

# School Holiday Support



For Parents, Carers and Young  
People



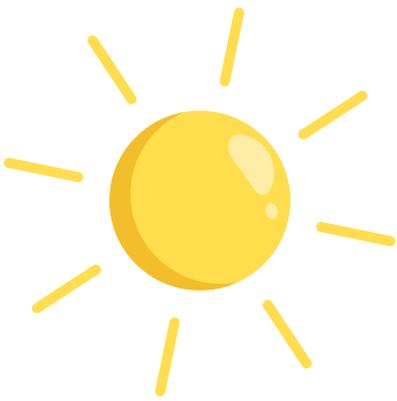
Outcomes  
First Group

Created by the Smallbrook  
School Clinical Team

# Introduction

Summer can bring big changes—less structure, sensory overload, and unexpected events. While it can be exciting, it may also cause stress for young people and those around them.

This guide offers practical tips, calming strategies, and ideas to help make summer enjoyable for everyone.



SUMMER

Summer doesn't have to be perfect. Focus on connection, comfort, and celebrating the small wins. You know your child best- Trust yourself.

You're doing a great job.

**We hope you have a lovely break.**

**Warm regards,**

**The Smallbrook Clinical Team**

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# Support for Parents and Carers



# Supporting your own wellbeing

# Support for You

## You matter too!

You can't pour from an empty cup, it is important to take time to look after yourself and meet your own needs in order to best be able to support your young person!

It is important to remember that you are not alone, connect with other parents/ carers through online forums, local support groups and charities.

Don't be afraid to reach out to family, friends or respite services if you need. It is okay to ask for help.

## Self- Care matters

Even the small things, like a quiet cup of tea or a short walk, can make a big difference. Try and make time to care for yourself over the holidays.

Please note that the following activities can be used by both yourself and your young person. Promoting mental wellbeing and mindfulness is for everyone!



# 5 Ways to Wellbeing

## 1 Connect with other people

Good relationships are important for your mental wellbeing. They can:

- help you to build a sense of belonging and self- worth
- give you an opportunity to share positive experiences
- provide emotional support and allow you to support others

## 2 Be Physically Active

Being active is not only great for your physical health and fitness.

Evidence also shows it can improve your mental wellbeing by:

- raising your self- esteem
- helping you to set goals or challenges and achieve them
- causing chemical changes in your brain which can help to positively change your mood.

## 3 Learn new skills

Research shows that learning new skills can also improve your mental wellbeing by:

- boosting self- confidence and raising self- esteem
- helping you to build a sense of purpose
- helping you to connect with others

## 4 Give to others

Research suggests that acts of giving and kindness can help improve your mental wellbeing by:

- creating positive feelings and a sense of reward
- giving you a feeling of purpose and self- worth
- helping you connect with other people

## 5 Pay attention to the present moment (mindfulness)

Paying more attention to the present moment can improve your mental wellbeing. This includes your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you.

Below are links to more information about ways to implement the 5 Ways to Wellbeing to your daily life!

[5 steps to mental wellbeing - NHS](#)  
[5 Ways to Wellbeing | Mind](#)



# Breathing Exercise for Stress

This calming breathing technique for stress, anxiety and panic takes just a few minutes and can be done anywhere.

You will get the most benefit if you do it regularly, as part of your daily routine.

You can do it standing up, sitting in a chair that supports your back, or lying on a bed or yoga mat on the floor.

Make yourself as comfortable as you can. If you can, loosen any clothes that restrict your breathing.

If you're lying down, place your arms a little bit away from your sides, with the palms up. Let your legs be straight or bend your knees so your feet are flat on the floor.

If you're sitting, place your arms on the chair arms.

If you're sitting or standing, place both feet flat on the ground. Whatever position you're in, place your feet roughly hip-width apart.

- Let your breath flow as deep down into your belly as is comfortable, without forcing it.
- Try breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- Breathe in gently and regularly. Some people find it helpful to count steadily from 1 to 5. You may not be able to reach 5 at first.
- Then let it flow out gently, counting from 1 to 5 again, if you find this helpful.
- Keep doing this for at least 5 minutes.



