



HASTINGS
OPPORTUNITY
AREA



Supporting mental health and wellbeing

A series of mental health
and emotional wellbeing
top tips to support school
staff and parents

Resources for schools created by Boingboing (CIC) in partnership
with Hastings Opportunity Area

Introduction

The Hastings Opportunity Area are working in partnership with Boingboing (CYC), to provide mental health and emotional wellbeing support for schools, families, children and young people. Boingboing have released a series of mental health and emotional wellbeing top tips, to support school staff and families. In this booklet we have collated all of the top tips across the series for staff. Accompanying this booklet are individual tip sheets for parents.

Your child's mental health – some tips

Creating good family mental health

Mental health often gets talked about in terms of problems, but everyone has mental health. Sometimes our mental health is good and we feel happy, relaxed, confident and emotionally connected to others. At other times, we can feel stressed or anxious, distressed or isolated. We can develop less common issues like self-harm or challenges with eating.

So, mental health is not just something to talk about with your children when there might be a problem. When you chat about other positive things like healthy eating or getting enough exercise you can refer to activities to keep mentally healthy. This makes it seem more 'normal' and less scary to talk about when things aren't going so well.

If you develop habits that promote good mental health then you will naturally encourage these in your child. Boingboing's [Resilience Framework](#) will give you lots of ideas about what you can do to promote the whole family's mental health. We call these 'Resilient Moves'. They are very ordinary things but when times get tough we can make a conscious effort to do them because we know they promote mental health.

Why not see how you can include as many as possible into your family life? Doing these activities together mean that you are being a positive role model for your children and creating a family culture of positive mental health.

Identifying when your child might be needing extra support

It is important to notice any changes in your child. They might become more withdrawn, might be communicating less, seem less motivated, or you might notice a change in their sleep or eating patterns. This could be due to normal changes of adolescence. It could be as a result of external changes or pressures (e.g. coping with transition from primary to secondary school or one class to another, being bullied or the breakup of an important friendship). It can also be signs of your child needing extra support around their mental health. The good news is that ways of addressing these are much the same.

Find good times and places for conversations

When we feel anxious as parents, it's tempting to launch into a 'heavy', sit down conversation, but this is probably the last thing your child needs. It is much easier for someone to open up about how they are feeling when they were doing something side by side with you (playing a game, washing up, walking the dog, cooking together etc.). Try to find times and places where you won't be interrupted by the demands of others. Try and make conversations about mental health a normal part of your family life.

Listen more than talk

Try to listen and avoid jumping to conclusions based on your own experiences – they are yours, not your child's. Listening enables your child to feel that you want to understand what is going on for them. You could reflect back what you have heard to check your understanding. Avoid giving advice unless your child is actually asking for that. Remember what they most need is to know that they can talk about what they are going through safely without you over-reacting. Be comfortable with silence. Show empathy by making little affirming responses like 'that sounds really hard', 'I'm sorry it's tough for you at the moment'.

Let your child know you are asking because you care, not because you are judging them

Your children care about what you think of them, even if it doesn't always seem that way. Try to make it clear that you are asking how they are because you care about them and not as a negative response to a change in their behaviour. You can ask if they are ok and perhaps give a specific reason why you are asking (for example, 'I noticed that you seem quieter than usual' or 'I noticed that you seem reluctant to leave for school in the mornings, these days.')

Stigma around mental health can make us feel that needing support is a sign of weakness. Wait until they feel comfortable to talk, even if this is in small steps over a period of time and praise their courage for talking about their mental health. Try not to judge or show any worry as this may put them off opening up any further.

Let your child know that distress is normal

It is important to give your child the clear message that everyone will feel distressed from time to time; having positive mental health isn't about feeling happy all the time, but about being able to manage distress. At the same time, acknowledge that feeling distressed can be very painful and unpleasant.

It is important for your child to feel hopeful that difficulties can pass, and that there are positive things that can help (they can pick some Resilient Moves from the Resilient Framework). Have some time together to stay connected – even if it is just 10 minutes at a time.

Remember you are not on your own

Sometimes it is good for you as a parent to have someone to talk to, for support and another perspective. Your child's teacher or tutor could be a good person to contact. Your experiences at home might help the teacher to look out for signs that your child might be struggling at school. The school can tell you about local places offering support. Your GP can also be a good source of information and support.

At Boingboing, we are lucky that young people who have lived through challenges have taught us about how to support other young people in similar situations. On our [website](#), you can find a great [Parents' Guide](#) written by young people who have experienced mental health issues themselves. Their insight and advice are well worth reading.

