



# YOUNG SAFETY NET E-ZINE

Activities

Advice

sussing out  
school

Information

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Keeping children & young people safe





# So you're heading back to school?

In September you might be going to a new class, or even a whole new school! Or maybe you're thinking about going back to your usual class now that some lockdown rules have relaxed. Either way a lot of change is happening and this can create many different feelings...

Are you excited to go back to school? Maybe you're really looking forward to seeing all your friends again. Or maybe you're feeling worried about going back. Perhaps you've been really enjoying your time at home and home feels safer than school at the moment. Maybe you're worried about new school routines and social distancing rules; school will feel familiar but not the same. If you are in year six, you will be going up to a whole new school in September and that might feel a bit scary. You might be worried about saying goodbye to friends, making new ones, how big the school will be and what the lessons will be like. You might be feeling a whole mixture of these emotions; some excitement and some nervousness and that's completely healthy and normal.

With all of these feelings going round in your head it might feel overwhelming sometimes, but there are things we can do to help ourselves...

## What can I do about it?

We tend to feel better in situations where we have a **choice**, a **time limit** and some **control**. So how can we find these when we go back to school? Firstly, you have a **choice** in how you react to your feelings. Even if they feel too much, choosing your response to them will help you feel more steady and calm. You also have a **time limit** when you go back to school. You will still have plenty of time at home in the evenings and at the weekends to do all the fun activities you may have been doing over the last few months. Finally, you can take some **control** by asking questions about what your new school day will look like. The more you find out, the less scary it will seem!

Does it help knowing you're not the only ones getting ready to go back to school? Your teachers are also hard at work to make sure your classrooms are both physically and emotionally safe places for you. Saying goodbye to your primary school might feel emotional, but remember, you will be able to keep in touch with old friends at the same time as making new ones – bonus!

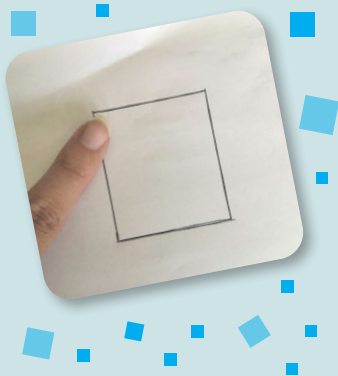
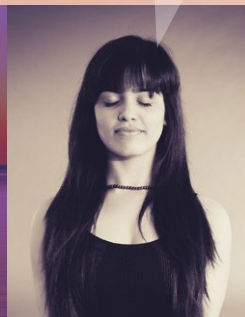


# breathing activity

## Mini breathing exercises to try when we're feeling worried or anxious.

Sometimes we can feel quite overwhelmed when we're worried. We might start thinking about lots of 'What ifs', like 'What if I get lost on my first day?' or 'What if I don't know where to find things in my classroom anymore?' It is natural to think of the future and it can be a good thing to help us plan, but we need to remember to take things one step at a time and focus on the present too. Keeping calm can help you to think more clearly and find it easier to make decisions.

Here are some little breathing exercises you can try when you're feeling worried. These can be done anytime, anywhere. You can try them out before you're feeling worried to see which ones you prefer. These are often nice to do before bedtime too and might help you feel a little more relaxed before going to sleep!



### Square breathing

- Find or draw the outline of a square.
- Trace an edge of the square with your finger and breathe in for four seconds as you do this.
- Pause at the corner of the square for a moment whilst holding your breath.
- Whilst tracing the next side of the square, breathe out for four seconds.
- Repeat around the square as many times as you need.



### Five finger breathing

- Open the palm of one of your hands.
- With the pointer finger of your opposite hand slowly trace up your thumb whilst breathing in through your nose.
- Slowly breathe out through your mouth as you trace down your thumb.
- Repeat this going across the rest of your fingers.



### Flower breathing

- Collect a flower or another nice smelling item.
- Breathe in deeply through your nose and inhale the scent of your chosen object.
- Hold your breath for three seconds.
- Breathe out through your mouth for four seconds.
- Repeat as many times as you need.

