

Durham
County Council



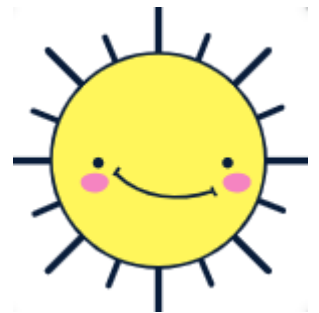
Supporting your child as
they return to school



Preparing your child

We have been on lockdown for some time now due to the outbreak of COVID-19. Schools have been closed and most children have stayed home. The message has been to stay home to stay safe, so the news of gradual re-openings of schools may bring up a range of emotions.

Just like after the school holidays it is important to prepare children for the return to school and the accompanying routines.



Be positive!

Children look to us for our reactions to a situation. While you may be feeling anxious about your child going back, it is important to try and speak positively. This can help balance out any worries they might have. Emphasise the good things about going back to school, such as seeing their friends again, learning new things and having a chance to socialise (even if this does look different to the way they have socialised in the past).



Communicate with school



Your child's school is there to help you and they will be working hard to get the transition right. If you have any questions or concerns please share them with school staff. They want to work together to provide a consistent approach.



Routines are helpful

Just like after a school holiday, it is important to get children back into the routine for school.

- Try to put children to bed at a consistent time each evening, bringing this time forward gradually if bed-times have become too late.
- Get children up at the same time each morning and encourage the routine of getting up, washed, dressed and eating breakfast.
- Try to get back into the routine of having three meals a day with healthy snacks, as this will mimic the school day.
- Encouraging independence will help your child settle back into school. Allow them to make a simple meal or snack for themselves and encourage playing alone at times throughout the day.

5 ways to wellbeing

The NHS promote 5 ways to improve wellbeing. Below are some ways to use this to help your child.



Connect

- * Spend time with family members (of same household).
- * Connect with friends (e.g. social media, messaging and Facetime).
- * Stay connected with school by engaging with work, checking the website etc.

Be Active

- * Taking daily exercise as long as they are able to.
- * Completing online exercise sessions, e.g. Joe Wicks.

Take Notice

- * Engage in mindfulness and relaxation techniques (e.g. Headspace app).
- * Keep bedroom and workspace clean and tidy.
- * Look after a house plant or family pet.

Keep Learning

- * Engage with any learning tasks set by the school.
- * Wherever possible, continue with an existing hobby.
- * Consider using the time to learn a new skill e.g. baking or sign language.

Give

- * Provide opportunities to help out around the house.
- * Engage in community activities, e.g. taking shopping to neighbours or displaying rainbows in the window.

Worries



It is normal to feel worried during these strange times. Your child will probably have worries too, even if they keep them to themselves. One thing we can do to help children with worries is to try and *contain* them.

Worry Time

It can be helpful to encourage your child to write their worries down and put them somewhere safe, like a jar, worry monster or a special box,

Once the worry is written down try to distract them with a different activity.



Put aside a set time each day to sit down and go through their worries. This will be their “worry time”.

Any worries that can be “problem-solved” you can think about together and try to resolve them.

