



TIPS FOR PARENT/CARERS & SUPPORTING ADULTS

**These are some things you can do each day to help improve
your child's return to school**

When your child identifies worries, concerns, questions, anxieties, it's important to listen and take them onboard. Instead of "you're too young to worry about that", try "I can see how that would make you feel worried". Instead of "you don't need to feel sad", try "it's understandable that this would make you feel sad". Instead of "just forget about it", try asking them what their feelings are about it.

Acknowledge

One of the most straightforward ways of acknowledging an emotion is to name it. Naming an emotion can help to stop the emotion in its tracks and can open up a conversation about how the child or young person is feeling. It can be helpful to use a prompt, to help the child identify their emotions. For younger children, try searching online for "children's emotions cards". Teenagers might prefer to use a "Feelings wheel", which can also be found online.

Validate

Although a child or young person's response to an emotion may not be acceptable (hitting out, avoidance, bad language, etc.), it's important to validate the emotion/s that the child is feeling. People do not act out for no reason; it's a response to a thought or feeling. Validation acknowledges that these feelings exist and that they're real for them. Tell them that you understand how that could be (e.g.) upsetting, annoying, frustrating, etc.

Normalise

Normalising an emotion is helpful because it lets the child or young person know that emotions are something that everybody experiences and that there's no shame in having them. It's also important that they learn that emotions are not to be avoided, as they're a normal part of life and they all serve a purpose. It's OK to share your own emotions with the child. Whilst we don't want to transfer our worries onto them, we do want them to know that we understand what it's like to have these emotions and that they're a part of life. We do need to make sure, however, that we don't diminish their emotion. We're not trying to say, "everybody feels that way, so it's not really so bad", we're trying to say, "this is a normal emotion, which everybody experiences at times, and it's normal for you to experience it too". We need to make sure we validate before we normalise, otherwise the child can feel as though their emotions are being diminished or ignored.