

Back To School

By Ola Ajala and Sam Parker

Keeping Well NCL

Who we are

- Debbie Bell: Assistant Psychologist and Competitive Powerlifter
- Ola Ajala: Systemic Family Therapist, Psychiatric Nurse and mother of 2 boys
- Sam Parker: Systemic Family Therapist and father of twin boys

Aims and Objectives

- Consider what the experience of returning to school might be for families given the challenges of the past year`
- Consider how we can balance our roles and responsibilities
- Provide a space for reflection and exploration
- Offer advice and guidance on how to better navigate this time

Introduction

- COVID-19 has caused huge disruptions and changes to our lives
- There is no right way to manage the challenges
- How do we ‘return to normal’ despite COVID-19 remaining present in our lives?
- Families may have various worries about their children returning to school; for those with additional needs, the challenges may be exacerbated

- Discussion

- What are some of your challenges or concerns regarding the return to school?

What are some of the challenges?

- Loss and bereavement
- Challenging experiences at home
- Uncertainty
- Transitions
- Friendships and bullying
- Feeling safer at home

• Discussion:

- How are you managing to balance your different roles and responsibilities?
 - What have you found helpful and unhelpful?
- Discuss in break out rooms for 10mins
- you'll have the option to feedback some of the themes of your discussion to larger group



• Compassion Fatigue / Burn out

Mental fatigue /
Emotional exhaustion

Negative feelings and
perceptions about the
people we care for

Decreased feelings of
personal accomplishment

- (1) Having idealised values of ourselves & what we can achieve
- (2) Accepting high workload & not wanting to let the side down or appear weak by saying no
- (3) Accepting high responsibility for change
- (4) Doubling efforts to get through it, working longer
- (5) Avoiding work or tasks
- (6) Keeping quiet, not wanting to burden colleagues

- (1) Having reasonable expectations of ourselves & being accepting of our vulnerabilities
- (2) Setting boundaries and being clear about what we can and what we can't do
- (3) Accepting that we are one part of the system and do what we can
- (4) Creating space and taking breaks, increasing boundaries
- (5) Naming it and getting support
- (6) Talking with colleagues and supporting each other

Look after yourself

- To best support your families, it is also important that you take care of your own wellbeing
- Do something for yourself
- Keep up with the basics
- Find small moments to yourself
- Reframe unhelpful thoughts
- Share how you're feeling with people you trust
- Spending quality time with friends or family
- Share how you're feeling with your manager
- Keep things in perspective
- Approach others with kindness and an open mind
- Note things you're grateful for/ Focus on strengths and positives as v
- Model that it's ok not to be ok all of the time



• How do we create opportunities for communication ?

- Children will benefit from space to talk through their feelings & experiences about school (pressures, changes to routines, worries, etc)
- Parents are not always best positioned to be able to do this but we can make space for this in our relationship

Equation for change

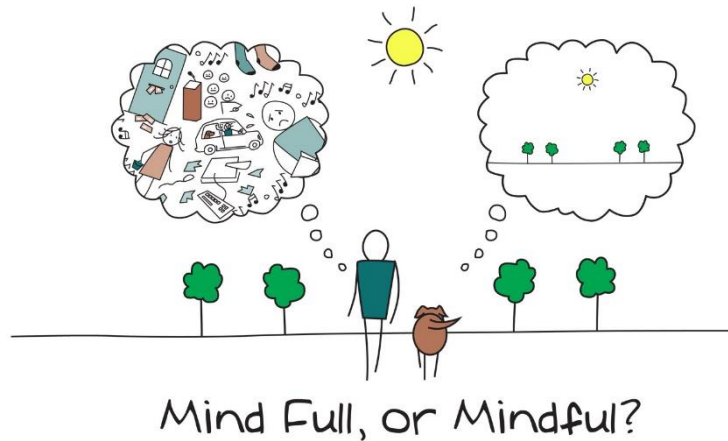
Commitment to experimenting with difference + Repetition + Time = Change

- Establishing routines that provide time to talk (walks, mealtimes, etc)
- Staying curious
- Consider the environment/time/ appropriateness
- Using active listening, validation, emotion coaching
- Looking at it from child's point of view, what might they be experiencing?
- Structuring conversations
- Using play
- Using a light touch
- You do not have to have all the answers



