



Supporting your child transition back to school post lockdown

Dr Rebekah Sutherland – Clinical Psychologist
Helping Hands Psychology

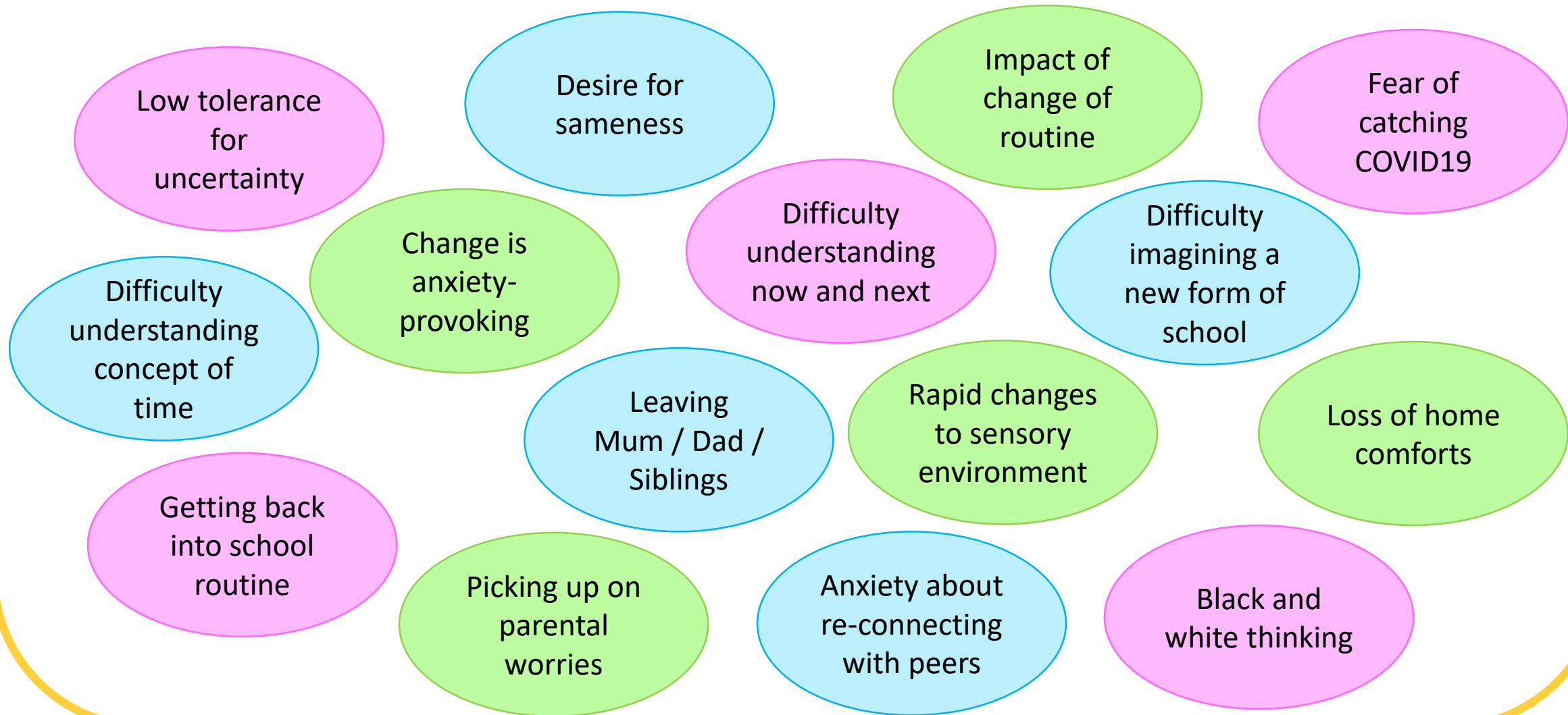


Plan for the Session

- Housekeeping
- Transitions for children with additional needs
- Circle of Security™
- Supporting your child's needs on the circle
- Supporting yourself within the transition
- Behaviours and emotions
- Talking about feelings
- Practical strategies
- Questions and close



