

Supporting your child with changing schools

Mental Health
Support Team
in Schools

North and East Dorset



Moving Schools

Schools play an important role in supporting the wellbeing of children and young people at a time when they are experiencing lots of physical, emotional and social changes. The introduction of Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) working within schools is a new approach to provide an additional source of support to families.

Moving schools is a big step for any child. It is particularly difficult for children to move from one stage of their academic path to another, for example moving from primary school to secondary school.

There have been three important factors identified to a successful transition: communication from the current school to the new school, communication from the new school to the current school and parents/carers communication with both parties and their young person.


Research has shown that parents/carers play a key role in helping their child transition to a new school. Without your support, the whole process becomes a lot more difficult for your child.

This booklet aims to give some practical tips and advice to parents/carers to support their child with this change.

What is Worry?

Worrying is a normal part of life, something we all experience when we are faced with something we **think** is difficult or scary, such as moving schools, and can cause physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches or feeling sick.

Your child may have heard many different things about secondary school and may have been thinking about all the possible scary things that MIGHT happen. These worries can become bigger than they should be as children go over and over them (rumination).




On the look out for danger
"The work will be too hard
for me"

Overestimation of threat

Worry =

Underestimation of coping



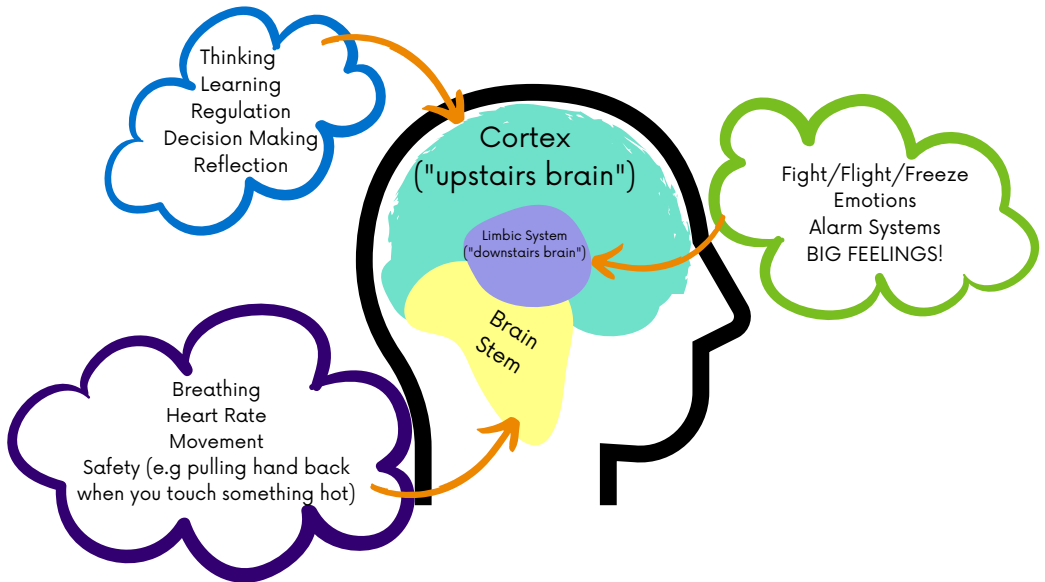
Miss Jones and my
friends won't be there
to help me



This booklet is designed to help you support your child when they are having moments of worry like this. It can be helpful to think about how our brains work when we think we are in a situation that could cause us danger.

Where does worry come from?

Our brains are amazing at protecting us from danger - it has kept humans alive for thousands of years, however the alarm that keeps us safe from wild animals chasing us, as we cross the road or move our hand away from a flame, can sometimes tell us there is danger when there isn't.

