

Your child's mental health and wellbeing: June 2024



Fresh starts and change

As we come into the summer term many of our children will be facing change. Some will be starting new schools or colleges, whilst others will be changing classes, or starting a new phase of their education. These tips can also be used when you are supporting a child with any new experiences (such as school residential or exams).

Have you ever started laughing because someone else's laughter was so infectious?

As humans we are very connected to others and this makes our feelings contagious. It is natural for you to be worried about new challenges your children are facing, but try to only share these feelings with other adults and not your child.

Feelings are contagious



Share excitement and positivity

Creating positive expectations

Whilst we want our children to see that everyone has to deal with a full range of emotions, in the case of big changes we should aim to keep our focus positive. Talk to your child about what the exciting new things they will try, share with them your own positive stories about starting a new school, trying new things, or making new friends. Set them up to approach this change with excitement.

Keep a balance

When children are worried about something they need two key things from the adults around them:

Empathy and confidence.

You can hear and respect your child's worries whilst also expressing that you are confident that they can cope and will overcome them.

This clip from Inside Out is a beautiful example of empathetic listening:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t685WM5R6aM>

Empathy and confidence



Have a script When we want to express empathy and confidence we could say something like:

"This is going to be a big change for you, and I can see that you are worried, but you know what, you've coped with changes before, do you remember when you did...I know that you can do this, and I am excited for all the new things you are going to do".



What to say

"We become the story we tell ourselves."

If we believe ourselves to be anxious we are more likely to experience anxiety, if we tell ourselves we are going to fail, then there is a higher chance that we will fail.

Move away from labelling a child as "anxious" or saying that they "have anxiety". Instead use much less emotive phrases such as "you are feeling worried about this" or "you have having some anxious feelings at the moment". This describes the feelings rather than the child and frames them as temporary.

Try not to say



Recorded webinars for parents and carers

Our colleagues in Norfolk and Suffolk have produced a large number of recorded webinars for parents. These include several which are relevant to children who experience worries and anxious feelings.

<https://www.nsft.nhs.uk/parent-workshops/>

Jabari Jumps

A brilliant book for younger children about facing your fears and giving things a go.