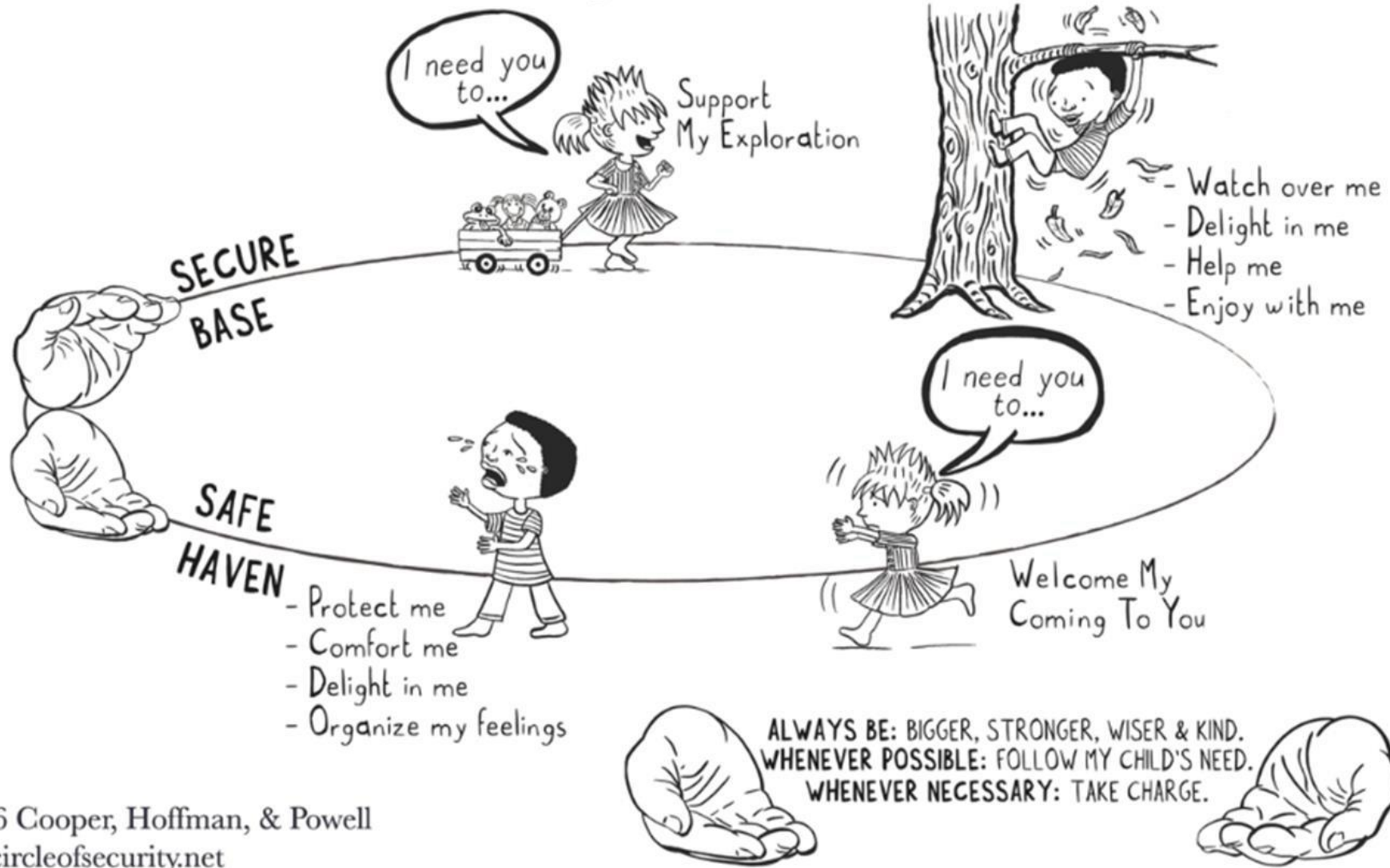
What is difficult about transitions for children with additional needs?