# Mindfulness



## What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a practice that can support both your wellbeing and that of your family as it can be practiced across the lifespan.

Mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment, without judging or trying to change it. This involves observing your thoughts, feelings and sensations without getting caught up in them.

## Key Elements

### Awareness

Noticing your thoughts, feelings and sensations as they happen. The goal isn't to stop thinking- it is to become aware of your experience, rather than getting lost in it.

### Acceptance

Noticing your experience without judging or trying to change it. For example, if you notice a feeling of anxiety, simply state to yourself: "I notice I'm feeling anxious."

## Benefits

- ✓ Decreased depression and anxiety
- ✓ Improved memory and focus
- ✓ Improved resilience to stress

- ✓ Greater satisfaction in relationships
- ✓ Less overthinking or obsessing
- ✓ Improved ability to manage emotions

# Mindfulness Practices

## Mindfulness Meditation

Sit in a comfortable place, and begin paying attention to your breathing. Notice the physical sensation of air filling your lungs, and then slowly leaving. When your mind wanders— which it will— simply notice your thoughts, and turn your attention back to breathing.



## Mindfulness Walk

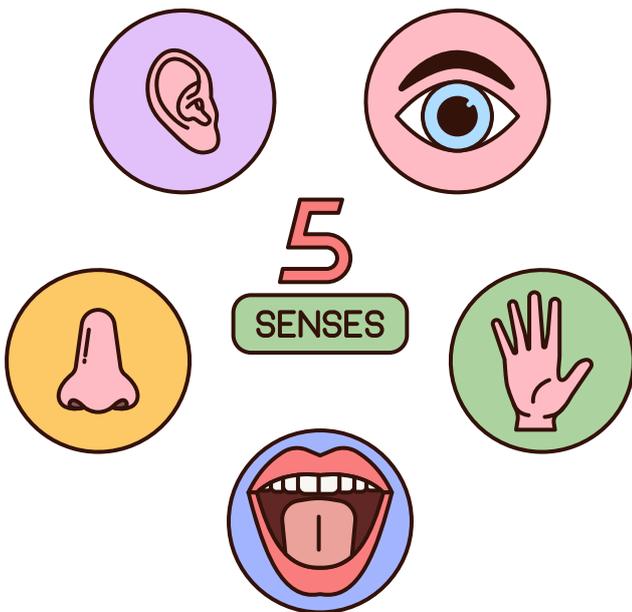
Practice mindfulness while walking. First, notice how your body moves and feels with each step. Then, expand your awareness to your surroundings. What do you see, hear, smell, and feel? This technique can also be used during other daily activities.



# Mindfulness Practices

## Body Scan

Pay close attention to the physical sensations throughout your body. Start with your feet, and move up through your legs, groin, abdomen, chest, back, shoulders, arms, hands, neck and face. Spend anywhere from 15 seconds to 1 minute on each body part.



## Five Senses

Simply pay attention to each of your senses, one after the other, noticing:

- 5 things you see
- 4 things you feel
- 3 things you hear
- 2 things you smell
- 1 thing you taste



# Using Nature to Support Wellbeing

# Using Nature to Support Wellbeing

Research shows that spending time in nature is good for us. It is good for our wellbeing and for our physical and mental health. The closer we feel to nature, the happier we are, and the more likely we are to look after wildlife and the environment.



Taking part in activities that increase our connection to nature can help to enhance these benefits. Being connected to nature is something that can start right from birth and this handbook includes activities designed to be enjoyed by everyone, and they can help you and your family increase connection with nature. They might encourage you and your child/children to notice the nature around you in more detail, and you may become more aware of nature both close to home and farther afield.



We hope that you will enjoy trying out some of these activities with your family

# The Current Situation

**80%**

of children  
DON'T regularly  
do activities  
that connect  
them with  
nature

Only

**33%**

of adults often  
stop to  
appreciate the  
stars or the moon  
in the sky



Only

**30%**

of adults often  
listen to  
birdsong.

