



Aspiring to achieve our best: moving forward together!

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Pastoral Team Newsletter

We hope families are keeping safe and well at home in the current situation. It has been an unsettling and worrying time for both adults and children and we understand the pressures that come with this. It has been wonderful to see photos of children looking happy and healthy whilst home learning.

Our Pastoral Team have been in contact with some families to offer support and resources for mental health and wellbeing. If any parents would like support, advice or resources for supporting their children's emotions, mental health and wellbeing please get in touch with us:

Karen Moore – Pastoral Lead

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Hannah Gleeson – Social, Emotional and Mental Health Support Worker

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Coping with Change

With many changes for children in returning to school and their daily routines it may be quite overwhelming for both adults and young people. Change can be difficult, and for children this can be reflected in their behaviour. Here are some ideas and activities to talk about 'coping with change' with your child.

- Is your child worried about upcoming changes? Draw or write it on the sheet. Think about the small steps that you could take to help you with this change. Make a list around your picture and order them in sequence.
- Is there a change happening that is making them feel sad or upset? Draw the situation on paper and think about a change that you or someone could make to help you feel safer and happier.
- What is change? Think of a change that your child has made because they wanted to (e.g. changing their bedroom, choosing a new family pet) and then one change that has happened that they had little or no choice about (e.g. a change of school, house move). Talk about the differences and similarities between the two types of change, what do we need to have or know to make a



successful change, such as 'what will it involve', 'how will things be different', what might make the change easier to cope with and who could help, what can we do to keep feeling ok about the change (e.g. set small goals, reward ourselves).



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- Skills for change Draw a life path together, showing all the important changes that have taken place during your child's life. Use pictures or quick sketches to represent various changes. Chat about the changes. How/why did they happen? What was good about the change or not so good? What did you or your child learn? Did you both feel the same about each of the changes? What helped your child cope? What skills have you both developed by coping with change? Did one change lead to others? What stayed the same?
- [Helping Children Cope with Change](#)
- [Top 10 Tips for Coping with Change](#)

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the ability to be fully present in the moment, to focus on where we are, what we're doing and how we feel without allowing other intrusive thoughts, worries or fears to permeate our minds. It can be really difficult to focus on the here and now without letting other things distract us.

Mindfulness can be useful to help improve focus, self-regulation, sleep, develop empathy, reduce aggression and enables people to manage feelings of anxiety and depression. It's not just about meditation, there are lots of ways it can be practised. Below are some ideas to practice mindfulness with your child.



- Connect with nature – Go for a 10 minute walk, outside. Breathe in the fresh air. Look around and take in the environment with your senses. What can you see, hear, smell?
- Mindful Moment – Use at the start of the day or after a transition. Ask the children to close their eyes and take several deep breaths. Encourage them to pay attention to their breathing and what it feels like
- Colouring to Music – Choose a piece of relaxing music that you can listen to whilst colouring
- 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 – A good grounding, mindfulness exercise to use after a change or to bring focus back. Ask your child to take a couple of deep breaths, whilst closing their eyes. Get them to open their eyes and look around their environment. Then ask them to THINK about 5 things they can see, 4 things they could feel/touch, 3 things they can hear, 2 things they can smell and 1 thing they can taste.
- Musical Stimuli Exercise – Play some music, either one piece or several. Ask your child to listen to it and think about how it makes them feel. What images/pictures or thoughts pop into their mind? Draw or write them on paper.

You can learn more about Mindfulness at
<https://www.headspace.com/mindfulness>



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Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal, human feeling of fear or panic. When we face stressful situations, it can set off our brain's in-built alarm bell system, which tells us something isn't right and that we need to deal with it.

Most of us worry sometimes and feel anxious when we're under stress, but afterwards we usually calm down and feel better. But when you're not in a stressful situation, and you still feel worried or panicky, that's when anxiety can become a problem.

This can be particularly tricky for children to manage.

When we get anxious about something, we can get all sorts of funny feelings in our bodies – shaking, feeling sick, wobbly legs, blurred vision, feeling like we can't breathe, can't swallow, feeling dizzy, tight chest, looking pale and many more. Everyone has their own unique subset of symptoms for anxiety.

These feelings can be horrible, but in fact they are completely harmless. They are just our body getting ready to escape from something that we are scared of.

If your child gets these feelings, keep calm and confident, and tell them it is ok and that these feelings will go away in a bit. Empathise and validate their feelings.

'Worry time' - If your child is frequently worried and anxious, try setting aside some time each day to talk through their worries. You could then suggest that they do something they enjoy to help distract them from their anxiety.