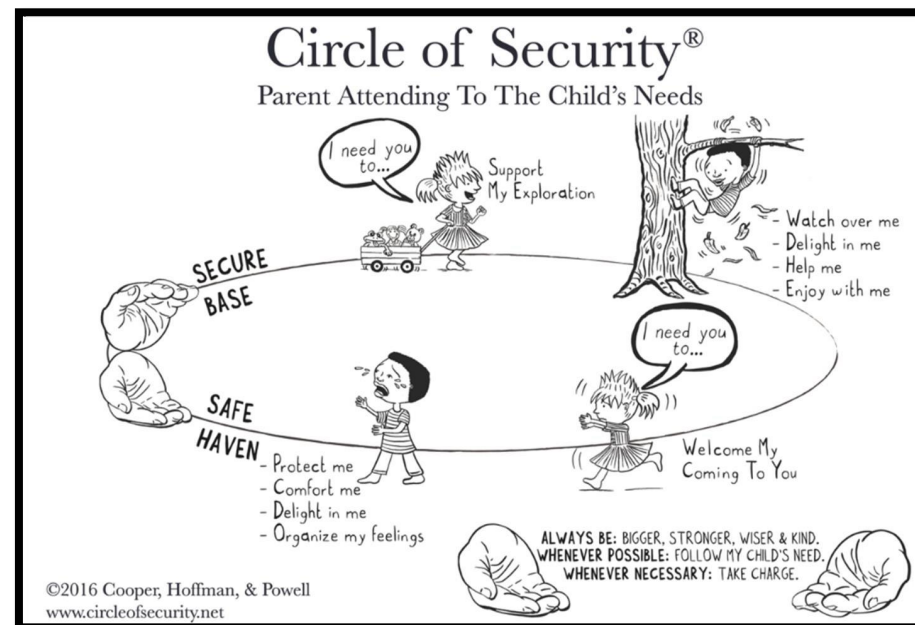
Circle of Security[®]

Parent Attending To The Child's Needs



Private reflections

Take a moment to think about the Circle of Security...



Is your child someone who struggles more with going out on the circle or with coming in on the circle?

What could you do to support them going out or coming in?



Going out on the circle: Ideas to support exploration

- Hugs/kisses goodbye. You could turn this into a game, for example you could say “how many kisses and squeezes would you like today?”.
- Let the child know when you will see them next and what you will do together e.g. I will pick you up straight after school and we can go and get an ice-cream.
- Have a transitional object e.g. a picture or special scent, or item that comforts the child.
- Be positive and decisive when saying good-bye to your child.



Additional ideas to help your child feel your presence when they are at school:

- **Matching items:** Give your child something which you also have a copy of, which you can both keep on your person when you are apart e.g. matching home-made wrist bands; or draw a heart, cut it in half and keep a half each.
- **Notes:** Write notes to your child that they can keep in their pocket or surprise them with notes in their packed lunches.



Additional ideas to help your child feel your presence when they are at school:

- **Text:** If your child has access to a phone, text your child during the day simply telling them that you are thinking about them.
- **Keep your child in mind:** The adult could have an item such as a mug and say “whenever I have a cup of tea I will think of you”. Or take pictures of things you think they would like or reminded them of you and show them the pictures at the end of the day.



Inform the teacher of any plans you make as they may be able to help and offer support throughout the day.



Coming in on the circle:

Ideas to support reconnection

- A positive greeting after the school separation. This could be a hug, smile, kiss, high-five, a fun handshake, or a special phrase that you use with your child.
- Let your child know that you are glad to see them and that you have thought about them during the day, e.g. “when I was at work I thought about you when I had a cup of tea out of my special mug”.
- **If you planned a special activity that you were going to do together after school, it is important to still try and do this even if your child has had a bad day at school. Your child will be better able to take on any thoughts or consequences you have if they feel safe and connected with you.**

