



Managing Transition, Uncertainty & Change

Back to school edition

We've all been through a period of uncertainty and change. It is likely that transitioning back to school will be challenging - even if we're looking forward to it.

This Back to School Edition of this toolkit is the 2nd toolkit (Part 2) in this series, following on from Part 1 - [the Summer Holiday Edition](#). It is designed to help you transition back to school in the healthiest way possible for you.

Using this toolkit

- ✎ We recommend completing the activities in Part 1 of this toolkit ([The Summer Holiday Edition](#)) before progressing to this Back to School edition
- ✎ If you're a parent/carer or professional supporting a young person through this toolkit please see the guidance on page 14.
- ✎ **Lookout for the light bulb** for tips + techniques to use to protect your wellbeing in these challenging times!
- ✎ Much of this toolkit is interactive – **Lookout for the thinking bubbles** where we invite you to write, draw or reflect on your experiences, thoughts and feelings.
- ✎ Not all the ideas included will help everyone - so take what you find useful and leave the rest (we do recommend you try as many of the ideas as possible - you never know what might work!).
- ✎ **You don't have to do this alone - ask for support, go through the activities with friends and family to help you build your confidence and create deeper connections**



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1 Our body: Feelings Related to Back to School

In Part 1 of this toolkit, we learned how our body gives us clues when something doesn't feel right - your heart beats faster, you get butterflies in your stomach, your legs shake, or you can't think straight.

These are called our Early Warning Signs, and are all normal responses to us feeling uncertain or unsafe

Look at this list of Early Warning Signs and tick all the ones you notice in your body when you think about going back to school.

Shaky legs	<input type="checkbox"/>	Breathing faster	<input type="checkbox"/>	Holding your breath	<input type="checkbox"/>
Heart beating faster	<input type="checkbox"/>	Muscles feel tense	<input type="checkbox"/>	Grinding teeth	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clenching fists	<input type="checkbox"/>	Goosebumps	<input type="checkbox"/>	Nail biting	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fidgeting	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sweaty hands	<input type="checkbox"/>	Eyes well up	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can't think straight	<input type="checkbox"/>	Face feels hot	<input type="checkbox"/>	Overthinking	<input type="checkbox"/>
Butterflies/knots in stomach	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling numb/feeling sick	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling heavy	<input type="checkbox"/>
Head feels fuzzy or full	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling empty	<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling 'out of body'	<input type="checkbox"/>

You know yourself better than anyone else - are there any other clues in your body that something's not right (write them in the spaces below)

Other signs that something doesn't feel right include changes in your:

Sleep	Mood	Behaviour	Thinking (e.g. overthinking, unwanted thoughts etc)
Energy levels	Appetite	Ability to focus	Physical wellbeing (e.g. headaches and stomach aches)

It can be helpful to know what our Early Warning Signs are, because the sooner we notice them, the quicker we can do something about them...

(Check out: 'What Can I do 'or 'Finding Support' sections below)

Sometimes we feel our Early Warning Signs at the same time as feeling EXCITED - for example going on a rollercoaster, watching a scary film or asking someone out.

YOU MIGHT HAVE MIXED FEELINGS ABOUT GOING BACK TO SCHOOL - this is normal! Finish the sentences below to get a sense of how you feel about returning to school.



1. One thing I am looking forward to about being in school is _____
2. One thing I am not looking forward to about going back to school is _____
3. One thing I know is different about school is _____
4. One thing I know hasn't changed is _____
5. When I think about going back to school I feel (circle all the words below that apply to you)

Happy	Scared	Safe	Worried	Excited
Joyful	Unsafe	Uncertain	Mixed	Angry
Bored	Helpless	Confused	Connected	Stressed
Relaxed	Hopeful	Confident	Panicky	Calm

6. Write down any other feelings you notice:

DON'T FORGET

Remember: All of these feelings are NORMAL - they are all appropriate responses to change and uncertainty.

It's a good idea to stand up and move around after each task. Listen to a song you love, shake your arms and legs, stretch, do star jumps, walk around the space you're in - take deep breaths as you move around



2 What can I do?

Do you know how to get back into a ROUTINE before the first day of school?



- ✎ I know I start back at school on _____ / _____ / _____ (date)
- ✎ I need to be there at _____ (time)
- ✎ It takes _____ (time) to get to school and _____ (time) to get ready, so I need to set my alarm at _____ (time).
- ✎ To have a good nights' sleep I need to go to bed at _____ (time) the night before
- ✎ I will have breakfast AT HOME / ON MY WAY TO SCHOOL / AT SCHOOL

✎ In my school bag I need (circle all the ones that apply)

- | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------------------|---------|------------|
| Snacks | Water | Pens | Pencils | Notebook |
| Planner | Face mask | Object for de-stressing | Lunch | Money/card |
| Travel card/cash | Timetable | Hand gel/wipes | PE kit | Books |
| Feel good playlist | | | | |

Add any additional items you need in your school bag here:



Did you know...? When you're a teenager, your brain needs between 8 and 10 hours sleep a night?