Only

**6%**

of adults often  
make homes  
for nature

Only

**5%**

of adults often  
celebrate natural  
events (such as the  
longest or shortest  
day of the year

Only

**19%**

of adults often  
spend time in  
nature to make  
themselves happy.

Only

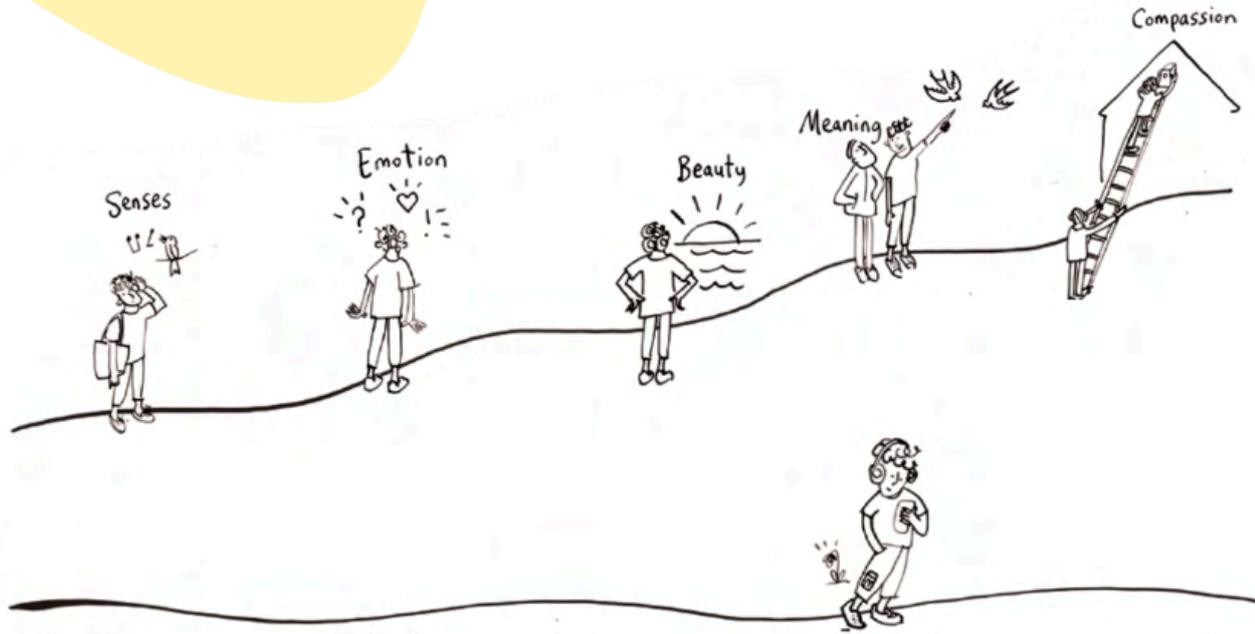
**16%**

of adults often  
enjoy watching  
wildlife at play

# Connection with Nature

Highly connected with nature

Less connected with nature.



## Senses

This could be listening to birdsong, smelling wildflowers, watching the breeze in the trees, going barefoot, tasting the fruits of nature

## Emotion

This could be finding joy in wildlife at play, taking a moment to feel calm with nature. Wondering at details, like a spiders web. Reflecting on your feelings and sharing these with others.

## Meaning

This could be creating a story about a tree, mapping the journey of a bee, finding folktales about nature, or celebrating key moments like the longest day or the first swallow of the summer.

