

Helping your child to cope with change
Returning to school after lockdown

Over the last few weeks our children have experienced a huge change in their lives. The familiar routine of going to school every day changed so quickly into lockdown and now they are being expected to change again! We all adapt to change in different ways.



Your child may have settled quickly and happily into being at home and enjoyed the new learning environment. Or, your child may have struggled with the lack of structure, feeling upset at not seeing their friends and teachers every day. All children and families will have experienced these changes in different ways – there is no 'normal' or 'right' way for us to have experienced lockdown.

We all get used to things staying the same and it is reassuring to know what is happening now and what is going to happen next. Routines, structures and familiarity help us to feel calm, in control and happy in our lives. When we know what to expect we can begin to understand how we feel about things and how to adjust our behaviours and that helps us cope with life.

Change is a natural part of life. Sometimes changes are predictable and expected and at other times changes can be unexpected and unwelcome. Being able to cope with change is sometimes called resilience. It is natural for children of all ages to feel unsettled, anxious and even angry when things change and this can affect their behaviour. Practicing different ways of thinking and planning for changes to come can boost your child's ability to cope and adapt to new things and events. Here are some top tips for how to support your child to increase their level of resilience and coping with change.

Think about changes that happen all around us

Play an 'I spy' game. Go on a walk and look for things out and about that change – people in the park, buildings, the weather – talk about what was happening yesterday and what's different today. There will be natural changes you can talk about like tadpoles turning into frogs and caterpillars turning into butterflies. Reassure your child that change happens all around us and is a natural part of life.



Talk about feelings

Make a list of all the feelings words you know. Talk about how those feelings make our bodies react. Do you get dizzy when you're anxious or worried? Do you get butterflies in your tummy when you're nervous? Do you feel jumpy when you're excited? It's OK to feel negatively or cross at this stage and it's OK to talk about this. Allow time to explore lots of possible feelings and reassure your child that everyone experiences a wide range of feelings all the time and that we can learn to manage them positively and feel happy and calm again. It is OK to feel nervous and worried about some changes and excited about others.

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|  | <p>Give reassurance</p> <p>Talk about changes you have already experienced as a family, how you coped and point out the positive aspects of things that have improved. You could draw a life path or pictures of changes that have happened like the birth of a sibling, moving house or starting school. Remind you child about the good things that can happen when things change.</p> |
| <p>Get things into perspective</p> <p>Remind your child that there are big changes and small changes. Sometimes, big changes are harder to cope with but when we feel anxious, the little changes can upset us too. Even when there is a big change to cope with, there will be lots of things and people who stay the same. Make a list of all the things that will change after returning to school and what will remain the same. Give reassurance that you will still be there, drop them off and collect them at the end of the day. There will be some changes, like social distancing at school but there will be many positives too!</p> |  |
|  | <p>Try a change</p> <p>Think about something you always do exactly the same way like crossing your arms or which hand you write with – some behaviours turn into habits and these can be hard to break. Make a game of trying a change and talk about how it feels different at first - but how positive and fun it can be too.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • watch a different TV show • try a new food • put your clothes on inside out • write with your 'other' hand • walk to the park along a different route <p>How did this change feel? How long can you remember to do this? Was it difficult or easy to make this change? Some changes can be fun!</p> |
| <p>Prepare your child for change and adventure</p> <p>Imagine that you are going exploring in the jungle or on an expedition to the Arctic... What would you need to find out or prepare for to make this change? What equipment would you need to keep yourself safe? Make a list of all the things your child will need to know and find out to help them feel positive and calm about returning to school. Think of things you will need to prepare together ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school uniform • an alarm clock to get up on time • a reminder of who will be in the class and who the teacher will be • what activities your child will be able to take part in • friends your child is looking forward to seeing again • school rules, timetables, procedures ... |  |