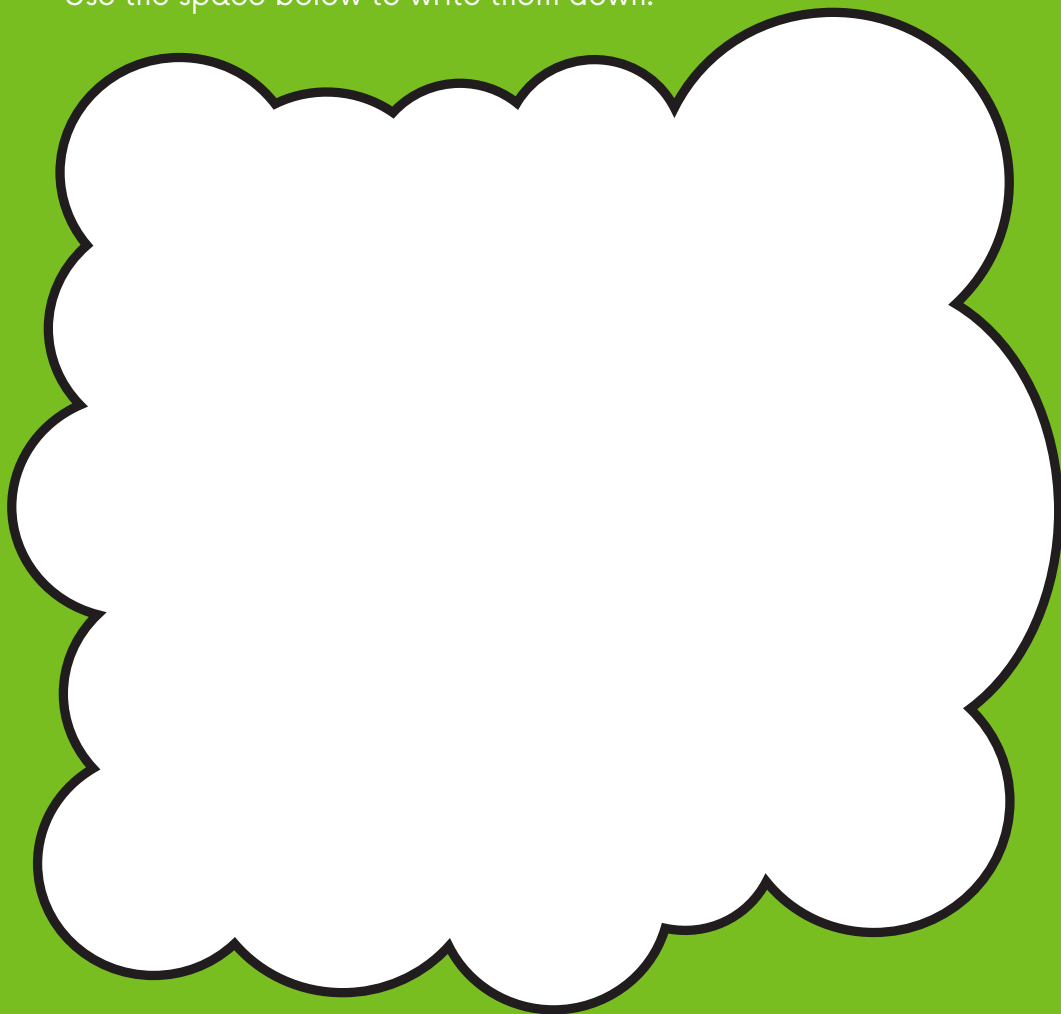


When this alarm system goes off, it can mean that our "upstairs brain" which includes our thinking, learning and decision making skills (as well as many more important things!) is switched off. This is why when we are in a state of fight/flight/freeze, we can struggle to concentrate or rationalise our fears.

Parent/carer/child worries

What are your worries about your child moving to their new school? What are your child's worries?

Use the space below to write them down.

A large, white, cloud-like shape with a thick black outline, intended for writing worries. The shape is irregular and fluffy, resembling a thought bubble or a cloud. It occupies the central and lower portion of the page, providing a designated space for the user to write their concerns.

Types of worries

Worries can often be put in to two categories. **Real-life worries** are things that are related to real situations happening right now and can be solved, for example "I've forgotten my PE kit", "I've got a lot of homework to do", or "Who is coming to pick me up today?".

Hypothetical worries, on the other hand, are worries that are about potential situations in the future that cannot be controlled or fixed or problem solved. They often focus around imagined situations - usually worst case scenarios! For example: "what if everyone laughs at me", "what if I have nobody to play with", or "what if the bus is late and I get told off".

