

Do you worry about going to school?

Guidance document for children in Sutton

Name:

School:

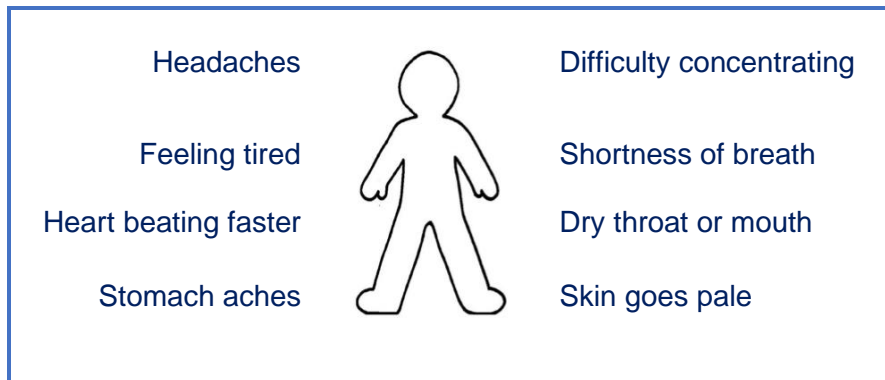
Year group:

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What is anxiety?

Worry or anxiety is a natural feeling that everyone experiences, much like happiness, anger, and sadness. A certain level of anxiety is normal and helpful (we do better in some situations with a bit of anxiety such as performing in an exam). Sometimes, anxiety can feel scary and impact on our everyday lives. When we are feeling worried, we may experience changes in our body, look at the image below.



Can you write down what happens in your body when you are feeling worried?

What do you feel like at school?

School can make us feel a lot of different things, and all of these feelings are normal and ok.

- Sad
- Worried
- Relieved
- Frustrated
- Excited
- Confused



Many children and young people worry about school, and this is normal. However, sometimes it can make us feel like we don't want to go to school. This can be understandable given the pressures in school and changes that have been out of our control over the last two years. For example, school closures, home working, reduced social interaction, reduced freedom, and fear of contracting Covid-19. If you are currently worrying about attending school, you may want some help with managing these feelings and this workbook can help.

What is making you worried at school?

Typically, there are four reasons why a child or young person may be having difficulty with going to school. It would be a good idea to complete a questionnaire that you can get from school or your parents to find out which one of these factors might be the main reason. Circle any of these four that you think might explain how you are feeling.

1) To avoid bad feelings about certain situations in school.



2) To avoid situations such as being with friends or learning tasks.



3) Wanting to spend time with family instead of being in school.



4) Wanting to do fun things outside of school such as playing games or going out.



There are likely to be positive things in school that can make it easier for you to go into school. These could be:

Adults to talk too	Enjoying learning	Parents want me to go to school	I can be myself at school	My friends are there for me
I can do things if I try	I feel safe in school	I have lots of friends	There are people to help me	I know what I want to do when I am older

Pick the top three of these statements which are most relevant to you:

There are also likely to be negative things that are making it more difficult for you to go to school. There could be:

I find the school noisy and busy	I don't have friends	I worry about being away from my parents	I worry about break times	I worry about the school work
I would rather be at home than at school	I get to do fun things If i stay at home	I feel pressure to come to school	I don't belong here	I worry at home