Supporting your child with trauma – some tips

What is trauma

Traumatic experiences are experiences that cause us to feel powerless, scared, unsafe and shocked. This could be a single event such as a traffic accident, could be a community trauma such as a pandemic, or be an ongoing experience such as domestic violence, bullying or discrimination. If your child has experienced trauma it can impact their sleep, they might be more emotional than usual, might be angry and easily irritated, feel physically ill, be confused and forgetful, their behaviour might seem irrational and they might be jumpy or have low mood. Trauma symptoms can look and feel different for different people and what is traumatic for one person might be experienced differently by someone else. The good news is that although lots of us experience some trauma at some time in our lives most of us will be just fine without needing any specialist help. There are lots of things you can do to support your child if they have experienced trauma.

First things first – keep yourself safe and secure

Your child's trauma might very well trigger your own previous experience of traumas. In order to provide the vital support to your child, you first need to look after yourself. Maybe you can try out all these top tips for yourself? Find strategies that help you look after yourself and lean on others who can support you.

Understand what has happened

The better we understand what has happened the better we will be able to make sense of it and process it. When we make sense of the trauma our brain is more able to move it from the 'conveyor belt' part of the brain to the 'store cupboard' part of the brain – which makes it easier for us to manage. So, talking through a traumatic event and being informed can be helpful.

Stay connected

Just being there for your child, being by their side, giving gentle reassurance and showing empathy and compassion is invaluable. Enabling your child to feel safe and secure is paramount. Focus on your child's strengths and achievements and praise their bravery. Ensure that your home is as safe and calm as possible.

Understand triggers

You might find that certain smells, noises, environments, or experiences trigger your child's trauma. Together, work out what the triggers are and see if you can reduce them (for example, reducing loud sudden noises). Sometimes triggers can seem quite obscure and this might need some detective work. If it isn't realistic to reduce the trigger, just being aware of the impact it can have can be helpful in itself. Your child might also see threats that other people don't see and therefore react to this perceived threat. For example, they might get into a fight if they thought another child was threatening them.

In the moment

You might find your child has flashbacks (where the memory of the trauma pops into their head and it's hard to get it out). They might feel out of control of their emotions and behaviour, or you might see them emotionally 'disappear' (as though they have gone into their own world and they can't see or hear you). If this happens, gently help them come back into the moment, you can do this by talking gently in a soothing voice, say their name regularly and tell them repeatedly that they are safe. You could help your child re-connect by using their senses – nice things to smell, taste, feel, hear and see. Some people find mindfulness a good way to stay in the moment, but it does take a bit of practice.

Find ways to calm down

You could help your child identify what helps them self-soothe. Different things work for different people so you might have to try out a few ideas. Some ideas are – doing a focused task like a jigsaw, crossword, knitting, catching a ball, painting your nails or colouring; doing relaxing activities like having a bubble bath, blowing bubbles, slow breathing, listening to music or having a hand massage; doing active things like running, skipping, dancing or baking a cake. What other self-soothing things could your child do?

Enable control

Can you help your child feel empowered and have control in some parts of their life? Can they have more responsibility to increase their self-worth? Having a clear routine can help your child feel more in control and helps create a calm environment. They may need to write things down if they are forgetful. Being informed about trauma can also help you all feel empowered.

Teamwork

Help others understand your child's needs, so your child can feel safe and

secure in school as well as at home.

School 'refusal' or School-based anxiety—some tips

What is school refusal, emotionally based school avoidance or school-based anxiety?

School is often a source of support, learning and belonging for children and young people. Everyone has worries about school from time to time too. Sometimes though, school can become challenging or distressing over a longer period and children may begin to avoid school altogether. This is often referred to as 'school refusal', but many young people find this term unhelpful since it implies a choice. School-based anxiety might be a better term. Most school-anxious children WANT to attend school, however their anxiety is overwhelming. They care about their education, but they need understanding and support at school for their needs. Sometimes school avoidance has other influencing factors such as being worried about leaving parents (parental mental health, parental suicidal behaviour, domestic violence etc.) and we can call this emotionally based school avoidance. Children who are experiencing school anxiety may demonstrate a number of different symptoms and behaviours, including:

- Refusal to go to school in the morning, leaving or running away from school during the school day
- Tantrums and outbursts, especially in the morning
- Threats to harm themselves if they're made to go to school
- Physical symptoms like headaches or stomach aches or sleep disturbances
- Extreme clinginess - not wanting to be alone in a room

As these behaviours are mainly home-based, school may not be aware of any difficulties and so it is a good idea to communicate your concerns to a trusted member of staff.