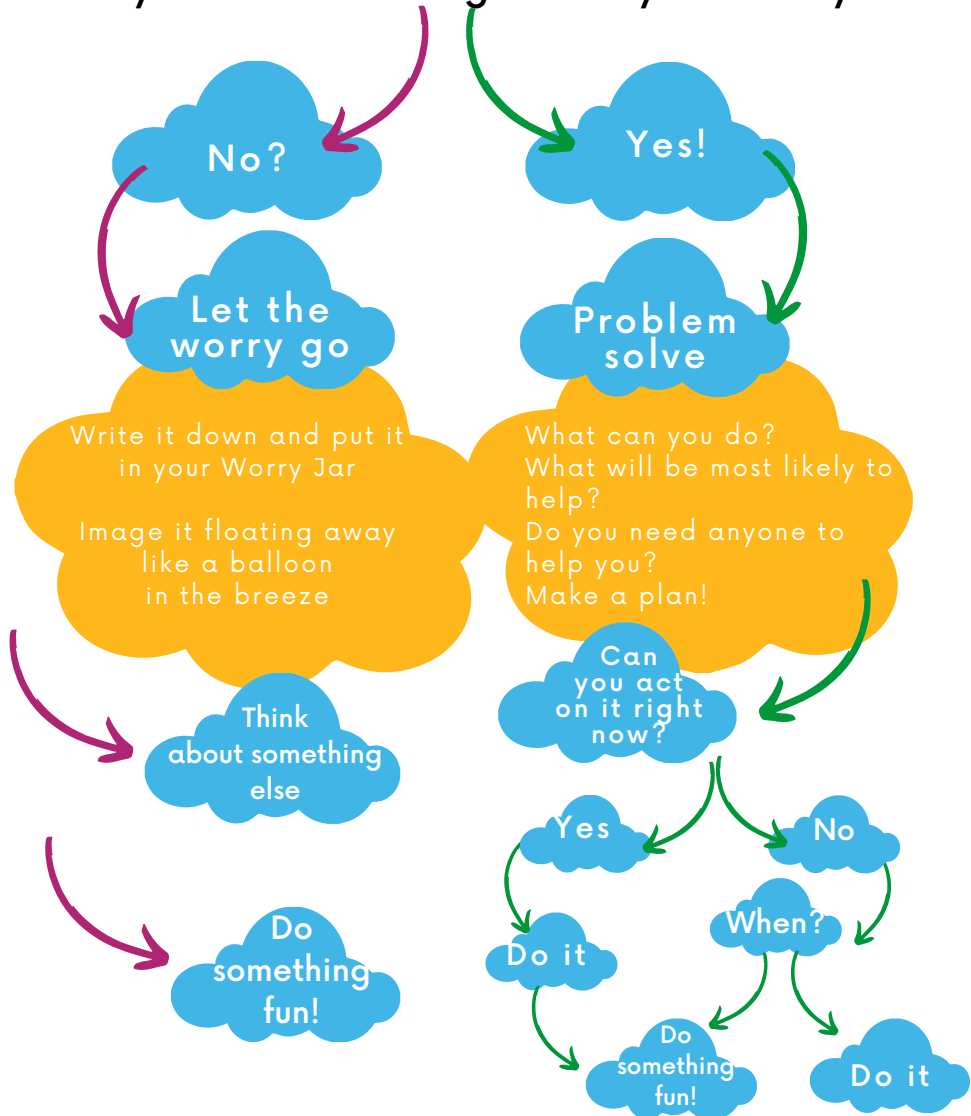
Looking back at the worries you wrote down on the previous page, do you have more real-life worries or hypothetical worries written down? Do you think your child usually has real-life worries or hypothetical worries?

Sometimes it can help to use a Worry Tree to help with deciding if your worry is real-life or hypothetical.



The Worry Tree

Can you do something about your worry?



Let It Go

Hypothetical worries can happen for any of us. They are normal, and a sign your brain is working well as it wants to protect you from potential dangers in the future. However, when those worries stop you from being able to be in the present moment and enjoy what is happening now, that's when we need to step in and Let It Go.

We can't solve hypothetical worries - there is no way of knowing if they will really happen, or could really happen or even if they did happen if it would happen again! We just don't know.

Accepting this can be hard, and it does take practice to bring yourself back into the here-and-now, and away from our worried thoughts.

Some young people benefit from Worry Monsters or Worry Jars which allow them to write down all their worries. Some young people benefit from talking them out, or using the Worry Tree.

Other great ways to help let go of hypothetical worries include Breathing and Grounding techniques which we have included on page 9 and 10 of this booklet.