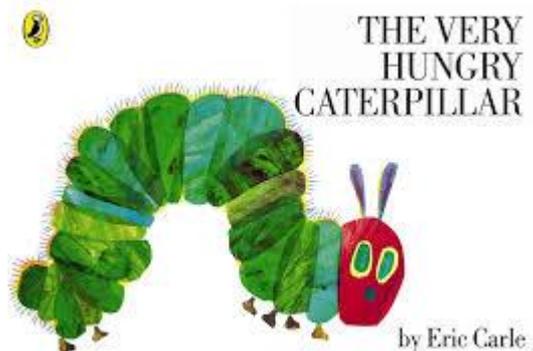
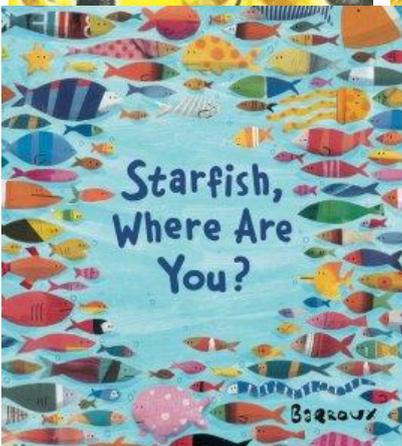
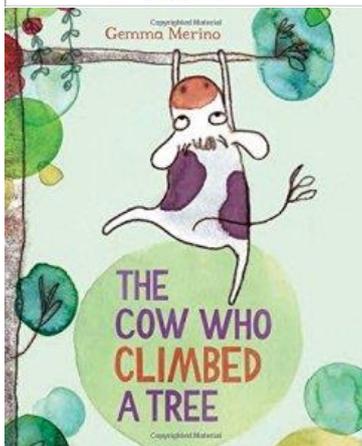
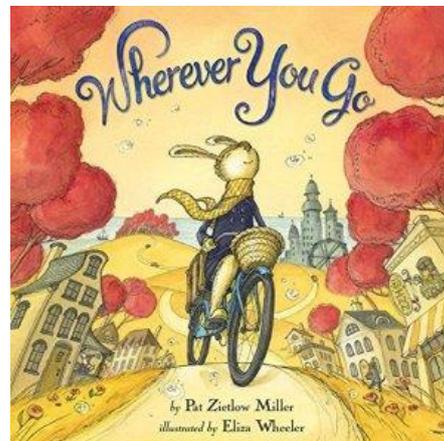
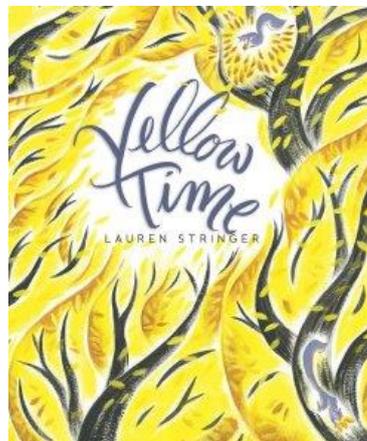
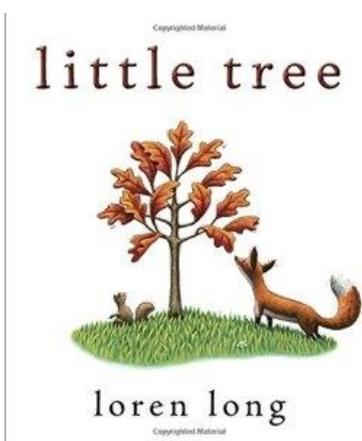


Learn to relax

Practice some stress management techniques that can help reduce anxious feelings and can be used in the future...

- learn how to do deep, relaxing breathing
- make up a silly song, rhyme or joke to distract yourself and make yourself smile
- try drawing or listening to music to relax
- make a den or special place to practice filling up with calming, positive thoughts
- use exercise or physical activity to work off any stress

Some good resources ...



<https://www.brighthorizons.com/family-resources/helping-children-deal-with-change-and-stress>

Children's Services and Skills Directorate
SEND 0-25 Service
Specialist Inclusion Support Service
Social, Emotional and Mental Health Team



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| <p>https://www.early-education.org.uk/sites/default/files/Helping%20children%20cope%20with%20change.pdf</p> | The logo for Early Education, featuring the text 'Early Education' in a blue, sans-serif font, with 'The British Association for Early Childhood Education' in a smaller font below it. |
| <p>https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/helping-children-deal-with-change</p> | The logo for Cbeebies, featuring the word 'Cbeebies' in a yellow, bubbly font with blue eyes, and the BBC logo below it. |
| <p>https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/resources/10-ways-for-parents-to-help-their-children-cope-with-change/</p> | The logo for Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families, featuring a stylized black and white symbol of three interlocking loops, with the text 'Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families' to its right. |