Why does it happen?

School-based anxiety may be due to unmet Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (including physical or mental illness) bullying, academic pressure, or

even the school environment. Autistic Spectrum Conditions are noted in a high proportion of children with school-based anxiety. It affects around one per cent of children, is more common in boys, and tends to peak between ages 5 and 6, and 11 and 12 (which are important transition times). Following the impact of COVID-19 and the national lockdowns there may be additional issues, for instance, worries about safety in school, bereavement, concern about vulnerable adults at home and difficulties transitioning back to school. Some pupils may have found the quieter learning environment at home better for their mental health.

What can you do?

It is important to work with the school, keep them informed and discuss possible strategies together. A positive approach would be for the school to work in partnership with you, give you information and support, and ensure that you and your child participate as fully as possible in decisions. The views, wishes and feelings of you and your child should always be central to any decision making.

Be kind to yourself

School-based anxiety can be really difficult for parents and carers who sometimes feel they are 'failing'. The whole family can be affected both on a practical or emotional level. It can have a major impact on parents who are working and on brothers and sisters. It can also be very upsetting to see your child so distressed. Remember you are not alone and try to draw on your support networks for emotional support.

Responding early is a key to making successful changes. Good communication is vital, and it might be helpful to meet with everyone involved at school, for instance, the form teacher, SENDCO, TA, senior leader, or trusted staff member, to identify the difficulties. You may all decide to assess your child for particular educational needs.

Talk to the young person

Actively listen to your child as soon as problems arise. Acknowledge what they are feeling and tell them that feelings of anxiety or concern are normal. After validating their feelings, try to make a plan to help them deal with anxious feelings about school. Together you can try to identify the focus of their concern and the triggers for their anxiety. See if you can think of strategies at home or at school that can support them when they face these

triggers. At the same time try to avoid allowing them to stay at home, which will reinforce the power of their fears. Once they have stopped going into school it will be harder. You can also help your child to use self-soothing strategies such as breathing or counting, which they can use when their anxiety begins to overwhelm them. At home and school, you can use positive praise and reward, be sure to validate the effort they are making – try to notice the small steps where you can. Work with the school and your child to identify a member of staff to be available to check-in, chat or clearly hold them in mind. This does not need to be a teacher; admin or premises staff might volunteer for the role – whoever the young person feels comfortable with. The school should also work with the child to respond to any concerns about bullies or friendships. Ensure children know who is supporting them and where to go if they need help.

Flexibility and management of effective detail

Flexibility in routines, breaks or start and finish times can help a child stay in school. It's also important to manage the details of plans that are put in place. Break tasks at home or school into small steps to increase a child's confidence and decrease how much support they have at each stage. After some time, they should feel comfortable with that part of the process. Then you can look at working towards the next goal. Attending a new nurture group or counselling can be daunting, so ask the school to explain exactly what will happen and where, and possibly allow a friend to take them. Ask the school to make it clear when they can meet their trusted adult – they may need to be met as they arrive in school. If they are anxious about people at home, discuss strategies with the school to manage these concerns such as setting out ways that a child can contact home during the school day or systems for relaying messages from home.

Anticipating Difficulties

Work with everyone to anticipate difficulties. This might be at transitions such as changing teacher, changing school or even when there is a cover teacher. There may also be issues around exams or school trips. Your child can be prepared and equipped for what to do if they begin to feel anxious in school.

Communication

Good communication between home and school is really important. You may need to provide some clear information about your young person and ask for this to be circulated among all staff who work with them. This will enable staff to make adjustments based on what might trigger your young person's

anxiety. Sometimes, for instance, a child manages to arrive in school only to be chastised for missing equipment or a uniform issue rather than receiving a warm welcome. Ask if school staff are trained to recognise panic attacks or anxiety, especially with quiet children who rarely claim attention. If the school don't know the full story, they won't be able to offer fully informed support.

Safe spaces

Work with the school and your child to arrange a space for them to sit away from the hustle of school life where they are not witnessed by peers in a state of anxiety. This could be sitting next to the receptionist or with a school nurse for ten minutes.

Supporting your child with anxiety – some tips

What is anxiety?