I get enough sleep

I find it hard to wake up

My sleep pattern has changed since the pandemic

Take a moment to think about your current sleep routine. Which of these statements is true for you?



I often stay up late into the night

I often feel tired

I get at least 8 hours sleep a night

One thing I could do differently to have a healthier sleep pattern is

For more practical tips on **building a routine** and **healthy sleep patterns** check out our [Wellbeing Toolkit](#).



3 Getting to school checklist



Top Tip: It can be helpful to practice getting back into a routine a few days before school starts so it's not so much of a shock physically or mentally.
(For example, knowing how to get to school and practising the route in advance can help you know what it feels like to do the journey, and can help you reduce anxious thoughts. You can ask someone you trust to do this with you so you feel prepared when you do it for real).



Do you know how to TRAVEL to school on the first day? (Tick the box once you have completed this).

- ☒ My journey takes _____ (minutes/hours)
- ☒ The route I take is _____
- ☒ I need _____ (£) much money to get to school
- ☒ I will travel to school ON MY OWN / WITH _____
- ☒ I have my Feel Good Playlist (see page 8) ready to keep me upbeat _____

4 Ready to be in school checklist

Do you know what is EXPECTED of you when you are back at school?



- ☒ I need to use _____ entrance into school
(there may be different exits and entrances due to social distancing guidelines)
- ☒ My form tutor is called _____
- ☒ The pastoral care person is called _____
- ☒ I DO / DO NOT have my uniform ready for the first day of school
(speak to a parent or carer if you need items before term starts)
- ☒ I DO / DO NOT know what the bell sounds like
(check with school or someone who attends your school to find out)
- ☒ I DO / DO NOT know how to access my timetable
(check with school or ask your parent/carer how to get this info)
- ☒ I know to expect that teachers and school staff may be wearing face masks or visors

One thing that could get in the way of me being prepared to go back to school is

One thing I could do to overcome this obstacle is

DON'T FORGET

Remember - you can always ask for help to overcome obstacles from adults you trust, such as teachers, carers or parents.

It's a good idea to stand up and move around after each task. Listen to a song you love, shake your arms and legs, stretch, do star jumps, walk around the space you're in - take deep breaths as you move around



5 Managing my feelings in school – Action plan

It's not just about **practical preparation**, it helps to prepare **emotionally**. Knowing what to do if tricky situations or feelings arise helps you manage these feelings more positively.

Have a look at the examples of what might happen and how you can prepare to respond (keep control) rather than react (lose control), before having a go at doing the activity for yourself.

If I lost my timetable & didn't know where I was supposed to be I would feel:	I can help myself by:
Anxious, frustrated, angry, confused	breathing deeply, reminding myself that it's OK and asking for help.

If I was accused of talking and sent out of class I would feel:	I could help myself by:
angry, unfairly treated, targeted, embarrassed.	breathing deeply, finding somewhere/someone that helps me stay calm, being kind to myself, reminding myself that I can solve this problem

Now have a go for yourself

If I couldn't find my way around at school I would feel	I could help myself by

If I didn't understand the social distancing rules at school I would feel	I could help myself by

If someone got too close to me at school I would feel	I could help myself by

If I was running late to school I would feel	I could help myself by



Some ideas to help yourself in situations like these could be:

- ⌘ Deep breathing
- ⌘ Asking for help
- ⌘ Planning ahead
- ⌘ Phoning someone
- ⌘ Reminding myself "I've got this"
- ⌘ Being kind to myself

Are there any other situations that might create stress for you...? What would these be?



Make some notes for yourself here that you can turn to in this situation (what could you do / what would help?)

In Part 1, we learned how our body sensations give us a clue that we might react (e.g. physically, aggressively, unhelpfully) in certain situations like the ones listed above. If we catch these sensations early we are more likely to take positive actions (such as breathing, moving our body, telling someone etc) which helps us avoid reacting unhelpfully.

In Part 1, we learned how our body sensations give us a clue we might react (physically, aggressively, unhelpfully) in certain situations like the ones listed above, unless we catch the sensation early and take evasive action (breathing, moving our body, telling someone etc).

Have a look at the image and think about what you could do if you noticed different or overwhelming feelings - write these next to the Body Map if it's helpful.

The diagram shows a human silhouette with various symbols and callouts:

- Head:** A thought bubble with scribbles (top left) and a speech bubble with symbols "£@#!*?" (top right).
- Face:** A single tear drop (top center).
- Chest:** A red heart (center).
- Stomach:** Three blue butterflies (bottom center).
- Arms/Legs:** Blue wavy lines (outer edges).