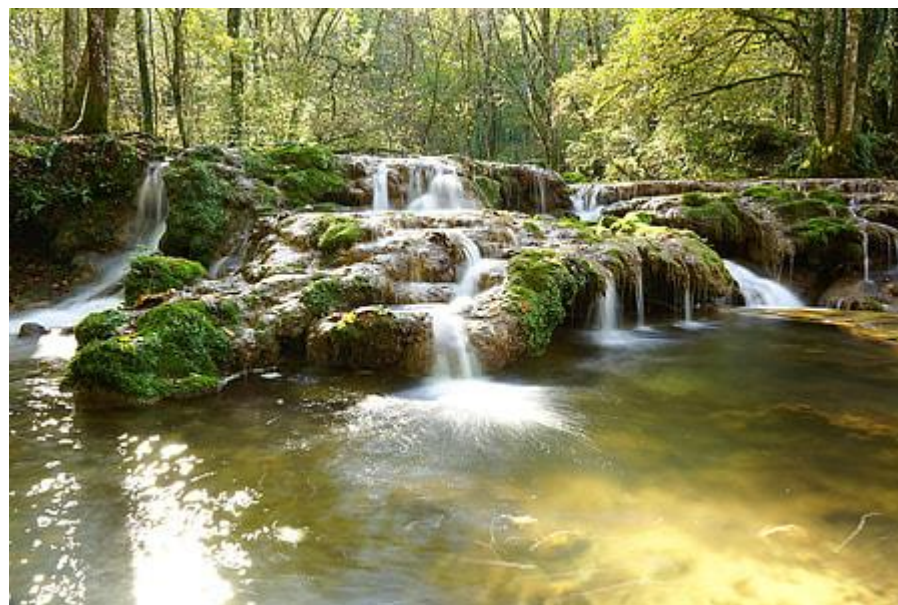
Being with





And most of all...

Remind the child (and yourself) that the Transition Storm will come, and it will go. You will stick it out together, and soon it will be over.





Supporting **yourself** with transition

Spend a few moments on what you will find difficult about this transition

- Giving up some control
- Preparing for a bumpy road
- Picking your battles
- Sense of loss
- Anxiety around child's health
- Anxiety around child's wellbeing
- Feeling detached from the school environment
- Change in routine

How do you know your child is struggling?



How do they present?

Some children or young people with additional needs such as learning disabilities or autism can find it difficult to identify or verbally communicate how they are feeling. They may communicate uncomfortable feelings such as anxiety, anger or sadness to us through their behaviour.



Emotions / Behaviour Iceberg

Behaviours we see on the surface

Head
Spitting banging
Biting Pulling hair Hitting

Emotions we can't see below the surface

Confused - not understanding what's going on
Feeling stressed by change in routine
Missing school
Frustrated by lack of physical activity
Bored and lacking stimulation
Picking up on other people's stress
Worrying about the virus
Missing friends and relatives
Missing going out to do usual activities

Try to respond to the emotions, not just to the behaviour

He had thoughts going around in his head.

George was very very SAD and worried.

What if my mum forgets to pick me up for school?

What if my friends don't like me anymore?

What if the work is too hard?

What if something happens to mum and dad when I am gone?

What if everything is different at school?

What if I don't see my mum and dad again?

What if I am needed at home and I aren't there!

What if something bad happens at home and I am not there?



How can you talk to your child about their feelings about school?



Seeing my teachers 	Having to get up earlier in the morning 
Doing my school work 	Wearing my uniform 
Break times 	Not being at home with my family 
My classroom being different 	Seeing my friends 

Creating a plan for returning to school

Returning to school after the Coronavirus lockdown may feel exciting, but it is also completely normal to have some worries.

Mark on the scale below how you feel about returning to school.

1 = VERY CALM - 5 = VERY WORRIED



What are you most looking forward to about going back to school?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are the 3 things you are most worried about?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What questions would you like to ask your school or teachers?

(You can add extra)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What do you think your school can do to help support you with the worries you have identified?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What things can you do to help you get ready for going back to school?

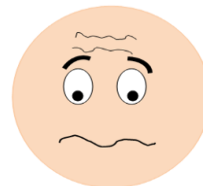
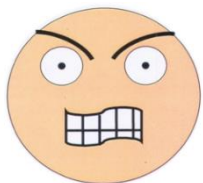
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

It is a good idea to share this information with your school.