• Using the present moment:

- How being mindful of the present moment might be useful for us to change gear, unhook from judgements & look at things with fresh eyes



Don't dismiss concerning behaviour:

We shouldn't ignore signs that something more serious may be going on. Some signs that you should seek additional mental health support for a young person might include the following:

- A significant change in mood
- A significant change in weight
- Tiredness/lethargy
- Anger
- Secretive behavior
- Self-harming behavior

Other things to try

- Encourage children to write their worries down
- Encourage children to think about someone or a place that makes them feel safe when anxious
- Encourage children to notice their senses when anxious
- Introduce a “worry jar”
- Be creative

Get support

Do not hesitate to get urgent support if you think either you or young person you look after, needs it

- **Young Minds'** parents helpline offers free, confidential advice via phone, email or webchat:
0808 802 5544 from 9:30am - 4pm, Monday – Friday
<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-helpline-and-webchat/>
- **NHS website** has plenty of information for parents and carers:
<https://www.nhs.uk/search/results?q=parents&page=0>
- **Action for Children** has lots of tips to help you spot signs of mental health issues in children and advice:
<https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/>
- **Time to Change** also has useful information about going back to school during coronavirus:
<https://www.time-to-change.org.uk/>

Get Support cont.

- **Mencap** has a free Learning Disability Helpline you can contact for help or guidance:
<https://www.mencap.org.uk/>
- **Ambitious About Autism** has lots of advice and resources around what to expect when returning to school or college:
<https://www.ambitiousaboutautism.org.uk/>
- **Scope, the Mental Health Foundation and Autistica** all have excellent resources and support for parents or carers of children with physical needs, learning disabilities or autism
<https://www.scope.org.uk/>
<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>
<https://www.autistica.org.uk/>
- **The National Autistic Society:**
<https://www.autism.org.uk/>

Additional resources

- **Young Minds** have a piece which addresses loss and grief specifically from a young person's perspective:
<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/my-feelings/grief-and-loss/>
- **Cruse Bereavement Care** have a range of resources that may be helpful for supporting young people who have been bereaved:
<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-parents>
- **The Royal College of Pediatrics' and Child Health** have guidance on supporting children and young people living with a range of health conditions:
<https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/>
- **Anna Freud Centre and Mentally Healthy Schools** website have more information and access resources to support young people during transitions:
<https://www.annafreud.org/>
<https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/>
- **Early Years: Sesame Street** have some useful videos and resources for younger children about health emergencies and dealing with worries:
<https://www.youtube.com/show/SC9IEJfpPyn0jm4yC95DLJew?season=40&sbp=CgI0MA%253D%253D>
- **Axel Scheffler's book** is a great book for primary school kids about covid:
https://nosycrowcoronavirus.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Coronavirus_PDF_UpdateV3.pdf
- **Young Scot** have a wide range of articles for young people about coronavirus, including clear explanations of the situation and "jargon busters" of some important terms:
<https://young.scot/>

Additional Resources cont.

- **Mindful Music** have some songs on their website for younger children that you can use when talking about worries:
<https://www.mindfulmusic.london/>
- **Family Links** have helpful resources:
<https://www.familylinks.org.uk/>
- **Student Space**:
<https://studentspace.org.uk/support-services>
- **The Mix**: Returning to university or college after lockdown
<https://www.themix.org.uk/work-and-study/student-life/what-will-student-life-be-like-this-year-37764.html>
- **The Mix**: Get support via a helpline or online chat:
Free helpline on 0808 808 4994, open 3pm-midnight
<https://www.themix.org.uk/get-support/speak-to-our-team>
- **Student Minds**: Support for me
<https://www.studentminds.org.uk/supportforme.html>
- **Young Minds**: Looking after yourself at uni
<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/coping-with-life/looking-after-yourself-at-uni/>

Please take a few minutes to complete our feedback survey:



We are always looking for ways to improve how we help people, please let us know your thoughts using the link below. It will take less than five minutes to complete!

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/1GP3AI/>

Thank you!

Get in touch:

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