

How to prepare for school transition or change

Welcome! This resource is all about making a smooth transition from primary to secondary school. We know change can be nerve-wracking, unsettling, and anxiety provoking. It is okay to feel like this. Emotions are like a rollercoaster; they are never permanent and constantly changing. You may feel different emotions at the same time, for example, excited for a change but also nervous because it feels unknown.

In this resource, we'll give you tips on how to handle this big shift and make it easier for you. You'll learn some awesome coping skills that'll help you when you need it. It's all about finding what works best for you, because we know everyone is unique!

If you're about to start secondary school this September or you've already rocked the first few days, this activity pack is the ultimate guide to understanding this new chapter in your life. Plus, it's not just about school stuff; we'll also help you take care of your mental health too.

Are you in? Let's do this!



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Take a look at our social media channels for more ideas, tips and activities to keep you busy and feeling good.



@DORSETMHST



what is

mental health?



EVERYONE HAS MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is all about our feelings, the good and the not-so-good, and it's unique to each one of us. 🧠

You know how sometimes you're on cloud nine, feeling super happy and positive? And other times, you might feel a bit down or worried? Well, that's totally normal! Our emotions are like a rollercoaster, always changing, and that's all part of your mental health.

When we face new changes, they can bring along a whole bunch of different feelings we haven't experienced before.

Sometimes we might need support from a trusted adult or a friend but there may be other times where we might not feel able to talk to someone at home or school. There are services available for you to contact if you need to talk to someone. The first step can sometimes be the hardest but know there are people who want to help and listen to you.

[chathealth.nhs.uk](https://www.chathealth.nhs.uk)

Connection - call 0800 652 0190 or NHS 111

[kooth.com](https://www.kooth.com)

Text 'SHOUT' to
85258

Childline - call 0800 1111

For emergencies call 999

[youngminds.org.uk](https://www.youngminds.org.uk)



Activity 1:

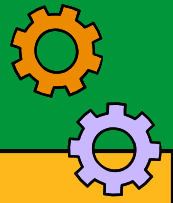
support network

A transition means there is change happening which can sometimes create new or difficult feelings that we might not know how to deal with.

We might not completely understand how we are feeling and it can feel really hard. One way of helping yourself prepare and deal with transitions is by identifying people in your support network who are there to help you.

These people are the ones you can turn to and reach out to them when you need to.

Here is an example to get you thinking about what your support network might look like.



Time:
10-15 minutes

- Find a photo of yourself, cut and carefully stick it into place in the circle below (check with an adult first to make sure it's ok to use, or if you need help)
- No photo to hand? Don't worry, draw a picture of yourself instead
- Write your name

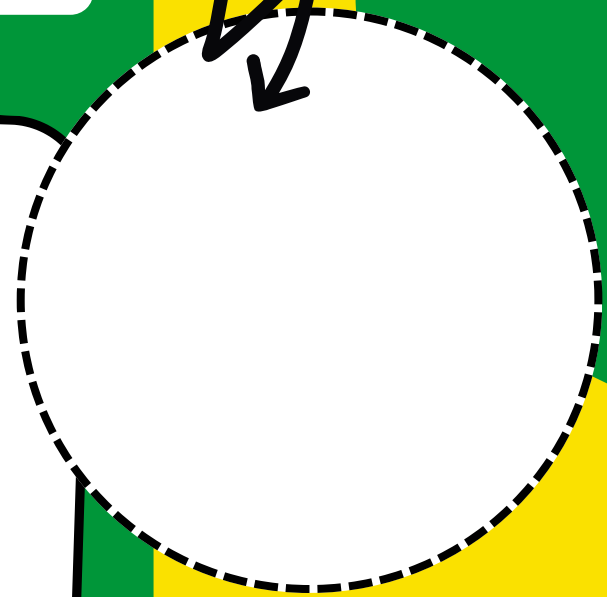
Write the names of all the people you can think of that you can include in your support network. This can be anyone you trust or anyone that cheers you up – even your pets!

Return to this once completed to remind yourself of all the people you can turn to if you need it.