Anxiety is another word for stress and it's important to remember that we all feel stressed sometimes. Stress can be a very normal emotion when we are faced with a difficult situation and it can have an important job to do. An example of this is the current Covid-19 pandemic – our stress makes us take action to keep ourselves safe. However, sometimes our stress can feel overwhelming, we might continue to feel stressed once the situation has gone, or our level of stress feels out of proportion with the actual situation. This is when we might benefit from finding ways to manage anxiety.

What happens when we get anxious?

This is how we think it works: First, we have a situation or an experience that is the trigger (for example, a dog barks). How we think about this event (we might think 'this dog is going to bite me') impacts how we feel (scared) which, in turn, influences what we do (run away). If this goes round in a cycle and the fear gets bigger and bigger (for example, we begin to think all dogs are dangerous) the anxiety may interfere with our behaviour (we might stop going out). Changing the original thought ('I am safe, this dog is just very noisy') could lead to a different feeling (not scared) and a different action (ignore the dog).

Can we reduce the triggers?

Some young people face lots of different stressful situations or experiences, such as discrimination, financial stress, bullying, academic pressure, domestic violence, health, housing etc. Research tells us that those of us who face greater challenges can often experience more anxiety. Try and understand what is causing your child's anxiety and whether any stressors can be removed. For example, it might be possible to reduce academic pressure or change unhealthy friendship groups. Sometimes, however, these anxiety-causing situations might be beyond our control, such as financial stresses or poor housing, but it still might be helpful to understand your child's anxiety in this context, rather than as a personal weakness.

Fight, flight or freeze

Anxiety can show itself in different ways and you might find it useful to identify the different behaviours your child displays when they are anxious. They might go into fight mode – so they might be aggressive, argumentative and confrontational. Or they might go into flight mode – they might run away, avoid school, reduce contact with friends, keep the bad thoughts away by doing repetitive things like checking, hoarding, repeating etc. Or they might freeze – not be able to do anything, stay in bed and not be able to concentrate or communicate. Your child might have all of these responses at different times (or even at the same time). Try to understand the anxiety behind the behaviour – what is causing the behaviour?

You are a superhero

Parents and carers make the best therapists, and you are often in an ideal position to support your child to manage their anxiety. Here are some ideas of things you might find useful: try to create a calm, safe and nurturing environment; discuss how normal it is to have anxiety at times; talk about and model how you manage your own anxiety; show empathy, patience and acceptance; give your valuable time to be with them; listen more than talk; catch their successes – put those positivity glasses on; understand that some things might be very challenging for your child and give lots of praise for bravery. Remember, your role is really important and you have to look after yourself to keep your superpowers working.

Information is power

When we understand anxiety it becomes less scary, so read all about it. There are lots of useful websites with helpful information (i.e. www.youngminds.org.uk). Help your child understand their anxiety: identifying what causes it, what their negative thoughts are, where they feel it in their body, what's keeping the anxiety going. You could give your child's anxiety a silly name to make it less frightening and draw what it looks like with them.

One small step at a time

We can often avoid things that make us anxious, but avoidance allows the anxiety to grow bigger and bigger. Try to support your child to slowly and safely re-introduce what they are avoiding (they might be avoiding school, shops, public transport etc.). Break the challenge down into very small steps, allowing your child to stay in control of the pace and the plans. If the challenge is too great, make the steps even smaller and don't forget to praise bravery and every achievement, no matter how small.

Coping skills

It can generate anxiety to push ourselves outside of our comfort zone, so try and help your child use lots of self-soothing and relaxation strategies. Your child might find it useful to practice their self-soothing strategies often, so they really have perfected these techniques for when they need them. Remember, it is much easier to stay calm than to try to calm down after anxiety has got a grip. Different self-soothing strategies work for different people, so work out what works for you and your child – here are some ideas: bubble bath, music, colouring, puzzle book, reading, YouTube, mindfulness, fresh air and exercise, baking a cake, breathing exercises, blowing bubbles, knitting, jigsaws, going to a safe place in your head, imagining a good day, counting, tapping, writing, dancing, positive self-talk, doing your nails, reading, having cuddles. Some children like to have a self-soothe box – like an old shoebox – which they fill with items to help them stay calm, for instance, family photos, chocolate, a squishy, puzzle book, letters etc. What else helps you and your child stay calm and relaxed?