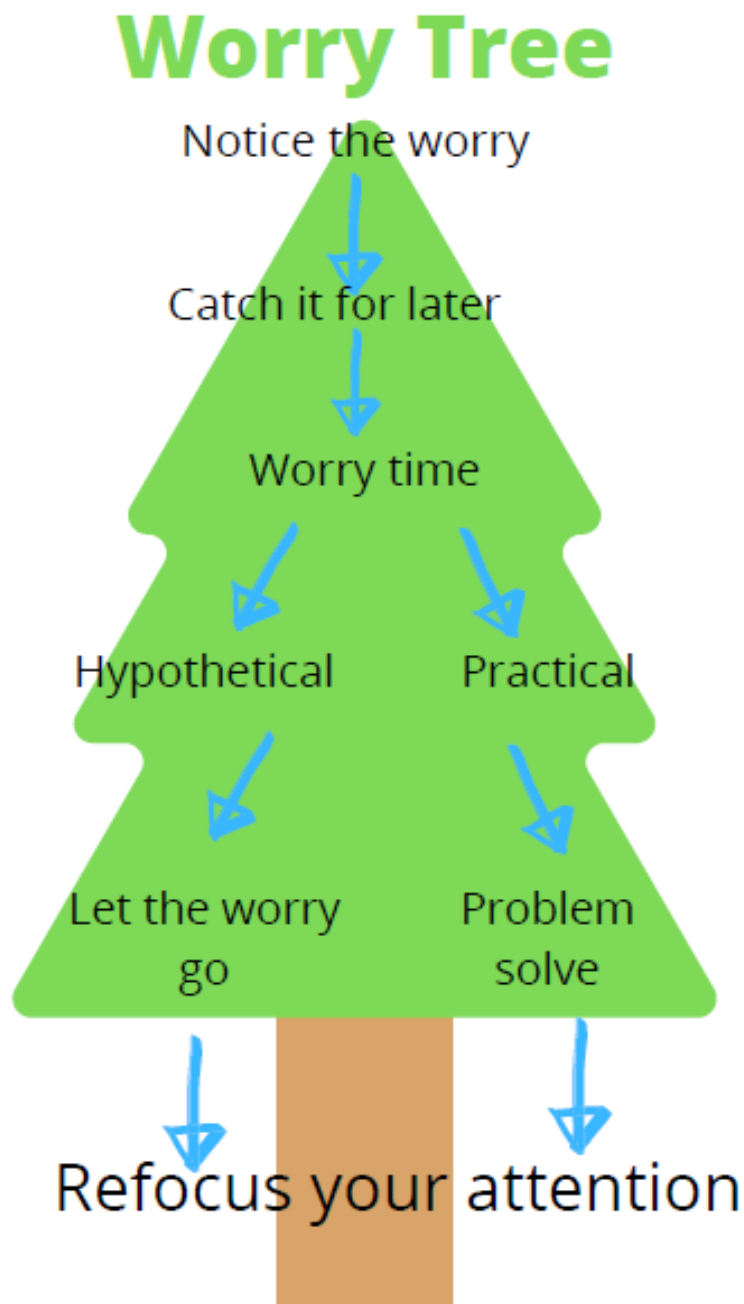
Any “hypothetical worries” (imaginary) can be torn up and put in the bin, as these are a waste of time and energy.

Once worry time is over (15-20 mins) it is time to stop thinking about them and move on to another activity. Any new worries can be saved for the next day’s worry time.