Things that you can do to help children and young people cope with these difficult feelings



1. Let them know that it is OK to feel sad or angry or worried. Everyone has uncomfortable feelings. They will pass. Sharing those feelings with other people can help.
2. Help them recognise when they are feeling anxious, sad or angry.
3. Help them communicate to those around them about how they are feeling.
4. Help them develop skills to cope with difficult feelings.



Practical strategies to support transition

Issue	Strategy
Low tolerance for uncertainty	→ Visual timetables*
Difficulty understanding concept of time	→ Countdown calendar / timers / 'Now & Next'*
Separation anxiety	→ Separation and reunion plans / transitional objects*
Difficulty regulating emotions	→ Understanding anxiety and regulation strategies*
Anxiety about reconnecting with peers	→ Social media connection / social stories*
Fear of catching COVID-19	→ Social stories and safety plans*
Black and white thinking	→ Present middle-ground ideas in a factual way
Changes to sensory environment	→ Supportive sensory equipment, planning with school
Re-starting school routine	→ Driving past school, transition routines back home
Explaining why it is safe to go to school now	→ Social stories*

*examples in next slides

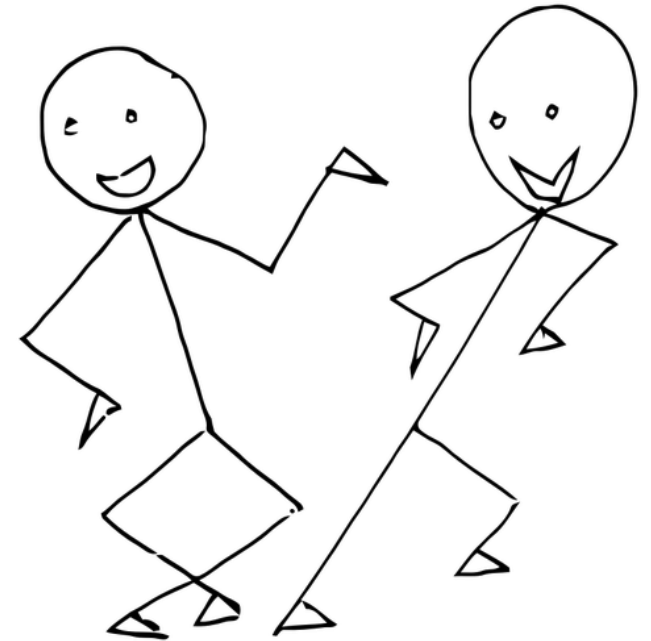
- Spend some time with your child finding out a bit about what they believe will be different when they see their friends again.

Draw a picture of you and your friend. What do you like about them? What do they like about you?



What do you like to do with your friends?

Everything you liked about each other before lockdown has not changed



- Role-play with your child conversation starters that they can have with their friends
- Consider whether any virtual connection or connection via parents would be helpful

When I Leave Mum or Dad

Name

Talk to your mum or dad, and together think of 5 things you could do when you say goodbye to them when you come to school.



1. I say goodbye to all family members and pets in the home
2. I cuddle or fist-bump with adults I am leaving
3. Mum gives me a hug and I kiss her on the cheek
4. Mum gives me something of hers to look after when I am in school
5. Dad gives me a final wave when I go through the school gate

When I See Mum or Dad Again

Name

Talk to your mum or dad, and together think of 5 things you could do when you see each other again after school.



1. Mum gives me a hug and I kiss her on the cheek
2. Dad asks me how my day was
3. I have special time in the park on the way home
4. I can have a special snack in the car on my way home
5. I can have some time playing on my iPad when I get home

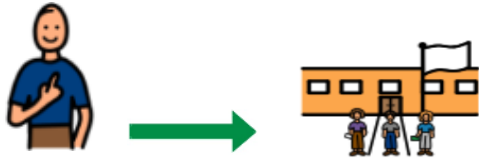
Separation anxiety

Separation and reunion plans / transitional objects



Explaining why it is safe to go to school now

Social stories



I am going back to school



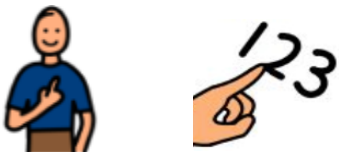
My school has been closed because of Coronavirus