# Back to school in the new normal

You might be feeling worried about returning to your school, about changes to a space that you knew really well. A lot of this worry is down to not knowing what it might be like. We've asked school staff to tell us about some of the changes there are. Here are some of the things you might find different at your school. Remember, all schools are different and you can always ask your trusted adult to get in contact with yours if you have questions....

## Social bubbles

Some schools are creating social bubbles. This means that you might be in a smaller class size and you might stay with the same group of people through the day.



## Washing hands

We've all got really good at washing hands! You will most likely be encouraged to wash your hands very regularly at school. Teachers might have set times for you to do this. Sometimes you might be asked to use hand gel when it's not possible to get to a sink. If you have eczema on your hands this might be a worry for you – ask your adult to talk to the school before heading back to make a plan.



## Different playtimes

Some schools are changing the times of playtimes for different children to come out at different times. This might mean that your playgrounds are a little quieter than usual. Other schools might have a big grid stuck down on the playground so that you can stay in social bubbles inside your area, whilst keeping socially distanced from others.



## Having lessons again

It might feel a bit strange having lessons with a teacher again and not at home. Remember if you're feeling worried about work and you're struggling with it, tell your teacher so they can help you. Everyone will have worked at different paces at home so you're not alone in feeling like this!

## One-way systems

There might be one-way systems in place around areas of the school, especially on how to get in and leave the building. If there are, there will be signs showing you how to use these with arrows. There are some supermarkets that are also using this!



## Solo Desks

You might be sat at a desk by yourself and your desks might be in a different position so that you're facing the front of the classroom instead of facing other children. This is actually great practice for secondary school as usually desks all face the front there too.

## Things keep changing!

It has been a very strange few months for us all and we're not sure what's to come in the next few months which can be worrying. Remember to talk to a trusted adult or a teacher about worries you may have and any questions you would like to have answered about what school might be like. We might not be able to control how schools change but we do have a choice on how we react. Try planning things you enjoy doing for around the time you head back to school to give you things to look forward to. Doing some calming breathing exercises for times when you feel your Early Warning Signs can also be really helpful.

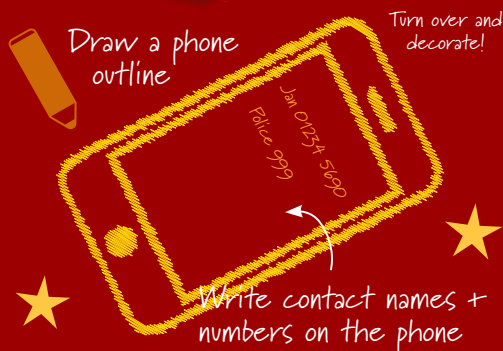
# make a HELPING HAND OR SUPER SPEED DIAL

If you ever need to talk about anything, big or small, a Helping Hand or a super speed dial is a really useful tool to help you identify the adults you'd trust. They're also really easy to make!



## HELPING HAND

1. Draw around your hand with a pen or pencil on a sheet of paper.
2. On your fingers and thumb write the names of trusted adults (over the age of 18) you trust and know will listen to you.
3. On the palm of the hand, write or draw the things which bring you comfort and make you feel safe. This could include your friends, pets, siblings, toys, or even your favourite food!
4. On the sleeve write the numbers of emergency contacts you could use if you ever need help. This includes '999' for the police, fire service or an ambulance. It also includes Childline (0800 1111), a free service you can use to talk to someone about anything that's worrying you. What other emergency contacts could you write down?
5. Decorate the other side of the hand! Why not use bright colours and patterns so you'll be able to find it when you need it. Even if you don't have your Helping Hand on you all the time, you can always look at your own hand and remember the names and contacts you have written.



## SUPER SPEED DIAL

1. Draw an outline of a mobile phone.
2. Think of the trusted adults you would put as your top 5 contacts and write their names on the phone's speed dial.
3. These adults could be from your home, school, after school clubs or other similar places. Make sure they are over 18.
4. Also add any emergency numbers you could use in case of emergency. For example 999, or 0800 1111 for Childline.
5. Why not decorate the back of the phone case with things that bring you comfort? You could draw pictures of your friends and pets, for example.
6. TOP TIP: Write the names of adults from different places. For example, parents and family members from home, teachers at your school, and adults who run after school clubs.

