



RECONNECTING

A Back To School Guide For Young People



Help to Prepare You for Going Back to School
After Lockdown
A Guide for Young People

Where has all the time gone????

As we come through the next phase of lockdown and prepare for heading back to school you may be filled with a heady mix of excitement, relief, stress and nerves. Getting back to new routines, early starts, adjusting to the new normal in school, whatever that may look like, and coping with all the changes can be a lot to get your head around.

As well as getting used to possible changes to timetable and your first pieces of homework, you'll be in a socially-distanced classroom, with queues to get in, tape markers on the floor and a new set of rules to learn.

- Every school will have a slightly different structure, but the focus will be on making the environment as clean and safe as possible for everyone
- Schools will ask students to wear masks in communal areas and possibly also in classrooms (unless you are exempt)
- Schools will be going back to the bubble system, separating students and staff into bubble groups, to avoid the spreading of germs.
- Teachers and staff will also be wearing masks
- There will be regular testing two or three times a week to keep you safe and make sure you don't have coronavirus.

How are you feeling about going back?

Many of you will be excited to see your friends and be back in class again, but you may also feel a bit anxious and uncertain. It's not easy and there are lots of things to adjust to, but remember you're not alone in dealing with all this change.

A few tips to help prepare you emotionally for going back into the classroom again

It's good to talk

Covid-19 has affected us all in different ways and it's important to remember that if you're feeling anxious or worried, opening up about how you're feeling and what you've experienced, good or bad, can be a really helpful step in recognising that things are different and also finding new ways of managing.

Whether it's with friends, family or trusted teacher, allowing yourself to share your thoughts with others rather than bottling things up will help you to make sense of things. Ask any questions you may have – no one will mind explaining things to you.



Go easy on yourself

If a friend was going through a difficult time and needed support, think about how you would treat them and then do the same for yourself. Sometimes it's much easier to cut other people some slack than ourselves. Remember it's ok not to feel ok; we're all human and you deserve some TLC too.



One size doesn't fit all

It's important to remember that there's no right way of doing things. What's helpful for your friends may not necessarily work for you so take some time to think about your own situation and coping. Try not to put pressure on yourself to conform to something that doesn't feel right - do what feels best for you.



Self-control can be over rated!

With so many things out of our control right now, it's important to feel we have some sense of control over our lives. However, sometimes our sense of control can actually be worse if we tighten the reins too much. Control what you can, let go of what you can't and accept there will be some uncertainty as we adjust to a new normal.



Click here



A positive mindset can move mountains!

Keeping a positive mindset in the midst of a pandemic is easier said than done, but thinking positively can help us be deal with problems more effectively. Holding onto the belief that things will be ok will not only help you feel better, it will also encourage more positive behaviours. This will increase your confidence and self esteem and improve your overall health and wellbeing.



Negatives can become positives!

The pandemic has certainly been a real challenge for everyone. However, even when things are hopeless, we can often find strength and new directions if we think creatively. Maybe you've spent more time with your family, reconnected with a friend, learned a new hobby as a result of Covid-19. If you look for the positives you'll find them.



Perspective is key

During these uncertain times, maintaining a sense of perspective can be really important. The more we are surrounded by chaos and fear, the easier it is to lose perspective and think about everything negatively. Focusing on the things that are going well and the things that you can control will help you feel more balanced and make you feel better.



Hold on to your healthy habits

Covid-19 has likely brought many changes in the way you eat, exercise and socialise as meeting up with friends, eating out and playing sport were severely restricted. Now is the time to start picking these up in line with changing guidelines. Whether it's going out with friends, visiting relatives, getting back to training or joining a sports club, all will help improve your health and wellbeing and make you feel good.



Back to Basics

More Practical Tips for Going Back to School

You've been off school for quite a long time now and lockdown has become the new norm but now's the time for change - government has decided that it's now safe to go back. Change can be hard but we can do our best to prepare. Here are a few more ideas to help prepare you for your first day back:

- Get back into some sense of routine
- Try your school uniform on



Make a list of everything you need
for your first day:

Remind yourself of your timetable - what was your favourite lesson?



Remind yourself of 5 simple things you have done at school in the past

1

4

2

5

3

Contact your friends, what are they doing to prepare? Have they got any more ideas or could you share yours?



TOP TIPS

Take one day at a time, think about your first day in achievable steps.



- 1) Get up on time
- 2) Get ready for school
- 3) Get to school
- 4) Registration
- 5) Morning classes
- 6) Lunchtime
- 7) Afternoon classes
- 8) Home

Close your eyes and imagine that you have finished your first day. How do you feel?

Negative Automatic Thoughts

Sometimes our thoughts can be negative, I can't do it. Take some time to think of alternative thoughts which may be more helpful.

Negative Automatic thoughts	Alternative thoughts
Example: I'm worried about catching Covid	The government have said it is safe to go back to school as long as we keep to the social distancing rules
Example: I don't want to go to school because it's boring	I like some classes in school

**Now make a plan of the steps you need to take
as you prepare for going back to school**



I am going to:



Further Guidance and Wider Supports

Help and Advice for Young People in Northern Ireland Website

We hope you found this guide helpful and understand you all have come through a very difficult time over the past year.

If you would like more targeted support and advice there are a range of services dedicated to young people across NI. These range from:

- guidance on staying safe online, bullying
- support for anxiety and depression
- bereavement services where you can learn from other young people how to cope with grief and feel less alone
- drug and alcohol intervention services for young people and support also for young people whose family member may have addiction problems
- , confidential sexual health advice
- drop-in facilities offering a safe and relaxing space for young people who find themselves in crisis or need mental health support.

All support services are listed in the Young People NI website, a collaboration of ANNI (Adolescent Network NI) group. Please note this website does not provide medical advice in its own right. Should you be experiencing an acute mental health episode or crisis please consider contacting Lifeline, your GP/GP out-of hours or, if it is life threatening, contacting 999



Further information about coronavirus and how it is affecting education settings in NI can be found here .

Click here