It is safe to go back to school



I will travel to school in the morning



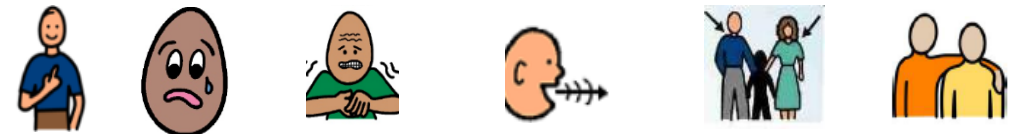
I will have lessons



Going to school is good for me



It is okay to feel sad or worried about going back to school



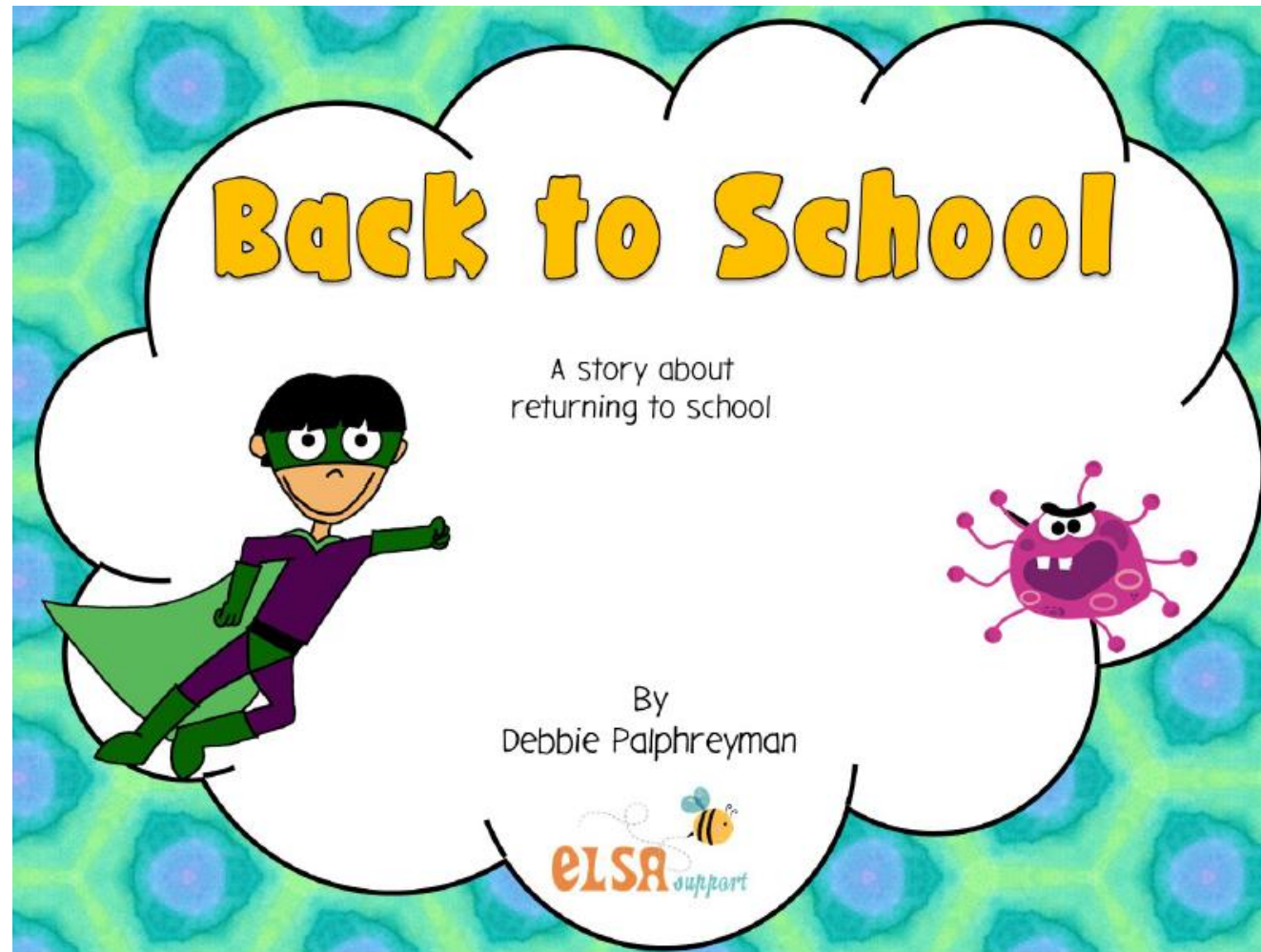
If I am sad or worried I can speak to an adult who looks after me