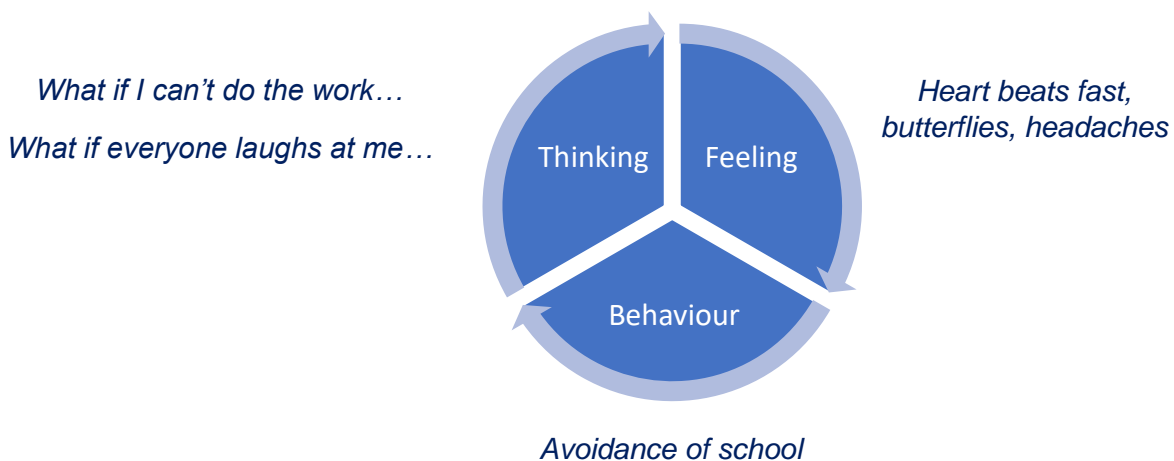
Pick the top three of these statements which are most relevant to you:

Are there any other things you are worried about?

There are many worries that you could be experiencing currently and some of these are in your control, and others are not. Complete the figure below by writing your worries down, thinking about what is 'within' or 'outside' of your control.

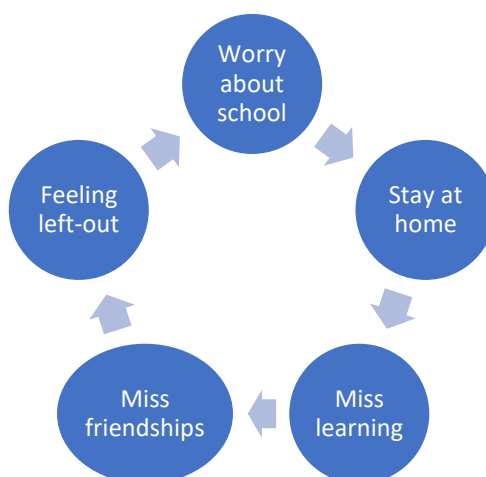


When we experience high levels of worry, it can impact on how we think, feel, and behave. First, you might experience feelings in your body (like shaking, sweaty hands, or your heart racing). Because of this, you might start thinking anxiously, such as “I can’t do this”. You might then try to avoid going to that place or try to be near someone who can help as it can seem like this will help. The table below provides an example of potential thoughts, feelings, and behaviours about school. Add any more that relate to you. In the next few pages, we are going to help you to think, feel and behave more positively.



What happens when you avoid school?

When you are worrying about school, it can seem like the best thing to do is to avoid the situation and this can make you feel better initially. However, the more time away from the thing that is worrying you is going to make it even more difficult to go back, and your worries will increase. This is often because you will miss out on learning, friendships and all the other things that happen in school. We can see this in the diagram below.



What do you do if you feel like this?

Most importantly, it will be helpful to talk to somebody about how you are feeling, it can feel scary and that's ok. There are other CYP who also feel this way and with support and help from adults around you, it can get better. The best thing that you can do is to agree a plan with your parents and school to manage those big feelings and take small steps towards going back to school. Take a chance! Once you are at school, it may not seem as bad.

How can your school help?

There are lots of things that can be done in school to support you. It will be helpful to make sure that your parents and teachers know how you are feeling and sharing your views about what makes school better or worse for you. Tick which of these strategies would help you.

Teachers knowing and recognise how you are feeling.	
Give you a key person to talk to	
Find a safe space you can go to	
Communicate with your parents	
Make changes to your timetable	
Help you with your school work	
Help you to build friendships	
Celebrate your successes.	
Support to help you manage how you are feeling	

What else would help?

Changing how you think about school

Changing what you think about something can change how you feel and what your body does. Have a look at these two examples.



