

Leaflet provided by:

The Mental Health Support  
Team (MHST) in Schools, a  
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# Moving Up: Top Tips!

## Information Leaflet for Young People

Practical strategies to help you to  
transition to secondary school

Most people worry about changes, especially big ones. Knowing what to expect, talking about your worries and having a plan to manage anything that seems difficult, can make changes easier to cope with.

There will be lots of things that are different at your new school but you will be surprised at how much will be very similar or the same.

These activities will help you in preparing to leave your primary school and move on to a new secondary school.

## What could you do to prepare?

Here are some tips for how you could start preparing for secondary school:

- Communicate to a parent/carer about how you are feeling. If you don't feel able to speak to them, you could draw, text, write or sign. They can help to remind you that it is okay to feel a mixture of emotions. They can also help solve problems or worries you might have about starting a new school.
- How will your new school be the same or different to your primary school? Make a list of ideas on your own or with a friend/parent/carer.
- Start to get to know your new school – attend an open day and visit the website. This will help make your new school more familiar and normal.
- Does your new school know all the important information about you that would be helpful? For example, that you are autistic, dyslexic, partially sighted, deaf, have ADHD, Tourette's Syndrome or a health condition. Check with your parent/carer to make sure they have passed on this information to your new school.
- Have fun preparing for your new school! Do you need a new school bag? Or a new pencil case? Would some colourful pens or rubbers help you to stay focused in class?
- Prepare ahead of time with your new school uniform. You could also prepare a plan for your first day, including what time you will need to wake up, how long you will need to get ready, and what time you will need to catch the school bus.



## Positive Affirmations

Thinking about things differently can help us to cope better. Try out one of these positive affirmations to help you through any worries you might have about your new school.

I can do anything I set my mind to.

I am worthy of kindness and respect.

I can do hard things.

I know my voice and ideas are important.

I know my efforts are enough.

I have people who love me and value me for who I am.

There are some great resources available out there to help support our mental health. Below are just a few you may wish to look at to help you manage any fears, worries, or negative thoughts.



If you would like to access more information or advice about school transitions, scan the QR code



**Take a moment to reflect**

To move forward it can help to think about your journey through primary school and the positive memories you have made along the way.

Have a go at...



creating a  
scrapbook with  
memories of  
primary school



filling a special box  
with photos,  
drawings,  
newsletters etc.



make a memory map or timeline of your journey through primary school – memories of trips, teachers and friends.



Or you might like to come up with your own idea!

- Be kind to yourself and give things time to feel normal. Try to keep routines the same and continue to do the things that bring you joy.

## What is the same? What is different?

Secondary school will naturally bring lots of new things, which can feel exciting but can sometimes feel scary or overwhelming. When we start to think about this change, it can be helpful to think about what will be different and what will also be the same as primary school. There may be more than you first think!

Things that will be the same

### Things that will be different

This image shows a full page of a notebook or ledger. It features a light cream-colored background with approximately 20 horizontal blue lines spaced evenly apart. The lines are slightly wavy, giving it a hand-drawn appearance. There is no handwriting or other markings on the page.This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue lines, resembling notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

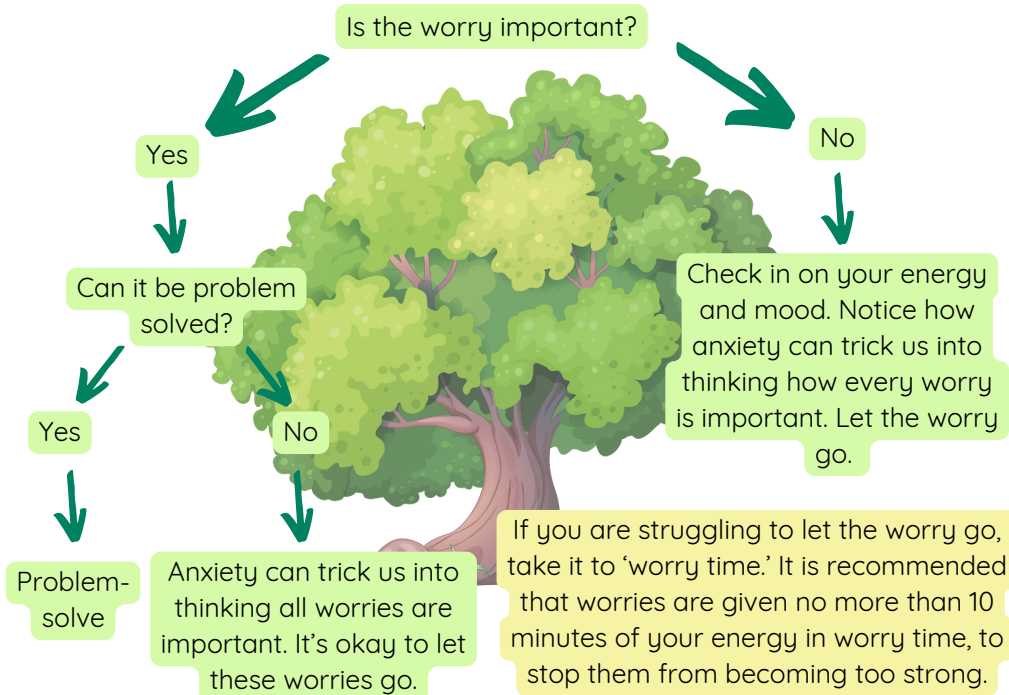
## Worry Time

Do you often worry before bedtime or on the walk to school? Do worries distract you in school or is worrying about secondary school taking up large parts of your day?