It is safe to go back to school



I can be happy to go back to school

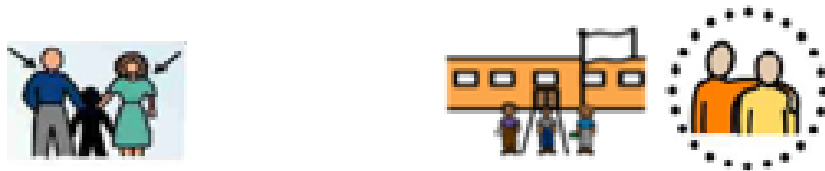




I will go to school on the bus



School will be clean



Adults will make the school safe



I can feel safe in school

Daniels' Safety Checker

My hands are clean, I have washed them.



I can speak to an adult if I am worried.



I can stay 2m apart from other people.

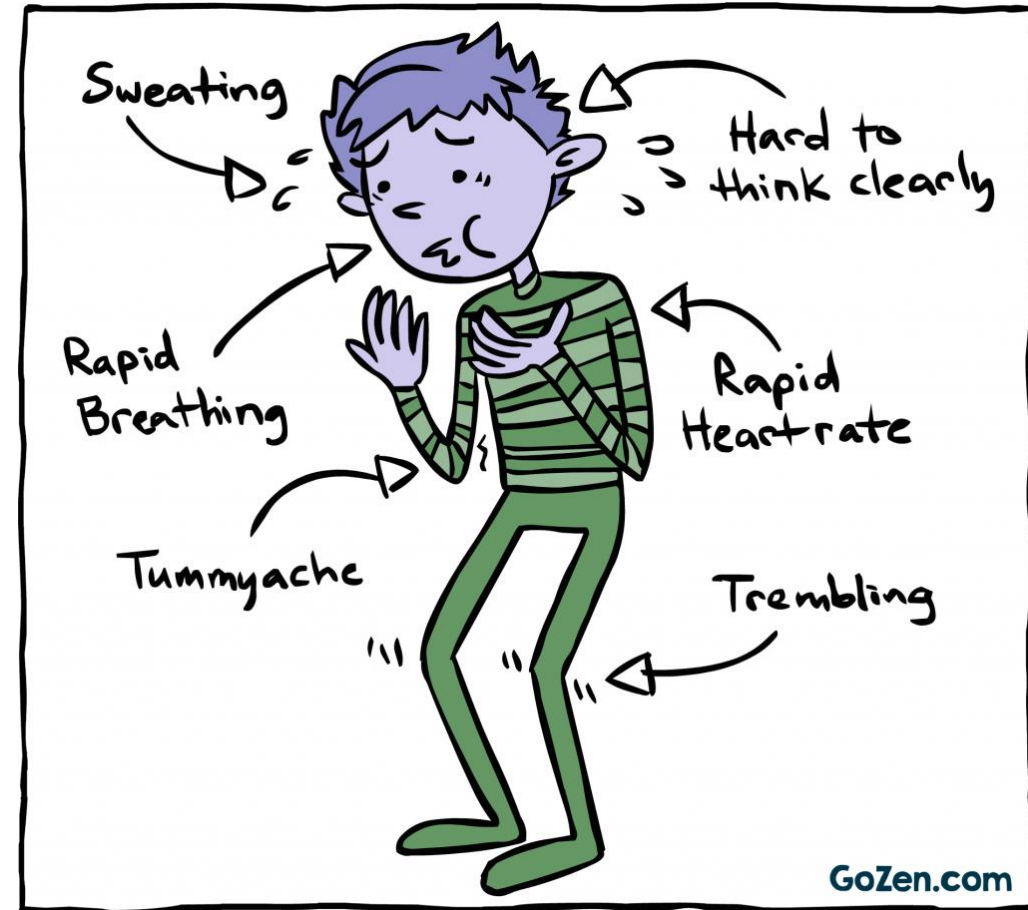


I think I can feel...

Safe

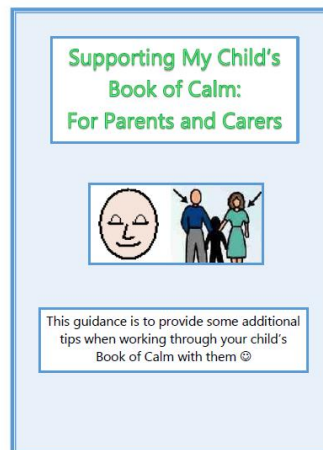
Unsafe

When we are anxious, worried or angry we can feel it in our bodies



Children feel fear in their body. Help your child's body to calm by:

- Doing short bursts of physical activity (star jumps, running, dancing) frequently
- Encourage playful and engaging ways to use deep breathing to calm bodies
- Try a range of other body calming activities that work for your child
- Use nurturing touch to let them know you are there. Touch can be a great calmer



A calming breathing exercise for younger children




<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/joinin/help-children-cope-with-emotions?collection=parenthood-tips-and-tricks>

Low tolerance for uncertainty