If you recognise that you may have some **red** thoughts, then remember to STOP:

S stands for: are you feeling scared?

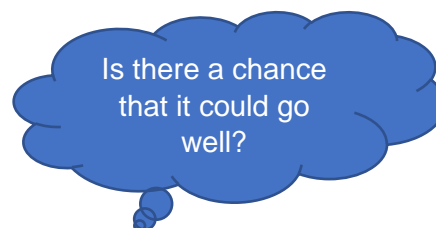
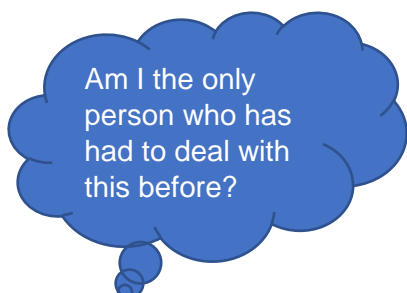
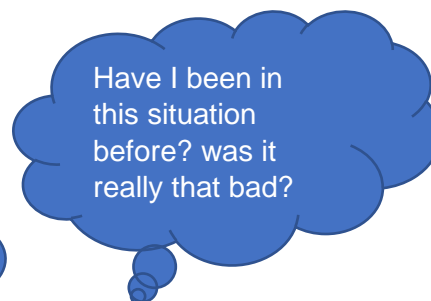
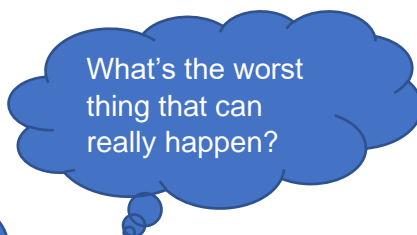
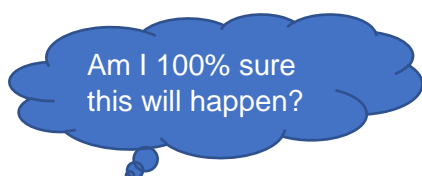
T stands for: what are you thinking?

O points you towards other helpful thoughts.

P is to praise yourself for using these steps and plan for next time.



In the table below, write down some of the '**red**' thoughts you might have about school. Next to them, think about how you can change them to '**green**' thoughts. To help you, here are some questions that you can ask yourself:

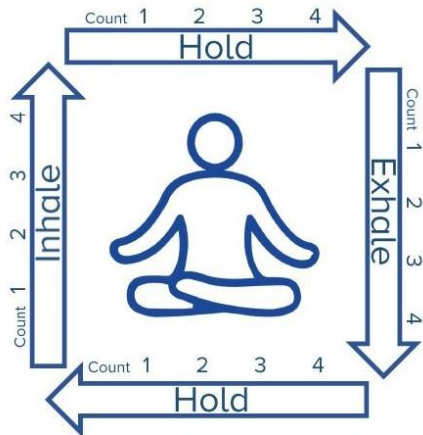


Red thoughts	Changing to Green thoughts
e.g. I can't do it, I can't go to all of those lessons.	e.g. I can't go to all of those lessons YET, but I think I might be able to go to Art as that used to be my favourite lesson.

Helping to manage big feelings you might experience

It can be helpful to teach yourself to use relaxation techniques to help when you are feeling overwhelmed. For example, on your way to school, or in a lesson. Try and practise the following techniques.

Breathing



Practise taking long, slow breaths to regulate your heart rate.

breathe in for four seconds...

hold for four seconds...

breathe out for four seconds...

and hold.

Repeat this process until you are feeling calm again.

Grounding technique

A helpful grounding technique to use is the '5,4,3,2,1' method.

This can be done anywhere (classroom, bedroom or on a walk).

Pick things you notice, as described in the picture.



Calming activities

Perhaps you like to listen to music, go for a walk, playing sport, sing a song, sewing or other calming activity that you can focus on to help you to feel calm again.