My Support Network

name:

Who I feel I can talk to:



Places I can go if I need to talk to someone:

Anything else that makes me feel good:

Apps or websites that can help:

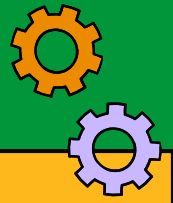
Activity 2:

spot your strengths

Everyone's got their unique strengths, whether they're born with them or built them up through hard work and practice. These talents could be anything from creative pursuits to being great at sports. They can also be the little things, like being an awesome friend or a great listener. We all shine in our own fantastic ways! ✨

Sometimes it's not easy to recognise our strengths. Sometimes we forget to appreciate ourselves. But trust us, tapping into our strengths is a game-changer. When we understand what makes us awesome, it sets us up to handle any curveballs that change throws our way.

So, let's take a moment to embrace our awesomeness and celebrate our strengths. Remember, you're amazing and you got this!



Time:
15-20 minutes

Using the prompts on page 5, complete the worksheet and write down all your strengths!

You might find some parts difficult so why not complete this activity with friends or loved ones and help each other recognise the best things about yourself?

Remember, you are you and that is what makes you amazing ❤️

The best things about **ME!**

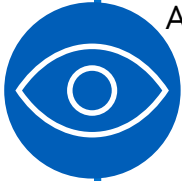
SOME THINGS I'M GOOD AT ARE...



THINGS MY FRIENDS LIKE ABOUT ME ARE...



THINGS THAT I LIKE ABOUT ME ARE...



THINGS MY FAMILY LOVE ABOUT ME ARE...



THINGS THAT I'M PROUD OF ARE...



ONE UNIQUE THING ABOUT ME IS...



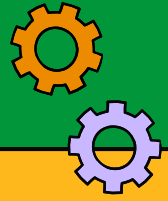
Activity 3:

worries & excitement

Moving to secondary school can bring with it lots of different emotions or feelings - like a rollercoaster of emotions.

This is a lovely activity we have created to get you thinking about the things that you may be feeling worried about and the things you are also excited about.

By completing this activity it helps you to be more aware of how you might be feeling about the move to your new school. Having this awareness can help us understand how to look after our wellbeing and mental health. By recognising the things we are worried about we can talk to someone we trust, maybe friends are experiencing similar worries or your parents/caregivers can ask teachers for help. By recognising the things we are also excited for helps us see that change can bring positive experiences as well.



Time:
10-15 minutes

Using the handout on page 7, think about all the things you may be worried about when considering the move to secondary school, and write these in the section that says "What are you worried about?" Such as homework or getting lost.

Using a different coloured pen (if you want to), now think about all the things that you are looking forward to at secondary school, and write these in the section that says "What are you excited about?" Such as new subjects or making new friends.

Worries & Excitement

What are you worried about?



What are you excited about?



Activity 4:

worry tree

The worry tree is a really useful tool to help you to organise your worries into practical (worries we can do something about) and hypothetical worries (worries we cannot do anything about).

Practical worries have already happened or they are definitely going to happen, these are the worries we can do something about. To help us feel better about our practical worries we can problem solve by thinking of all the possible solutions and try one of them out.

Hypothetical worries are the worries we cannot do anything about and they might not actually happen, these are often 'what if' worries. When you experience a hypothetical worry it is important to write them down or talk to somebody you trust. Afterwards, you can then try to let the worry go and change the focus of your attention by do something you enjoy or engaging in distraction exercises.

The worry tree is a really good tool to help manage your different worries and help you feel less overwhelmed by them.



Time:
10 minutes

Using the handout on page 9, think about all the things you may be worried about when considering the move to secondary school, and follow through the arrows to help you change the focus of attention.

The Worry Tree

notice the worry

what am i worrying about?

can i do anything about this worry?

no

yes

let the
worry
go

make a
plan

when?

now

later

do it!

decide
when

let the
worry
go

let the
worry
go

change the focus of attention

Activity 5:

positive self-talk

When we are feeling difficult emotions and going through a transition it is natural for our thoughts to become more negative but it is really important and helpful to catch these negative thoughts and re-frame them for a more positive thought. This can be really difficult to do so think to yourself: what would I say to a friend?