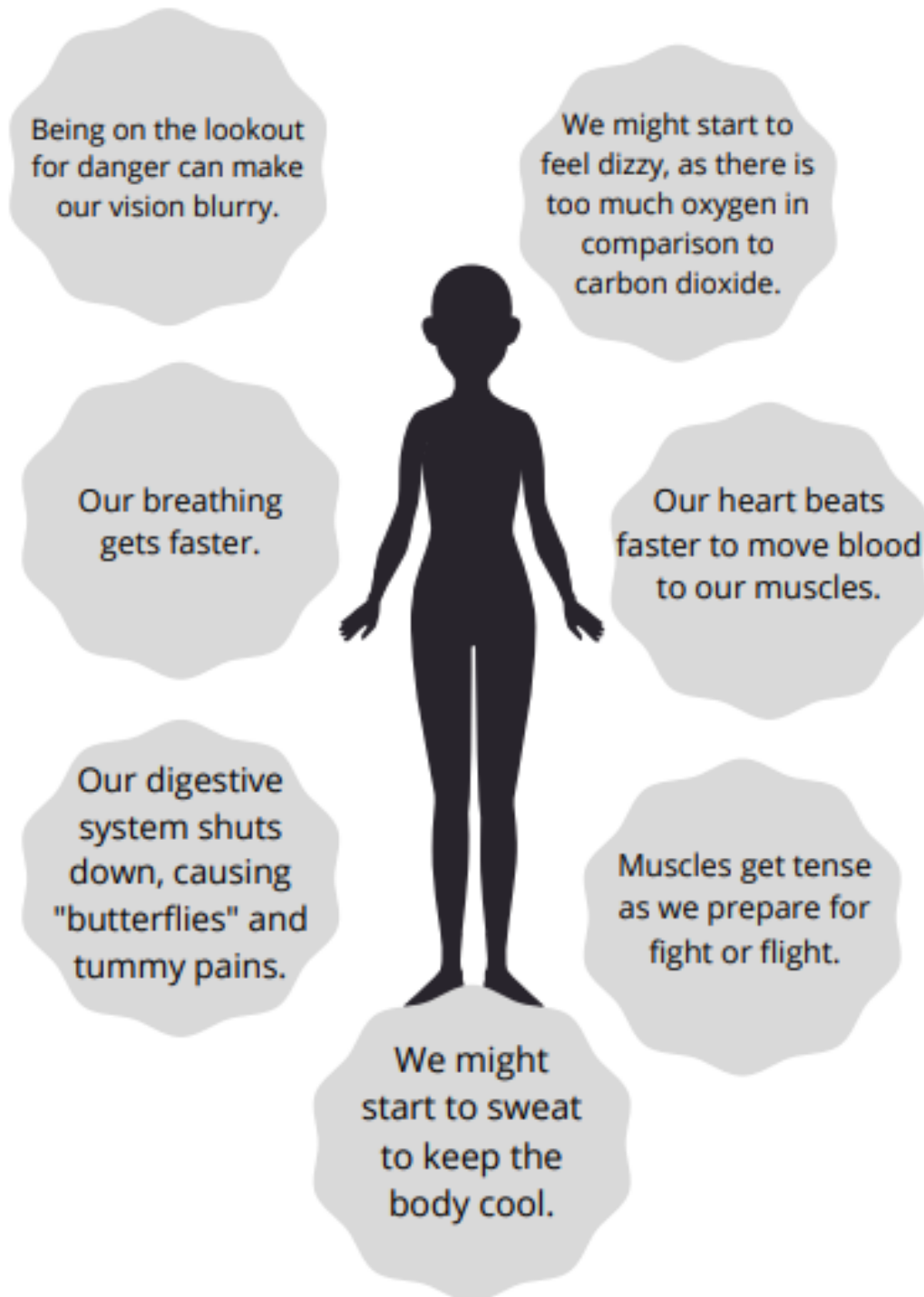
Containing worries

This diagram can help you deal with any worries your child might have. Always try to refocus their attention afterwards, so they don't dwell on their worries for too long.



Signs of anxiety

Anxiety can cause physical symptoms in our bodies. Children might not recognise this as a sign of anxiety and might complain of tummy pains or feeling breathless. It is important to reassure your child that these feelings are normal and we all feel them from time to time.



A helping hand



Your child will probably have specific worries about returning to school, so it is important they know who they can go to for help. Encourage them to write one person on each finger that they can go to for help. You may need to liaise with school about this, as staff for each year group may need to change.



Where to access help and support



One Point

Advice and practical support across all aspects of family life



03000 261 111



Education & SEND Support

Support for children with special educational needs or disabilities



Humankind

Health and wellbeing support for LGBT young people (15-24yrs)



01325 731 160



Investing in Children

A children's rights organisation, creating spaces to be heard



Rollercoaster Parent Support

Helping parents to support children with mental health issues



07415 380 040



DurhamWorks

Supporting 16-24 year olds not in education, employment or training



03000 262 930



Recovery College Online

Educational resources for people experiencing mental illness



County Durham Together Hub

Help when self-isolating/how to volunteer



03000 260 260



Children's Social Care First Contact

Report a concern about a child's welfare



03000 267 979



CAMHS - Single Point of Access

Community mental health teams for children



03001 239 296



CAMHS Crisis Team

24/7 service for young people experiencing a mental health crisis

0191 441 5733

