

Top Tips and Resources for Staff

# SUPPORTING STUDENTS RETURN TO SCHOOL



## VALIDATE, LISTEN & SUPPORT

Recent events are likely to have had a significant impact on students, who may be feeling anxious, angry or disappointed about returning. Listen to their concerns and show empathy & understanding. Open up dialogues for problem solving, and encourage thinking about things that they feel positive about in terms of their return.



## BE HONEST & ENCOURAGING

Students' anxiety may create need for reassurance from staff. Try to avoid blanket statements of reassurance "there's nothing to be worried about", as these can be invalidating. Be honest in an age-appropriate way, acknowledge risks but be clear about precautions that are in place to keep students safe. Encourage balanced thinking by gently asking questions to challenge thoughts.



## TAKE A GRADUAL APPROACH

For some students, anxiety may be high and they may want to avoid school altogether, which can be unhelpful in the long-term as they never get the chance to test out their fears. Work with families of these students, to create a gradual step-by-step plan for a transition back to school i.e. starting with partial attendance or visits.



## MODEL HELPFUL COPING BEHAVIOURS

How you manage your own stress & anxiety throughout the day can impact how students assess their own situations. Letting students know how you cope with uncertainty, and your coping strategies, can help them to feel less alone and provide them with further ideas to cope.



## LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

Your capacity to support students is linked to your own physical and mental wellbeing. Ensure you are being kind to yourself whilst you manage the changes to your working environment, and practice self-care. Carve out time in your day to do things that you enjoy, and try to maintain a healthy lifestyle with good sleep, nutrition and exercise.



## WORK TOGETHER

Remind yourself that everyone is navigating this new way of living and working together, and taking time to adjust to change is normal. Organisations are there to support you, and there are a wealth of resources for you to access to support yourself and your students at this time. See 'useful resources' below for some ideas.



# Useful Resources

- Further tips on supporting students, managing anxiety and behaviour - <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/coronavirus/returning-school-after-lockdown>
- Anna Freud 'Schools in Mind' - <https://www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/schools-in-mind/>
- Young Minds school resources - <https://youngminds.org.uk/resources/school-resources/>
- Education Support Partnership - <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/>
- Cruse (bereavement specific advice) - <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-schools/returning-to-school>