## "How will I find out about safe spaces in my new school?"

Staff will tell you where you can go if you need quiet time. There is usually a quieter area of the playground, the library, a room near staff, it will vary depending on your school.

## "I know who is on my 'Helping Hand' now, but who might be on it at my next school?"

You will get to know staff at your new school quicker than you think. How about your form tutor? Head of Year? One of your subject teachers? Don't forget your trusted adults outside of school.



## "What if I get my early warning signs?"

Remember you are just being super brave, and today is a good example of you taking a 'risk on purpose'! This is part of growing up and trying new things, it's normal to feel a little nervous. Try to feel those 'butterflies in your tummy' as excitement about this interesting new phase of your life! Remember your calming strategies: calm breathing, telling yourself you are okay, talking it through with someone you trust. Try to get plenty of sleep and good breakfasts, especially in these first few days when the big change might make you feel a little tired.



# moving to secondary school

Our children's worker, Sarah, answers children and young people's questions about heading up to secondary school.

## "How do I make new friends?"

You have lots of qualities other young people like. What would your current friends say about you? Try listing some of your good qualities at home first of all. This will make you feel more confident. Struggling to think of how to start a conversation with a new classmate?

- **Good chats include a bit of give and take** – you give some information about yourself, and take some from the other person!
- **Ask someone a little something about themselves**  
– "Which Primary did you go to?" "Do you have a brother or sister at this school?", "Did you feel nervous on your first day? I did!"
- **Try starting with a statement** and open it up: "I've got PE next – what do you have?"; "I'm a bit worried about getting lost here – are you?!", Remember your sense of humour, and start with listening, you will find others respond well to this, and they will want to listen to you too.
- **Get involved** with as much around the school as you feel comfortable with. Extra clubs and activities mean extra opportunities to meet people you get on with. This is particularly helpful if you have gone to a school without your Y6 friends.
- **Secondary schools are big** - there are lots of different types of children in them – you will find others who like the things you like, and who 'fit' with you, quicker than you think!



## "Is it going to be more strict?"

As you get older and more responsible, people have higher expectations of your behaviour, and your new school may seem more strict than your primary. Consequences for unwanted behaviour are meant to keep everyone safe and equal, but behaving properly can feel tricky for some. Check in with your feelings and your thoughts. These have an effect on your behaviour. Others can't see what you might be feeling / thinking inside. So help them out – tell them! If adults can understand you better, they can help you along the way to the behaviour everybody feels comfortable with.





# EXTRA HELP

If you are feeling worried during this time, know that you have the right to speak to someone about it. Your worry is not too big or too small to talk about.

**Childline** are available to contact by phone (**0800 1111**) or online with a 1-2-1 counsellor between 9am and midnight, or by email (which may take a little bit longer). All you have to do is create an account on their website, and you are able to contact them in whichever way you feel comfortable.

**The Mix** is the UK's leading support service for young people. They have articles and blogs online about uncertainty with going back to school; ranging from general anxieties to sitting exams. Their information can be accessed at [themix.org.uk](http://themix.org.uk), or via social media (Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and LinkedIn).

**YoungMinds** has a bank of information surrounding managing anxiety that is easily accessible. They have resources on how to deal with problems at school, and self-care tips for the new academic year. They can be found at [youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk)

**SuperBetter** A free web based programme created by game designers. Playing SuperBetter helps build personal resilience: the ability to stay strong, motivated, and optimistic even in the face of difficult challenges. SuperBetter can be played via their website: [www.superbetter.com](http://www.superbetter.com).

**WE WANT YOU!** Would you like to be involved with our e-zine? To share your experiences or create photo content? You can become one of our Young Reporters and receive a Little Young Reporters pack in the post! To volunteer, please email [ruth.davey@safety-net.org.uk](mailto:ruth.davey@safety-net.org.uk)



★ This issue of our Young Safety Net E-zine wouldn't have been possible without contributions from Vincent T, Sam our competition winner, and all the young people who bravely asked their questions about secondary school!

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