Here are some examples of negative self-talk that you may have during a school transition or change, turned into something more positive. This is often called positive self-talk and is a skill we try to encourage children and young people to use. To begin with this will be difficult but the more you practice talking positively to yourself the easier it becomes ❤️

What if no one wants to hang out with me at lunchtime?

I am a good friend and there will be familiar faces from my old school moving up too. This is also an opportunity to make new friends! I can invite someone to hang out with me.

What if I get lost and I am late to a class?

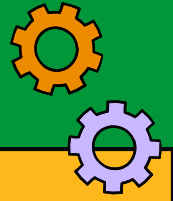
Being in a new space may be scary but I can be brave and ask for directions if I need to. I can also prepare by looking at the school/college website and see if they have a school map.

I am so nervous, I can't stand it.

It's normal to feel nervous about trying new things and meeting new people. I will take each day as it comes and I can talk to my friends and family if I need to.

What if I forget something and I embarrass myself?

I can look at the school website and make sure I have everything prepared. If I do forget something, it's not the end of the world and I can remember to pack it for the next day.



Time:
10 minutes

Using the handout on page 11, draw a picture of yourself or something that represents you in the centre of the mirror.

- Circle which kind and caring messages you want to remind yourself of.
- Say these positive self-talk statements out loud.


bonus activity: add in your own positive self-talk statements in the blank spaces

You can also print off the poster on page 12 and hang on your wall.

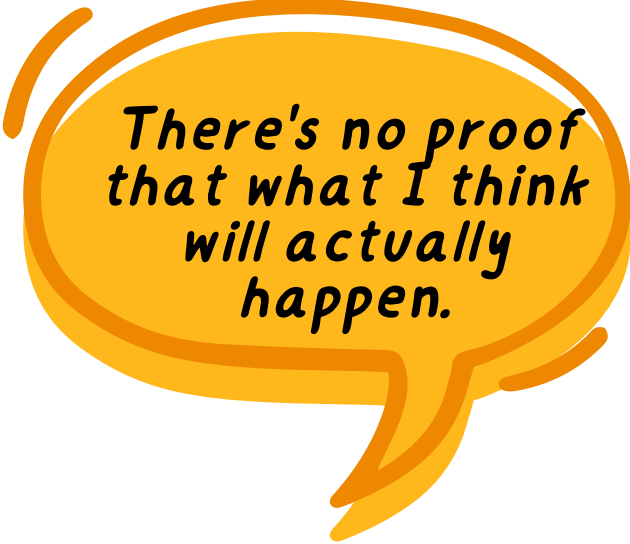


Positive Self-Talk






I can get through this. I have done this before.




There's no proof that what I think will actually happen.



Feelings come and go. This won't last forever.



Think about the things that make me feel happy & safe.



What did I do to calm down last time? Let me try that.



Everyone makes mistakes. It's really no big deal.

Positive Self-Talk







Activity 6:

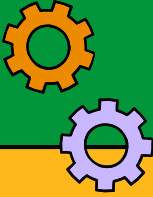
problem solving

Let's talk about problem solving 

The Worry Tree activity earlier in this resource explained what practical and hypothetical worries are. When you experience a practical worry (a worry we can do something about) it can be really helpful to problem solve and find a way to solve the difficulty to help you feel better.

Here's how to problem solve practical worries step by step:

-  Think about the problem.
-  Think about all the possible solutions to solve this problem (it doesn't matter how silly they are write down all the ideas to problem solve).
-  Write down the pros and cons of the different possible solutions.
-  Select one of the possible solutions that seems like the best one to try first (remember to plan when you can try this solution, where, with who, do you need help from an adult, friend or teacher).
-  Give it a go, try out the solution.
-  Review, how did it go, how are you feeling now, do you need to try one of the different solutions if that one didn't go as planned.



Time:
10-15 minutes

Using the handout on page 14, identify a problem you have when considering the move to secondary school or change of year group, and follow through the arrows to help you solve the problem, or identify different solutions or where to get further help if you need it.



