

PARENT GUIDE TO ACCOMPANY 'GOING BACK TO SCHOOL AFTER LOCKDOWN (P1-P3)'

North Lanarkshire Psychological Service

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Young children and change

Change is inevitable in life. For adults change can be exciting, but for young children it can often be unsettling. This is because young children need to feel safe and secure. Knowing what will happen and having a routine, makes them feel in control. Without this they can become unsettled and stressed. Young children need time to process and get used to change.

Younger children often do not yet have the language, the understanding, or life experiences to help them anticipate what change will be like—and it can feel as if their world has been turned upside down. Their feelings often do not show up in a way that is obviously related to any change. They are more likely to communicate it through their behaviour, for example being resistant or unreasonable, and/or regressing to an earlier stage of development, or communicate it through their emotions – becoming easily upset or angry.

Some younger children will be looking forward to going back to school—but they may also feel nervous. For other younger children they may not be looking forward to returning to school to start with. This change might feel overwhelming and threatening, and home may feel like a nicer alternative. When they do return school may not be quite as they remembered it—there may be new routines and new members of staff. Please remember all these feelings are normal reactions after a period of time that has been exceptionally abnormal.

What can help?

1. Keep to a routine and provide consistency where possible.

This lets your child know that whatever else is changing, there are things that they can rely on to always happen in the same order every day. It is particularly helpful to keep to bedtime and mealtime routines. If your child is well rested and their blood sugar levels are stable, they can cope better with change.

2. Stay calm.

You are your child's biggest role model! If you can stay calm, you are showing your child that you can cope with things changing and that all will be well. The message to your child is that they do not need to worry.

3. Keep talking and be available.

Give your child the space and time to ask questions and listen to any concerns. Give your child your undivided attention, so that they know they are being heard. If your child is worrying constantly, it can help to contain worries by agreeing a set time of day to discuss the worries. Your child might like to help you to choose the time of day, and perhaps even how long you will talk (e.g. 10—30 minutes). If your child worries at other times of the day reassure them that you will be available to chat it through during that special time. Keep doing this over the next few weeks until going back to school is an established part of their routine and the worries have subsided, as sometimes there can be a delayed reaction to change.

4. Be prepared

Share the '*Going back to school after lockdown*' story with your child and practise the techniques. If your child can do these techniques easily when they are

relaxed, they are more likely to be able to use them if they become distressed. Perhaps you know what the school routine will be like, or have photos of the staff they will be seeing – share these with your child. Knowing what to expect is reassuring.

5. Be realistic.

Expect that some regression may happen. This is normal at times of change. Be patient with your child – and with yourself.

6. Be accepting of their emotions.

Your child may go through a process that looks like grief as they adjust to going back to school. It is important that your child can express their emotions. Listen, acknowledge, reassure and comfort. Again, this is a normal part of the change process.

7. Offer small choices.

Where opportunities arise, let your child make some of their own choices and give two options, e.g. Which one of these books would you like to read?, Which one of these jumpers would you like to wear today? This will help your child feel that they have control over some aspects of their life and will help to boost their confidence.

8. Be kind to yourself.

This has been a stressful and challenging time for everyone. In order to be available for your child, you need to have your own resources and inner strength: To look after others, you need to look after yourself!

Finally, if you are concerned about any aspect of your child's return to education – get in touch with their school and talk to the staff. They will want to know of your concerns and offer help and support.

Contact Us

Give us a call for more information about our services and products

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