Callouts on the right side:

- If I feel confused or unable to focus I could ...
- If I feel like screaming and shouting I could ...
- If I feel like hiding or becoming invisible I could ...
- If I feel like crying I could ...
- If I want to punch something I could ...
- If I start to panic I could ...
- If I feel anxious I could ...
- If I feel like running away I could ...

As an example, here are some more things that you could do to respond to the feelings expressed on the body map:

Breathe deeply

Do push ups

Speak to someone

Walk around

Stretch

Do squats

Squeeze a stress ball

Draw out my feelings

Do star jumps

Listen to calming music

Drink water

Tell myself I've got this



Hints & Tips:

In the next section - Coping Strategies - there are lots more ideas.

If you know you need even more options to help yourself when you're stressed - check out the next section!

It's a good idea to stand up and move around after each task. Listen to a song you love, shake your arms and legs, stretch, do star jumps, walk around the space you're in - take deep breaths as you move around



6 Coping strategies

[Toolkit Part 1](#) is packed full of coping strategies to calm you, cheer you up, distract you, support you. Here are additional options for when you notice your Early Warning Signs or find yourself in a stressful situation.

Feel Good Playlist

Music is a great distraction for helping us manage our emotions, and may help us to move our bodies to the rhythm which helps regulate our sensations. Make yourself a playlist to make you feel calm and happy and listen to it on your way to and from school each day.

Tactical Breathing

This breathing technique is used in the army because breathing in this way literally calms down your brain. All you do is breathe out for longer than you breathe in, e.g. breathe in for 4 counts, breathe out for 8 (or whatever works for you). Try and do this for at least 9 breaths.



Hints & Tips:

Imagine you are breathing in **Calm**, and breathing out **Stress**

(say the words in your head: 'Calm' when inhaling, 'Stress' when exhaling')

Energy Release

Sometimes we have too much stress built up in our body. We can release this energy by

Beating or shouting into a cushion



Stomping our feet to loud, fast music



Doing exercise or sport



Squeezing a stressball



Other times we might feel really intense emotions that we don't know how to manage. When this happens start by reminding yourself that:

1. Feelings always pass (**they never last forever**)
2. Feelings themselves can't hurt you (only your reaction to them can)



When you are feeling intense emotions or overwhelmed you can try:

- ✂ Running your hands under cold or warm water
- ✂ Squeezing a stress ball/stretching a rubber band
- ✂ Drawing it out (you can throw it away after)
- ✂ Writing things down (even if you rip it up and throw it away)
- ✂ Self soothing (e.g. have a shower, listen to calm music, hold an object you love)
- ✂ Telling someone what you need (space, time, to move, to talk it out)
- ✂ Eating something strong-tasting - eg. a slice of lemon, chilli sauce, salty fish
- ✂ Holding ice cubes in your hand



Hints & Tips: Not all these can be done at school but they are all useful strategies for when you have a stressful day or you need to let out some frustration.

Name it to tame it

Acknowledging and naming negative feelings can take away their power and help our brain calm down. You can do this in 4 simple steps

Label the emotion. "I feel..."



Notice the physical sensations. "I notice..."

Transfer the emotion to an image outside of yourself (e.g. on a cloud passing by you.) Breathe deeply, watch the cloud pass & the feeling subside



“Wow – I feel angry”

For example, if I feel really angry I could say to myself

“As I breathe, I can feel the anger reducing.”

“I notice my jaw is tight, my fists are clenched, my heart is beating faster and I feel hot in my face.”

“I can imagine transferring these feelings to a cloud. I’m watching this cloud of anger pass by me.”

“Gosh, I feel nervous.”

Or if I feel really nervous I could say to myself

The feeling gets less and less, as I breathe deeply

“I notice I have butterflies in my stomach. I feel like hiding and my thinking is all over the place.”

“I can imagine transferring these feelings to a cloud. I’m watching this cloud of nervousness pass by me.”

DON'T FORGET

Remember, everyone deals with stress and uncertainty differently. There are no right or wrong ways to deal with change, but using coping strategies can make managing change easier. See the next section for more ideas, and how to find support when you need it.

It's a good idea to stand up and move around after each task. Listen to a song you love, shake your arms and legs, stretch, do star jumps, walk around the space you're in - take deep breaths as you move around



7 Positive self-talk & affirmations

Thoughts are powerful. They can change how we feel, how we behave and how we live life.

THINK POSITIVE

It can be hard to think positively. Especially when we are uncertain or many things are changing. But we can train our brain to be more positive.