Problem Solving

1. think about the problem (Be specific)



2. think about the possible solutions (Brainstorm)



3. pros & cons of solutions (Doable? Practical?)



4. select solution



5. plan solution

(What? Where? When? Who with? What steps to follow?)



7. review

(How did it go?)



6. try it out

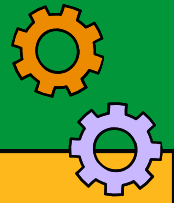
Activity 7:

distraction techniques

Sometimes when we have tricky emotions or are thinking about our worries a lot, it is helpful to do or think about something else. This can help you to feel calmer and make your worries a bit smaller as you're not thinking about them all the time.

Distractions can bring focus to something else which can help quieten those thoughts. Everybody responds differently to distractions. What works for one person, may not work for someone else.

Our suggestions on page 16 can be used as a starting point to explore the types of distractions that can be helpful for you when managing thoughts of worry or anxiety.



Time:
10-15 minutes

Using the handout on page 16, use the prompts to take notice of what is around you and have fun with it. How does this make you feel? Do you feel calmer? Has it taken your mind off your worries?

Return to this when you need it.

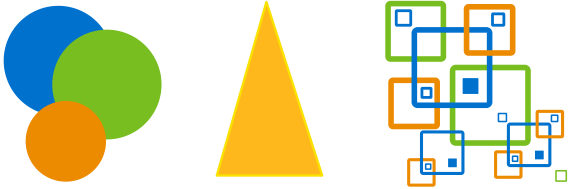
Distraction techniques

look around you...

what shapes are around you?

how many squares are there?

how many circles are there?

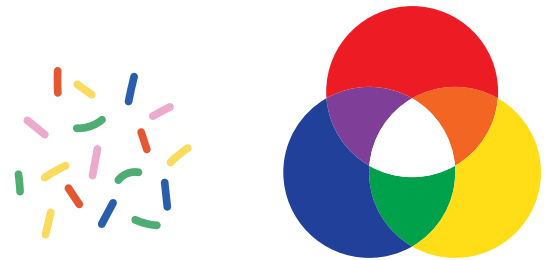


shapes

look around you...

what colours are around you?

how many: blues, yellows, reds, greens are there?



colours

in your head go down the alphabet and think of...

animals



food




names





activities





a-z

 5 things you can see

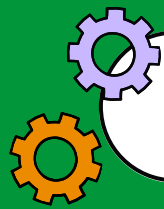
 4 things you can feel

 3 things you can hear

 2 things you can smell

 1 thing you can taste

5,4,3,2,1



top tips

to help

support

your mental health

Evidence suggests there are 5 steps you can take to improve your mental health and wellbeing. Trying these things could help you feel more positive and able to get the most out of life.



connect

Having good relationships help you to build a sense of belonging and self-worth and give you an opportunity to share positive experiences.



learn

Learning new skills can boost your self-confidence, help you to build a sense of purpose and connect with others.



take notice

Some people call this awareness mindfulness. Mindfulness can help you enjoy life more and understand yourself better. It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

Five steps to wellbeing



be active

Getting active and moving more can help raise your self-esteem, help you to set goals or challenges and achieve them and causes chemical changes in your brain which can help to positively change your mood.



give

Research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by creating positive feelings and a sense of reward, giving you a feeling of purpose and self-worth and helping you connect with other people.

Dorset Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) are working with a number of schools across Dorset to tackle the challenges children and young people experience, by helping them to feel more resilient, arming them with techniques to look after themselves and strategies to help them cope better with life's ups and downs. This includes support for things like mild-moderate anxiety or worries, exam stress and friendship issues through 6-8 sessions of low intensity Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (LI-CBT), counselling sessions, themed group work or information workshops.



get access to our resources

visit our website for more info

bit.ly/dorset_mhst



Dorset Mental Health Support Team in Schools



Dorset HealthCare University
NHS Foundation Trust

Take a look at our social media channels for more ideas, tips and activities to keep you busy and feeling good.



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