



Physical Activity for Mental Health

Being active makes us happier as well as being good for our physical health. It can instantly improve our mood. We don't all need to run marathons, there are simple things we can all do to be more active each day. We can also boost our wellbeing by unplugging from technology, getting outside and making sure we get enough sleep.

5 Reasons why exercise and being outdoors are important:

1. It gives everyone a break from busy schedules – being out in the fresh air gives us time to relax, reflect and gives our brains a break. Everyone needs time away from demanding routines. Time to have fun and just play and enjoying life outdoors and doing something that makes everyone feel happy.
2. Sports and physical activity lowers anxiety – a little harder to do in these current times but there has been found to be a link between sports and activities and the significant improvement in mental, psychological and emotional wellbeing in children.
3. Being active has a positive impact on mental health.
4. Helps top up our Vitamin D! – The sunlight is the best natural source for our bodies to produce Vitamin D, which releases serotonin in the brain – this helps regulate emotions and mood.
5. The outdoors relieves stress and anxiety – Time spent outdoors, which more people are doing in our current lockdown, is thought to help relieve stress and anxiety for children by reducing levels of the hormone cortisol in the brain.

RETURNING TO SCHOOL

For some children and their families, the return to routine and the familiarity of the school environment will be enough to reduce anxiety caused by the pandemic. Others may need a little more support to repair and recover, needing reassurance about the return to their classrooms.

There will be different types of anxiety that may arise:

Separation anxiety – for those who have spent a lot of time at home with their parents may find it hard to separate.

Social anxiety – returning to school and socialising (keeping distance in mind) may be hard for some who have managed to be socially distance and remained at home.

Generalised anxiety – Children who may struggle with multiple worries, such as what does the classroom look like, will I be able to remember how to do different things, when do I have my lunch etc.

Top Tips for helping children reduce the anxiety for the return to school:

- Children may struggle to communicate their feelings to you. Labelling their emotions for them and empathising can really help them to start to label their own feelings.
- Create a good bedtime routine, which will help the child to feel calmer. E.g. a bath an hour before bed, noscreen time just before bed, and reading them a bedtime story to help them settle. Sleep allows us to regulate our emotions, so a well-rested child is more likely to be a calm child.
- Keep yourself calm. It can be difficult but if your child sees that you are anxious, they will be to. Just remember they are still learning to control their own emotions.
- Draw around their hand and get them to label 5 people they can talk to in school – 1 person per finger.

Children could also have a good at creating one of these (first one is for younger children):

Coming back to school...

this is how I feel right now

3 things I want to tell you...

3 things I am looking forward to...

3 questions I'd like to ask you...

My favourite thing about being at home is...

and something I have found tricky is...

My name

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Checking in with my stuff...

How am I feeling right now?
 tickety boo stressed
 wobbly something else
 flat

What's playing on my mind?
 stuff I can control...
 stuff I can't control...

My top 3 to-dos...

1. Absolute must do
 2. Would be cool if I could do
 3. Now I'm just showing off if I do

3 things that help to fill my cup...

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

BREATHE IN HOLD BREATHE OUT
 you are worth the deep breaths, the kind thoughts & all the love you need

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Regards M Anne.