> <p>Has that ever happened to you before?</p> <p>Have you ever seen that happen to someone else?</p> <p>How likely is it that (this situation) will happen?</p> <p>What would you think was happening if someone else was in the same boat?</p>	<p>What did you think?</p> <p>What did you do?</p> <p>How did you feel?</p>
<p><b>Example;</b> <b>Will I catch the Corona Virus if I go to school?</b></p>	<p>I worry that I will catch the Corona Virus and get really ill and I might die?</p>	<p>You can help by washing your hands with soap and water.</p> <p>You can help keep you and others safe by following our social distancing rules.</p> <p>Lots of people that have had the virus are getting better already</p>	<p>I feel better about not catching the virus, if I wash my hands properly and follow the rules and know that if I do catch the virus it won't take long to feel better again.</p>



## Making a plan

Some children's anxieties and worries about transitioning might become overwhelming and a further strategy could be tried using a visual planner.

My Worry Planner












Worry	Positive and Happy	OK	A Bit Uncomfortable and Worried	Anxious or Scared	Overwhelmed and I can't manage	My plan
Am I going to catch the Corona Virus if I come to school?				☹		I can keep safe by following the rules, hand washing and social distancing. I can be reminded of all the people that have got better after catching the virus. I can talk with adults about my worries.
Everything has changed at school.					☹	Lots of things have changed for everyone, so that we can all try and keep safe. It is ok for me to feel worried and not like the changes that aren't so fun. I can talk with adults about the parts I am not enjoying.
Will it be like this forever?			☹			The one thing we know about viruses is that they don't last forever. Scientists and doctors are trying to find a vaccine to stop it from spreading. Our school day will start to return to normal in time and I can help by following the rules.

My Worry Planner

Worry	Positive and Happy	OK	A bit Uncomfortable and Worried	Anxious or Scared	Overwhelmed and I can't manage	My plan

For older children try using numbers and emoji's on a scale to help them recognise their feelings.

## Transitioning Back to School

	 Intensity	 How I Feel
 Virus		
 vaccine		
 social distancing	5	
 shops closed		
 Isolated	3	
 washing hands		
 coughing		

# How to nurture a child's mental health



Actively listen before offering your advice



Be patient



Share your feelings and validate theirs



Tell the truth



Model healthy behavior



Surround them with healthy adults



Be consistent and follow through with what you promise



Teach them how to be safe



Believe them and in them



Use open ended questions



Have scheduled family time



Limit electronic time for everyone



Reach out and hug them



Practice relaxation exercises together



Model forgiveness



Respond calmly when their emotions are elevated



View their behavior as a window to their needs and feelings



Make play and exercise a requirement



Recognize positive choices



Be present



Set and respect boundaries





# TOP TIPS FOR EMOTIONAL REGULATION

A DYSREGULATED  
ADULT CAN'T  
HELP A CHILD TO  
REGULATE  
SELF-CARE IS  
VITAL!

AVOID  
LABELLING  
EMOTIONS AS  
'GOOD' OR 'BAD'

-  
WE NEED TO FEEL  
A FULL RANGE OF  
EMOTIONS, AND  
THEY ARE ALL  
OKAY!

USE MODELLING  
TO NORMALISE  
TALK AROUND  
EMOTIONS

-  
SHOW YOUR  
CHILD THAT IT'S  
NORMAL AND  
OKAY TO FEEL A  
RANGE OF  
EMOTIONS

PREPARE  
FOR A LOT OF  
TRIAL AND  
ERROR!

DEVELOP  
STRATEGIES  
TOGETHER  
WITH YOUR  
CHILD

TRY OUT NEW  
STRATEGIES  
WHILE YOUR  
CHILD IS  
REGULATED  
TO FAMILIARISE  
BEFORE PUTTING  
THEM INTO  
PRACTICE



## **Useful Links and resources**



Managing anxiety.

<https://www.annafreud.org/media/11459/7waysanxiety.pdf>

<https://www.annafreud.org/media/11465/helping-cyp-manage-anxiety-apr2020-v3.pdf>

Social Stories and other resources for anxiety <https://www.hacw.nhs.uk/sltcovid19>