Let It Go - Have a Go

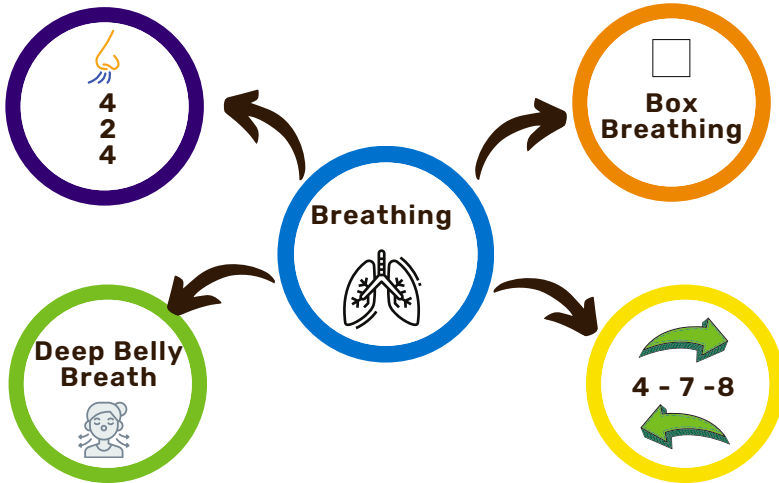
It can be hard to let go of worries, particularly if you/your child are not used to doing this. Use the space below to make a list of the ways you can think of using your time in other ways other than worrying. What else could you do with that time?



Breathing Techniques

- Sit down on a chair with both feet on the ground
- Take a breath in through your nose slowly for 4 seconds
- Hold this breath in your lungs for 2 seconds
- Breathe out through your nose for 4 seconds
- Repeat this for 4 or 5 rounds

- Sit down on a chair with both feet on the ground
- Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds
- Hold this breath in your lungs for 4 seconds
- Breathe out through your mouth for 4 seconds
- Hold this breath for 4 seconds
- Repeat this for 4 or 5 rounds



- Sit down on a chair with both feet on the ground
- Breathe in through your nose and keep going until you get the breath all the way down to your belly
- Hold this here for 4 seconds
- Release the air through your mouth in a big sigh
- Repeat for 3 or 4 rounds

- Sit down on a chair with both feet on the ground
- Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds
- Hold this breath in your lungs for 7 seconds
- Breathe out through your mouth slowly for 8 seconds
- Repeat for 3 or 4 rounds

Grounding Techniques

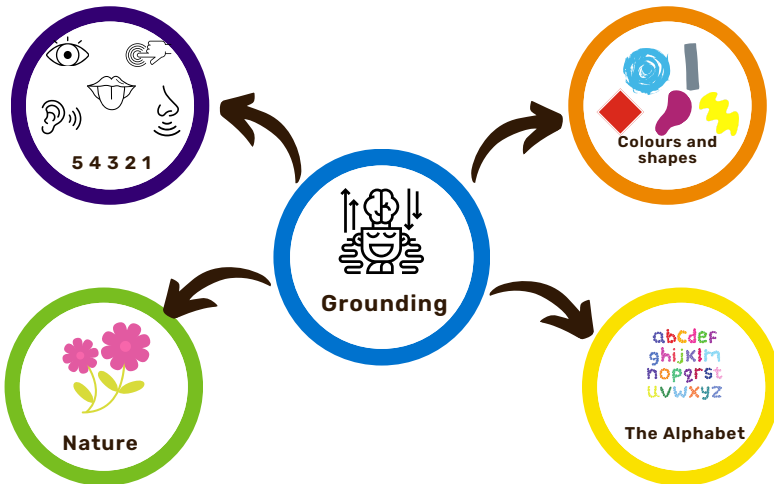
Can you name:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you want to taste

How many different colours
can you see in this room?

How many different shapes
are there?

Can you find one object for
each colour of the rainbow?



What can you see around you?

How many different plants, trees,
flowers, colours, shapes are there?

How many different textures are
there?

Is there something here that would
feel soft? Something here that could
feel rough or more textured?

Can you name:

One object in this room for each
letter of the alphabet?

Or,

Can you name:

A country beginning with each
letter of the alphabet?

A famous person beginning with
each letter of the alphabet?

Problem solving

Real-life worries can be solved. This is great! A solution is what we all want - but, how do we work out what the solution to our worry is?

A tried and tested method of dealing with Real-life Worries is Problem Solving. The following steps can be used for your worries or for your child's worries:

Step 1: Identify the Problem - Ask "What is the problem?". Define it, describe it in detail, get out all the parts and be as specific as you can.

Step 2: List **ALL** the Possible Solutions - Come up with all the possible solutions, no matter how wild and wonderful or serious and realistic - this isn't a place to decide if something will work, just make a big list of everything that could possibly help.

Step 3: Consider the Consequences - For each of the possible solutions, look at the pros and cons. What is the benefit of doing one solution over another? Does it hurt anyone else? Is it safe? Is it do-able?

Step 4: Pick the Best Solution and Try it Out - Make a plan of how you are going to try out the solution you think will work best. Do it.

Step 5: Review your choice - Ask "Is this working?" "Is there another way?" If needed, go back to Step 2 and choose an alternative solution, add more ideas if needed and start again.