Teamwork is dreamwork

It is important for everyone to work as a team to support your child, including school, co-parents, support services, extended family etc. Remember that conflict in the team can increase your child's anxiety (and yours!). As the captain of the team, you might have some work to do to ensure that there is good communication, mutual respect, a shared understanding of your child's needs and an agreed aim and plan. Don't forget that your child is the main player in the team and try to include them as much as possible. Being captain of your child's team might be a very challenging role so don't forget to look after yourself and regularly use your own self-soothing strategies.

Always have hope

If anxiety gets a grip in your family it may feel very daunting and finding ways to manage the anxiety might seem like a big mountain to climb. Learning how to manage anxiety might be a more achievable goal than abolishing it from your home completely. These hints and tips take a little bit of time and perseverance to get right, but change can always be made and sometimes just a little change can make a big difference. Always have hope.

Supporting a child with low mood – some tips

What is low mood and depression?

Sometimes we can feel sad, tearful or emotional for no apparent reason. Please don't worry, we can all have these ups and downs, and you might find that they just come and go. Sometimes, we might feel really sad because of certain things going on in our lives, such as loss and grief, feeling lonely or bored, discrimination, or previous bad experiences. Some young people feel sad, lonely, down, anxious or stressed for longer periods of time, to the extent that it can affect everyday life, and this can prevent them from doing things they would

normally do. This is known as low mood or if it becomes severe, it can be called depression.

What might we notice if our child has low mood?

The main clue to recognising if your child has a low mood is a change in their behaviour. You might notice that they have lost some of their confidence and self-esteem, you might see a change in appetite (either eating more or less than usual), a change in sleep patterns (either sleeping more or less), they might lose interest in activities they used to enjoy, might be unusually worried or stressed. They might have less energy, be more forgetful, more tearful, sad or angry than usual. They might be less enthusiastic about their future and feel helpless. You might also notice an increase in behaviour that is a bit risky, or self-harm. Now, just something to bear in mind – your teenager will also be going through some major hormonal changes, which can cause very similar symptoms to these. These Top Tips to support your child can hopefully be helpful whether these behaviour changes are due to hormones or mental health (or both).

Back to basics?

It is easy to forget how effective some of the basics can be; drinking lots of water and eating a healthy diet (with lots of fruit and vegetables, beans, eggs etc.) are really good mood remedies. Cutting down on eating food with high sugar and high fat content will help reduce those mood dips.

Exercise and fresh air

When we are feeling low, we often lack the motivation to get our coat on and go for a walk, but if we manage to push ourselves into getting regular fresh air and exercise it can really lift our mood. Try encouraging your child to take the dog for a walk with you or go to the park. Research shows that being close to nature, such as a park, water or trees is really good for positive mental health. When you are outside in nature, try to help your child notice the things around them – the smell of the grass, the noise of the leaves on the trees or the sound of the water. Noticing our environment helps us stay in the present and can be really beneficial for our mental health.

Stay connected

When we are feeling low, we might be tempted to withdraw from those around us. Encourage your child to keep socially connected with friends either through social media or face to face. You might find your teenager will prefer their own company rather than spending time with family, so try to grab the small windows of opportunity for social connection where you can - a small compliment, a hug or watching TV together are all good ways to stay connected. If you are away at work all day, try to have a regular time to eat or have a snack together. Having a laugh can often be a great medicine for low mood, so try to create some family fun time together where you can.

One step at a time

Your child might lack energy and be struggling to be motivated. When we feel tired and unmotivated, we might be tempted to stay under the duvet, which can often breed increased lethargy and lack of motivation. Try and agree with your child that PJ days and TV binge watching days are best reserved as 'one offs' (and can be more enjoyable when we only do them every now and again), and encourage a daily routine of getting out of bed, getting dressed etc. You could try supporting your child to set small daily tasks and goals. Achieving these goals can give a sense of achievement and help build confidence and self-esteem, which can then increase motivation and energy levels.

Confidence building

Your child may feel they have grown out of activities that they previously enjoyed but not feel confident in trying anything new. They might feel intimidated by peers, feel that everyone else is having a great time except them (which can often be the message portrayed on social media), have increasing self-doubt and feel self-conscious. Often negative self-talk (where we tell ourselves that we aren't very good) creeps in and adds to low mood even more. You could encourage your child to combat this by suggesting they try positive self-talk

or affirmations, such as telling themselves that they can do this, they are great, they are confident etc. Try and find opportunities where your child can feel a sense of achievement and help them celebrate their successes (no matter how small). Finding a sense of purpose can be very useful in challenging feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Feeling valued and feeling like they add value is a great way to improve your child's confidence and self-esteem. Is there anything they enjoy that they could take responsibility for? Can they do voluntary work or be part of a community project or team?