- Worry Time is a tool used to keep worries boundaried.
- Keep to the same time, same place each day, in a neutral place, e.g. after school at 4pm each day. Important: Worry Time should not be planned before bedtime.
- Worry Time should last 10-15 minutes and end with a grounding technique, such as a deep breath or 5-4-3-2-1.
- Practise bringing your worries to 'Worry Time' - give yourself time to think about your worries then you can let them go.



Use the worry tree to help manage worries that you have been having.



## Grounding Techniques

Grounding techniques helps us to feel calmer and more in control. Try out some of the techniques below and take time to notice which ones help you to feel better.

### Balloon Breathing

Imagine your tummy is like a balloon. Breathe in slowly through your nose to inflate and breathe out slowly through your mouth to deflate.



### Hot Chocolate Breathing

Imagine you are holding a cup of hot chocolate, or your favourite hot drink. Breathe in through your nose, imagining you are smelling the hot chocolate. Breathe out slowing, imagining you are blowing and cooling down the hot chocolate.

### 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

Take a moment to pause and stop what you are doing. What are 5 things you can see? 4 things you can feel? 3 things you can hear? 2 things you can smell? Now take 1 deep breath in.

**54321**  
**RIGHT NOW**



### Thinking in Categories

Name as many animals as you can that have four legs. Name as many things you can think of that are blue. Name as many songs as you can by your favourite artist. Try and recite the 6, 7, 8, or 9 times tables.

### Flower Breathing

Make a fist with your hand and slowly open your fingers (like petals) whilst slowly breathing out. Slowly make a fist like a flower closing its petals whilst slowly breathing in.



Which of the 10 a day are you really good at doing? Which could you focus on a bit more? Colour in the stars (1 star = I need to focus on this, 5 stars = I'm really good at doing this).



1  
Talk about your feelings



6  
Take a break



2  
Do something you enjoy and are good at



7  
Stay connected to those you care about



3  
Keep yourself hydrated



8  
Ask for help



4  
Eat well



9  
Be proud of your very being



5  
Keep active in mind and body



10  
Actively care for others



Problem solving can be a great tool to reduce anxiety. If we are able to problem solve a worry we have, it gives us a bit more energy to focus on the things that we enjoy. Solving a problem can also give us a sense of achieving something, which can help us to feel happier.

Try using the below flow chart to solve a problem.

What's the problem I want to try and solve?

What are the possible solutions to this problem?

Are there any pros and cons I need to think about?

How did it go?



## Coping Tools

All of our emotions are important and helpful. Even anxiety, sadness, and anger. But sometimes they can feel really big and strong, and we might need some help to manage them. Here are some helpful tools you can practice when sadness, anger, or anxiety need some extra help to move on.



### Stop and step back Take a breath.

**Observe** your thoughts, feelings, reactions.

**Pull back:** put in some perspective- Try to see the bigger picture. Is your thought a fact or an opinion? Another way of looking at it. What advice would you give a friend?

**Practise what works:** what is the best thing to do, do I need to act now or wait, only do what will help the most.

### Name the emotion

Everyone experiences emotion, it is normal. When you feel an emotion, name it first and then decide what to do.



### It will pass

When we are upset about a situation, we may feel the urge to escape, run away or hide from it. It helps to imagine we are running through a long tunnel. Stopping, turning around or trying to escape does not help. There is no option: we have to keep going. The emotion will pass. Rather than reacting, we can imagine we are travelling through a tunnel, accept it as it is and know that it will pass.



### Fact or opinion?

When we are feeling big emotions, these power our opinions. The strong opinions reinforce our emotions and this can make our emotions feel even bigger. It is a vicious cycle that feels very powerful. It can lead us to act on impulse with unhelpful results. The fact in a situation may be very different to our opinion about it.



### Self-care

Self-care reminds us what we need to do regularly to keep our minds and bodies healthy.

S – Sleep

E – Exercise and eating healthy

L – Looking out for stress and life challenges

F – Fun!



## Crystal clear

This skill helps us say what we really mean in a clear and confident way. If we want people to listen and understand us, we need to speak clearly instead of dropping hints or hoping they'll guess what we mean. It's important to think about the situation first, then get ready to explain how we feel or what we need – even if that means saying "no."



## 10 a day

It can be easy to spend lots of time focusing on our worries or negative thoughts about moving to a new school. But, if we made small changes to our day, and did things slightly differently, it could help us feel less worried and sad. Here are 10 things you can do to help improve your mood. What have you done so far today?



1  
Talk about your feelings



2  
Do something you enjoy and are good at



3  
Keep yourself hydrated



4  
Eat well



5  
Keep active in mind and body



6  
Take a break



7  
Stay connected to those you care about



8  
Ask for help



9  
Be proud of your very being



10  
Actively care for others