Some other tips and ideas for talking to your child about anxiety:

- Draw a really basic body outline, and ask your child to mark on where they feel their worry or anxiety in their body. Encourage them to use some calming skills when they are experiencing these physical symptoms such as
 - hand breathing (tracing their finger around their hand, breathing in deeply as they move to the fingertip and breathing out as their finger goes to the base of the next finger)
 - arm and hand massage
 - hug yourself (wrapping your arms around yourself and gently squeezing)
 - palm push (putting your hands together, palms touching, and gently raising your elbows).
- Listen to your child's worries and ask them lots of questions about them. Help them to problem solve and come up with ideas and ways that they can manage their particular worry.
- Encourage your child to draw or write down what is worrying them.
- Use an old box to make a 'worry box'. Decorate the outside, encourage your child to write or draw their worry and place it in the box. Chat through the worry with them and help them to think of solutions that might help and what they would like to try out.

More information of anxiety and ideas to help can be found at the following links:

[Minds Action for Children - Anxious Feelings](#)

[Young Minds - Parents Guide to Support Anxiety](#)



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Anxiety presents itself in many different ways...

www.thepathway2success.com

The desire to control people and events



Difficulty getting to sleep



Feeling agitated or angry



Defiance and other challenging behaviors



Having high expectations for self, including school work & sports



Avoiding activities or events (including school)

Pain like stomachaches and headaches



Struggling to pay attention and focus



Intolerance of uncertainty



Crying and difficulty managing emotions



Over-planning for situations and events



Feeling worried about situations or events

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Clipart by Kate Hadfield & Sarah Pecorino

WORRY MONSTERS

Imagine your worries as little monsters.

What might one of your worry monsters look like?

Might it be hairy with sharp claws or a slimy blob that keeps sticking to you?

Does it have lots of eyes or a long nose?

Now think of lots of ways you can get rid of your worry monsters.

STEP ON THEM

SQUASH THEM

Lock Them in a cage

Blow them away

Trap them

PUT THEM IN A JAR



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Fun 5 MINDFULNESS ACTIVITIES for children

by Big Life Journal

1 "JUST ONE BREATH" BREATHING ACTIVITY

- Find a relaxing place, sit comfortably, and set a timer for one minute.
- Breathe deeply in and out while paying attention to any sensations you notice or sounds you hear.
- Take another slow deep breath, imagine the air moving down into the lungs and back up.
- Take one more deep breath and hold for a moment, then release it.



2 CREATE A GLITTER JAR

- Finding a jar or plastic bottle and allow your child to decorate it however they like.
- Fill the bottle up 3/4 of the way with water. Next, add clear glue, food coloring, and glitter then shake.
- Seal the lid and you are ready to go.



3 HEARTBEAT EXERCISE

- Ask your child to stand up and either jump up and down or do jumping jacks for one minute.
- At the end of that minute, have them place their hand on their heart and pay attention to how their heartbeat and their breathing feels.



4 GOING ON A SAFARI

- Go outside on an exciting adventure, try picking up a small rock or touching a plant or flower.
- Notice the bugs or the birds. Take a moment to kneel down and touch the earth.
- Walk mindfully paying close attention to everything. Make sure you walk in silence because you want to notice all those little details.



5 TENSE AND RELEASE MUSCLE RELAXATION

- Starting at the feet, gently squeeze the muscles in the feet by tightening them, then slowly releasing.
- Next, squeeze the large muscles in the calves for 5 seconds, then gently release. Working your way up the body, squeeze the thigh muscles for 5 seconds then gently release.
- Continue moving up the body for more relaxation.



Big Life Journal - biglifejournal.com

Help and Support

Young Minds

www.youngminds.org.uk

Parents helpline 08088025544 (parents and children)

Talk works

Improving your mental Health and wellbeing 03005553344

Talkworks.dpt.nhs.uk (parents)

Childline

www.childline.org.uk

Mind

www.mind.org.uk

Action for Children

www.actionforchildren.org.uk

Family Lives

www.familylives.org.uk

Samaritans

www.samaritans.org

24hr helpline 116 123 FREE

[Rethink – Mental Health Support](#)

[Headspace - Mindfulness for your everyday life](#)

[Kooth - Free online support for young people](#)

School Nurse Hub Number:

Hub number 0333 234 1903

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

If you are concerned about a child or young person and would like to talk to someone call **0345 155 1071** or email mashsecure@devon.gov.uk and give as much information as you can