Cup half full or half empty?

You might find that your child has a negative perspective of the world where they only notice the negative things in their life and don't see the positive things they have. Try not to dismiss their 'cup half empty' perspective but you could try and pepper this perspective with some 'cup half full' thoughts. For example, you could suggest your child writes a gratitude diary every day where they identify 3 good things that have

happened that day. Another way to introduce positive thinking is to gently highlight the positives, encourage your child to put positivity glasses on and use language that is hopeful.

And relax...

There's a difference between feeling unmotivated and relaxing – relaxing is a positive action that needs a bit of planning and preparation. Together you could think about what helps your child feel relaxed or comforted

– it might be looking at family photos, listening to music, drawing, meditation or mindfulness, having a pamper night, talking to friends, being creative or doing an activity that keeps the brain ticking over, like a puzzle, reading a book

or writing a journal.

And finally

You might become increasingly concerned about your child's low mood - maybe they are deliberately hurting themselves (have you seen any recent scars or marks?), or they are engaging in activities that are risky (maybe involving alcohol or drugs). Maybe they are having thoughts about seriously harming themselves, or their low mood is getting more severe. If so, now is the time to reach out and access more support. You can go to your GP, speak to your child's school, or contact your local CAMHS service. If you think your child is in any immediate danger you can go to your local A+E. There is help and support available, don't be afraid to use it.

Helping your child manage change – some tips

Dealing with change

Change can be difficult for any of us to deal with. It can make us distressed and anxious. Most children have less experience of change than adults and they may need extra support to manage it. Changing schools or moving to a new house are common examples. Fortunately, there are some useful things you can do to support your child through change.

Help your child get to know where and what they are going into

Change often means moving from something comfortable and familiar to something unknown, but you can make this easier by finding ways for your child to practise thinking about what the change will involve and becoming more comfortable with it.

If the change is going to a new school for example, you can look at photos of the school, talk about what might be different and what might be the same as the school before. If the school offers the chance to visit before the new start date then that's a great thing to do. If not, you can practise taking the journey from your home to the school together. If you can find a way to end that trip with a treat then this can help your child develop positive associations with that journey, which can help to reduce any anxious feelings. You can do the same things when moving to a new house. Use your imagination to think of fun ways to do this.

Help your child connect with others

These days there are often local social media groups of parents. If you are moving to a new house there may be a group that covers the area you are moving to. Similarly, with a change to a new school, you can try to find social media groups of school parents. Ask the new school about this. Here you may find out about get togethers

where your child and yourself can meet other children and their parents in the same situation and make new friends.

Look out for the positives in the change and seek out the fun!

Think for yourself about any ways you can highlight the fun aspects of the change. Perhaps there is a playground nearby to the new school or home that you can visit. You can talk about how much fun you can have visiting it regularly once the change has happened.

Keep listening

Listening carefully to your child is important at any time and especially when you are helping them to manage a big change. It's important because it will help you to know if your child is anxious about it and, if they are, what it is they are anxious about. You can encourage them to talk about how they feel about the change if they

want to. This will allow them to express their own fears and gives you an opportunity to show them that those feelings are a natural part of going through change and that you understand them.

Don't create unnecessary fear or drama

On the other hand, it's also important to avoid making things seem more dramatic than they are because this can make your child's anxiety worse. Children often take the lead from their parents in terms of how they react to a situation, so showing your child that you feel confident that everything will work out fine is just as

important as allowing them to talk about their concerns. It is a tricky balance, but it is possible to show you understand their concerns but also that you believe that the change is exciting and will bring about good things. Doing some of the practical things talked about above (making new friends and helping your child become familiar with what they are moving onto) will reinforce this.

Remember the basics

You can also help by remembering to keep basic routines and healthy habits going in your family. Getting enough sleep and eating healthily have been shown in research to help to reduce anxiety. Try to keep to a consistent bedtime routine for your child. Avoid conflict situations as much as possible before bedtime. You could

find some story books about children going through change where everything

works out well and read these at bedtime. Try to keep mealtimes consistent and with good healthy food as much as possible. If it is the summer holidays before your child moves to a new school, it is easy to become very relaxed but remember that some routine is good for all of us. Knowing what to expect and when can help us to feel more in control, especially at times that are confusing and uncertain. Staying patient and calm with your child if they struggle with this at first is important. They need to feel that you are on their side.

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