Problem Solving - Have a Go

With your child, or on your own, consider a potential problem with moving schools and use the steps on the previous page to try out the Problem Solving Technique.

What is the problem? (e.g. I forgot my homework)

Possible solutions

Consequences of doing this

Problem Solving - Have a Go

Solution to try:

How am I going to try:

How did it go?

Practical tips to support your child

1. Discuss it

By talking through any worries your child might have you can help them to figure out if it is a real or hypothetical worry. Often just by talking it through, the problem will seem smaller straight away. Listening without judgement allows children to express how they are feeling.



2. Make a 'To-Know' List Together

Create a list of all the things your child would like to know about moving to their new school and who you/they can ask to find the answers. This could be older siblings or family friends, teachers, or during their transition day.

3. Don't 'What If'

"What if" questions are very normal. It can help to work out solutions to these "what if" scenarios together and encourage your child to problem solve themselves when they feel confident.

4. Create a List of Positives

Once you have had the initial conversation about worries or concerns, it is now time to focus on all the positives that are to come. What things are your child looking forward to? What could they uncover and learn?

Children are very good at spotting when adults, especially their parents, feel nervous or worried. It is important to use positive language when you talk about the trip in order to reinforce how good it will be for them.



5. Turn it into a Poster

Making a poster of everything exciting that is to come is a great way to solidify your conversations, and also create a visual focus for the weeks before the new school starts. It is something that can be added to as you get more information about the new school.

Practical tips to support your child

6. Create a List of Things to Take

Your new school will have a list of things your child needs to bring in each day. Your child may also want to think about if they are bringing their own lunch to school or if they are going to have school dinners. It is also a good idea to have regular access to water, so a good water bottle for school is another essential item.



7. Empower Their Decisions

Where possible, let the decisions about the new school and options your child has some form of control over be their choices. For example, can they choose the pencil case and bag and water bottle? Do they have a choice about how they get to school? Can they get the bus, cycle or walk?

8. Imply the Idea of Independence

Your child will need to become more independent throughout secondary school, which may include taking responsibility for their homework and remembering their PE kit. Build your child's independence and confidence by encouraging them to take on small responsibilities at home and giving them opportunities to test out new experiences.

9. Stay consistent

Transition comes at a time when there are many other changes happening for children physically and emotionally. Keep routine and boundaries in place and try to provide a consistent response to any negative behaviours which may be their way of communicating how they feel. Keep giving them hugs, smiles and attention.

10. Look after yourself

As parents you may also find this period of transition difficult as your child enters a new phase of life. Taking time out for self care means you will be better able to support your child through this time. Try going for a walk, reading, yoga, a hot bath, dancing, meeting or calling a friend.

Further Information for parents and children:

To find out more about the MHST and the role of the EMHP's, please visit our website:

<https://camhsdorset.org/about-camhs/mental-health-support-teams-mhsts>

To find out more about supporting your child with Transitions, please visit:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/school-college-and-work/school-college/moving-schools/>

<https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/supporting-childrens-transition-to-secondary-school-guidance-for-parents-and-carers/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=thnoUraeoGs>

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/media/2odjltz/top-ten-tips-for-parents.pdf>

https://youtube/nK1E_XgAWww

Further Support

FURTHER SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE:



If you're under 19 you can confidentially call, chat online or email about any problem big or small.

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Helpline: 0800 1111

Online chat: <https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/1-2-1-counsellor-chat/>



Available: free, 24 hours a day

More info: giveusashout.org

Text CONNECT to 85258 to contact Shout



Free, 24/7 text support for young people across the UK experiencing a mental health crisis.

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

Text: YM to 85258



NHS 111 is for everyone aged 5 and over. If you are worried about yourself or someone else call 111 and ask for Mental Health.

If you are worried about the safety of yourself or someone and need urgent advice, call **999** or **go to A&E**

Further Support

Further support for parents:



Website:

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/>

Parent helpline: 08088025544 (9.30am-4pm, Monday-Friday)



Available: free, 24 hours a day

More info: giveusashout.org

Text CONNECT to 85258 to contact Shout



Dorset Family Information Service is a free, impartial information service for parents and carers of children and young people

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/children-families/get-help-for-your-family/family-information-service>



Steps2Wellbeing supports adults experiencing common mental health problems, helping you to feel better.

<https://www.steps2wellbeing.co.uk/>



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If you are worried about the safety of yourself or someone and need urgent advice, **call 999 or go to A&E**



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University**
NHS Foundation Trust

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