

Help your child to settle back into school with confidence using positive self-talk

When children experience a strong emotion such as worry, often there is an underlying thought (self-talk) accompanying this emotion which intensifies how they are feeling.

When self-talk is negative, children can become anxious more easily.

Teach children to use positive self-talk (helpful thoughts) to calm their emotions. Brainstorm positive self-talk statements that children can use when faced with difficult scenarios.

Examples of positive self-talk (helpful thoughts) include:

"I can calm down"

"I can do this"

"Take a deep breath and say hello to someone new"



Encourage your child to use self-calming and relaxation strategies to strengthen their skills to manage difficult emotions such as worry, sadness or anger. They could try:

- Deep belly breathing: Sit in an upright position. Place your hands on your belly & take a deep breath in through your nose for four counts. Then exhale through your mouth for four counts. Feel your belly rise & fall. Repeat for a few minutes
- Bubble breathing: Imagine you are outside blowing bubbles, hold your tub of bubbles, dip your bubble stick in, take a deep breath and blow as many bubbles as you can
- Play peaceful, relaxing music: Encourage children to focus on their breathing while they listen
- Practice muscle relaxation: Sit in an upright position or lie on the floor. Squeeze the muscles in the top of your legs, hold for three seconds, and let them go limp. Repeat for different parts of the body: imagine you're holding an orange and squeezing all the juice out with your hands. Stretch your arms out in front of you as if you are trying to catch something. Move your shoulders up to your ears. Pull in your tummy muscles. Wrinkle up your face. Relax your whole body as if you're a rag doll
- Do some yoga: Research has shown that yoga can help to improve children's emotional regulation, mood and resilience. There are a range of videos on YouTube that you can use to practise yoga with children

Encourage your child to label their emotions & tell you and others how they are feeling

A simple strategy to encourage them to do this is to use of 'I' messages to express how they feel and why:

eg ***"I feel X because..."***

eg ***"I feel lonely because I haven't seen my friends very much"***

Provide supportive prompts to children who have difficulty talking about their emotions

eg ***"It looks like you might be feeling worried, is that right?"***

When your child has labelled their emotion and said why they feel that way, encourage them to work out how to resolve this themselves and try not to do this for them e.g ***"What can you do to help you feel better?"***

Giving a couple of examples to choose from will help them work it out.

Model 'I' messages yourself. It is useful for the children to hear their parent using 'I' messages throughout the day

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