Start by circling all the strengths below that apply to you:

Creative	Fun	Loyal	Easy-going
Trustworthy	Honest	Bubbly	Caring
Kind	Motivated	Friendly	Spontaneous
Relaxed	Confident	Passionate	Energetic
Funny	Responsible	Organised	Imaginative
Adventurous	Curious	Generous	Open-minded
Strong	Supporting	Good listener	Unique
Hard working			

Are there more strengths to add to your list?



Hints & Tips: If you struggle with this exercise ask someone close to help you. People who know us often see our strengths more than we do!

Write down each strength you identified at the end of the 'I am' sentences below:
(the more we repeat things, the more our mind believes them. If we practice thinking positive thoughts and kind things about ourselves we begin believing in ourselves and responding more positively to stress!)

I am _____

Often we hear more negative things than positive. This can make it difficult to think positive thoughts. When you are feeling stressed, remember your strengths - repeat them to yourself, as a way to reset your brain and help it think more positively.

Now you have identified positive things about yourself, finish the sentence

One thing I like about myself is... _____

Choose the sentence or strength that feels most important to you and

write it down somewhere you'll see everyday (for example your school planner, inside your locker, on the mirror in your bedroom, on your phone screen). When you notice unhelpful thoughts pop into your head, remind yourself of the positive one to balance it back out!

You can also try writing down these 'feel good' statements and putting them somewhere you will see every day...

I am on my side

I am resilient

I am strong

I am brave

I am unique

I am enough

I believe in myself

I am powerful

I am an amazing person

I am in charge of how I feel

DON'T FORGET

Remember, thinking in more positive ways can:

- ✎ Change how we feel
- ✎ Change how we behave
- ✎ Change how we relate to other people
- ✎ Change how our brain works, and
- ✎ Change how stressed we are

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8 Finding support: People who make us feel good!

We all need support, but may find it hard to ask for help, or even to know who to go to! Getting support is especially important now, when returning to school after the pandemic. Have a go at the creative activity below to identify the people in your life that support you.

Support Network Instructions

1. Draw around your hand on a piece of paper.
2. Think of up to 5 people you can go to if you were worried or needed help. (people you trust and make you feel good about you - they lift you up instead of put you down (they can be friends, family members, professionals etc).) **Try to have AT LEAST ONE PERSON on your hand drawing you will see every day at school.**
3. Write down the name of each person on each finger (and thumb) of your hand.



Hints & Tips:

- ⌘ If you have other sources of support (pets, a diary, God (or another religious or important figure in your life), a relative who is no longer around etc); add these to the palm of your hand as they also give you strength when things are tough.
- ⌘ If you have less than 5 people on your hand - don't worry - you can keep a lookout for more people to add (make sure they help you feel strong and resilient).



DON'T FORGET

9 Professionals

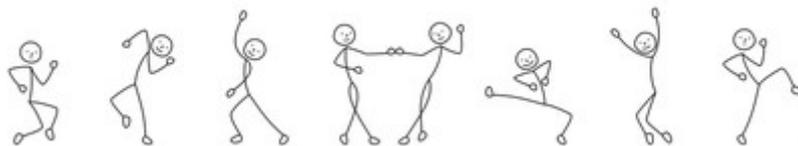
Remember, no matter how alone or rubbish you feel - there is ALWAYS support out there. Find out who you can go to at school if you need time out or feel overwhelmed.

And, you can always contact:

Childline - <https://www.childline.org.uk/> offers support for under 19s dealing with any issue. Their Freephone number is 08001111 and is open 9am - midnight.

The Mix - <https://www.themix.org.uk/> offers support for under 25s. There are a range of ways to contact them including an online 1-2-1 chat option (through their website), a Freephone number 0808 808 4994, and a 24/7 crisis messenger if you are experiencing a painful emotion or crisis you can text THEMIX to 85258.

It's a good idea to stand up and move around after each task. Listen to a song you love, shake your arms and legs, stretch, do star jumps, walk around the space you're in - take deep breaths as you move around



10 Using this resource as a parent/carer/professional

If you are supporting a young person through this toolkit, we recommend:

- ⌘ **Do all the activities together with the young person:** Role model how the activity is done and share some of your own experiences of transition and change during the pandemic. This can help to normalise these experiences, create a sense of

commonality ('we're in it together') and builds connection between you and the young person.

- ✎ **Do move around at the end of each section.** This helps regulate the body, balance emotional states and helps integrate learning. Make it fun - maybe see who can stretch highest or squat lowest - encourage young people to challenge you to do something they can teach you. This helps build their confidence in their own skills.
- ✎ **Use this toolkit with both individuals and groups.** If you plan to use the exercises with groups ask for an open group discussion about each topic before using the materials to gauge the existing knowledge in the room.

If a young person needs more support than this toolkit offers, please contact Khulisa for more information about our online interactive summer holiday webinar series.

We hope you found this toolkit helpful. Please feel free to send any feedback you have to thalia@khulisa.co.uk.

