

Young People and Transition

What does transition mean?

Transition simply means change from one thing to another. Within this hand out we are talking about the transition from primary school to secondary school (or sometimes it's called high school).

Change can cause worries to everyone. Adults worry when they are changing their job or if there are roadworks and they have to change their route to work. Worry is normal!

Change is much easier for everyone to cope with if that is the only thing they have going on. But for young people moving to secondary school they may also have friendship changes, hormonal changes and changes in their brain- that's a lot to cope with!!

What's changing and why?

Hormones: Hormones affect young people's moods, their body and their impulses. Therefore you could find yourself feeling more frustrated or cross. You may find that things you used to enjoy you are not bothered about doing anymore. They cause changes to the body which makes you feel like you should be able to do things which adults do and not being able to can be annoying. You may find yourself wanting to take more risks and act on impulse rather than thinking things through. Being aware of this will make you think more and consider consequences

The Brain: Changes in the brain can help you with decision making you start to look at other situations where you have felt similar and what the outcome was. The brain begins to get rid of pathways that a person does not use, so spend your time around positive people who can see and complement your good qualities and skills.

Friendships: At this age friends become more and more important and suddenly you find yourself feeling that the approval of your friends is more important than the approval of adults. This can often cause young people to get into trouble, try to maintain your own decision making and consider the type of friendship you want to be part of.

What is anxiety/worry?

Anxiety or worry is a normal emotion and it is absolutely normal to feel this in certain situations.

All body's respond the same way to fear and this is something called the 'fight or flight' effect.

Worry can start some changes within the body system and this dates back years and years. An example would be when cavemen were out hunting and they were approached by a bear. The first emotion they would feel would be worry or fear. When this is felt within the body the brain tells the body to prepare to fight or run away. So the heart rate increases to pump more oxygen to the muscles, because muscles need this, less is sent to the digestive system which is why we can feel tummy ache or feel sick. The increase in our heart rate can make us feel hot and the hormones released can make us feel shaky.

Think of a situation where you have felt fear or worry. Perhaps you were taking part in an important sports match or dance competition or taking test. Think about what you felt in your body and what you did. Was it any of these?

Fast heart beat	Overthinking- thinking about the same thing a lot
Sweating- sometimes feeling hot or cold	Memory loss- sometimes you can't remember what has been said because you were concentrating on your worry
Chest pain- you might feel as though you can't breathe	Need for control- liking to know the exact plans and times
Pacing- walking around	Avoidance- not doing things which cause you worry
Hand wringing- or clenching and un clenching your fists	Irritability- feeling cross or frustrated more easily
Headaches	Needing lots of reassurance- asking others if they think you will be OK
Stomach issues- having tummy ache or feeling sick	Panic attacks
Insomnia- not being able to sleep	
Fear of being alone- needing to be around people who you feel safe with	

What can I do to distract myself from my worries?

Distraction – this differs for each young person, it could be reading, watching something of interest, colouring, going for a walk, ringing someone for a chat.

Worry box – this can be an empty tissue box; a young person could write their worries and then post the worry into the box. For some young people they would feel it has gone once it has been posted, other young people may want an adult to read the worries and discuss them.

Times for worry – set aside a time each day when you can talk about anything you are worried about

Breathing exercises – these can be found on apps such as Calm or Headspace and often include breathing in and out for certain counts.

Mindfulness – this is beneficial for any young person, it can include listening to music or guided stories. Again the apps Calm and Headspace have lots of mindfulness activities.

Exercise – the endorphins released are good for raising the mood and reducing anxiety.

Preparation – run through the first few days, what to expect, how you will travel etc.

Reassurance – be positive about the change and spend time reassuring yourself that the change is good.

Let's look at some of the main worries young people have about moving to secondary school:

Will I be in the same form as my friends?

Even if you are not in the same form as your friend, don't worry because not long is spent in form time. You will still see the people you know on break and lunch times.

People in your form are not always in your lessons; they may be a different group of people.

Will I make friends?

So many people are in the same situation. Think about other times when you have not known anyone but made friends. For example, if you have been on holiday and then made friends around the pool or in the club bar.

Because lots of other people will be feeling like you everyone will be looking to make new friends.

Will I get along with my teachers?

The majority of teachers will have taught a year 7 cohort before and now that young people are often worried about many things therefore they will try their best to make you feel at ease.

Will I be able to find my way around the school?

Again a lot of people will be in this situation and the schools know this, so they usually have more corridor patrols on to be able to direct students to where they need to be going.

Also the lesson teachers expect some pupils to be arriving late so they are not as strict with this.

Will I get lots of homework?

There will be homework but this will be introduced gradually and it is good to get yourself into a routine from the beginning by setting certain times in the evening and possibly at the weekend to complete set work.

Will I be able to work at the standard of secondary school work?

Young people work at different levels and the secondary school take this into account when placing people in class groups. Secondary schools have lots of resources to provide help to those who feel they may need more support.

Will I be bullied by older and bigger children?

This is one of the main worries year 6 students have.

Every secondary school has a policy to deal with any bullying as soon as it arises. New students will also know which teacher to go to if they feel that they are being bullied.

How will I get to school?

Talk about this in the weeks leading up to September.

Will parents or carers be taking you? Will you be walking? Will you be catching the bus?

What if I forget things which are needed?

This will usually happen to us at least once but there are things we can do to help us remember.

Make yourself a checklist of what needs to be packed into your bag each day and use it when you pack your school things. Be as inventive as you like, some people will write a list, others may draw pictures or print and cut out things from the internet.

Keep things in the same place so that they can be found easily.

When you get in from school in the afternoon unpack your bag and put everything in the place you have decided to keep them.

Consider having a spare of things with you in case you lose them- such as black pens, purple pens etc.

How can I relax?

It is important, at times of change and worry that we look after our physical and emotional health.

Exercise is key to maintaining our physical health- do what you enjoy!! This could be football, bike riding, gymnastics, dance, trampolining or even walking. Find something which works for you.

Nutrition is also important to fuel the body. People should be eating a varied diet which incorporates fruit and vegetables.

Hydration is important for all the organs to function at their best.

Mindfulness is being present in the here and now; it is very good for anxiety and is easily accessible. Music can be found on you tube, apps such as Calm and Headspace could be downloaded; these have guided meditations within them.

Music is something which many people find a good distraction from their worries, what would you listen to?

Good luck at your secondary school- after a couple of weeks you will wonder what your worry was about!!!!
Go out there and be your amazing self!!!