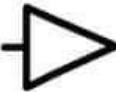
Visual timetables

Difficulty understanding concept of time

Countdown calendar / timers / 'Now & Next'

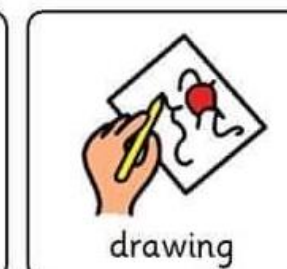
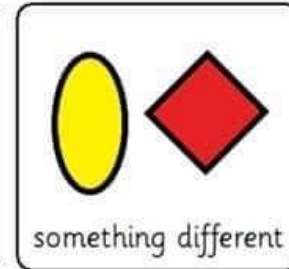
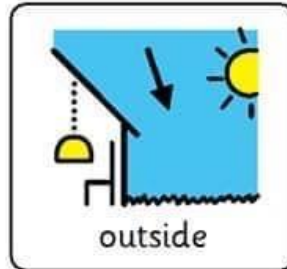
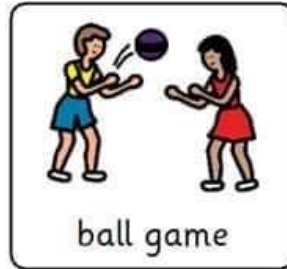
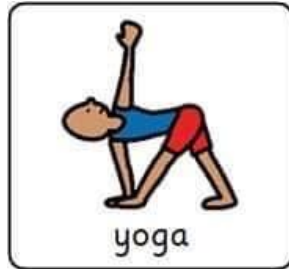
 _____'s schedule for today

--	--	--	--	--

  now	 next
 arts & crafts	 painting

Low tolerance for uncertainty

Visual timetables



*Thank you NHS
Fife Speech and
Language
Therapy for
sharing resources

Thank you for listening!



We would love to hear any questions from you or whether there has been anything useful that you will take away from today's workshop

Check your emails after this workshop for:

- Copy of the slides
- Helping Hands Psychology Book of Calm
- Helping Hands Psychology Re-engaging with life after lockdown
- Gwent Attachment Service & Gwent Community Psychology
'Supporting transitions back to school after COVID-19'
- Talking about school Sorting cards
- Talking about school Worksheet
- Easy read social story – Going back to school
- Boardmaker images for visual timetables (NHS Fife Speech and Language Therapy)