## Beauty

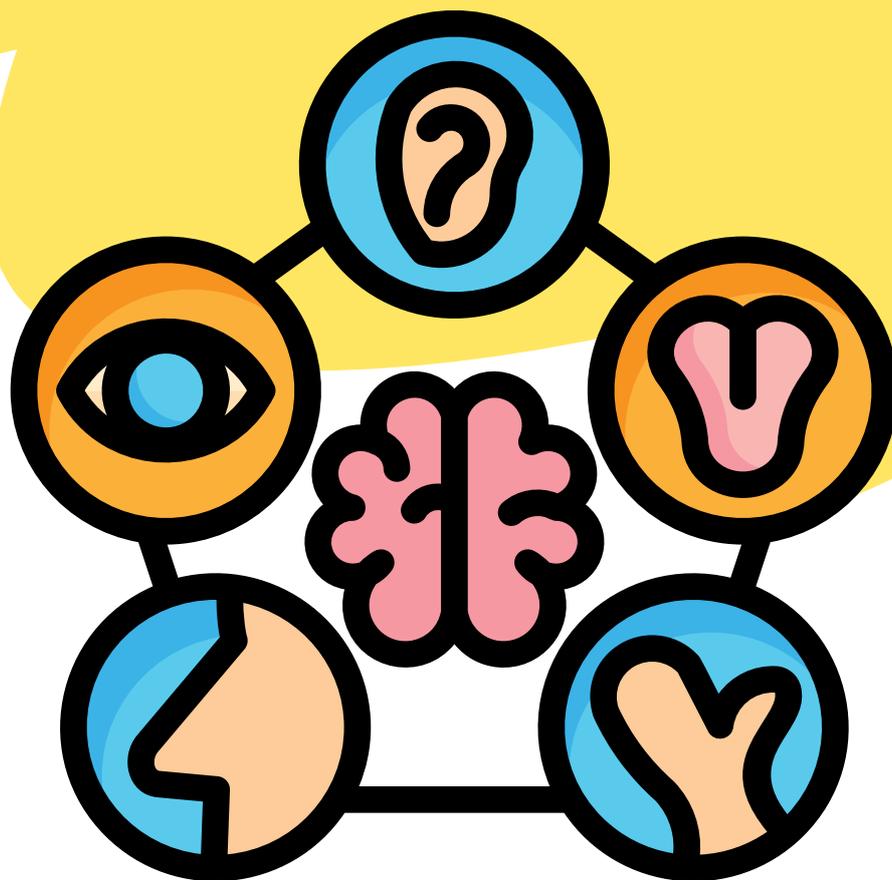
This could be creating some wild art, painting the amazing colours of insects, taking a photo of a flower, visiting a place with an amazing view.

## Compassion

This could be planting wildflowers, taking part in a beach clean, digging a pond, putting up a nest box, supporting conservation charities or buying eco- friendly products.



# Support for Young People



# Supporting Sensory Needs

# Supporting Sensory Needs

Along with all the lovely things that summer entails, there are some sensory challenges posed by the change in weather, daylight hours, breaks from school routines, eating outdoors, travelling and staying away from home.

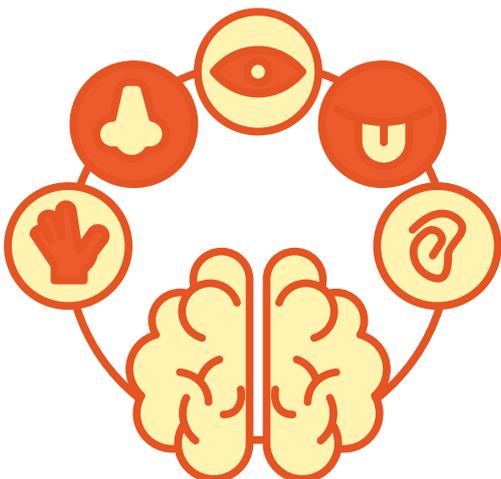
Within this section, you will find practical tips and suggestions to help those experiencing sensory integration or sensory processing differences better manage the sensory challenges of summer.

Everyone is unique and we all have different sensory needs and preferences. Suggestions within this guide should be tailored to your own child's sensory needs, abilities and preferences.

## What is Sensory Integration?

Sensory Integration is the way our brains take in, process and respond to sensory information from the environment and from within our own bodies. Everyone's way of processing sensory information is different.

Sometimes sensory processing difficulties can make it hard for a person to handle sensory information, understand it and react appropriately. Sensory integration differences can affect how we spend our time and what we feel able to do on a day- to- day basis.



# Boosting and Calming Energy Levels

During the school holidays, often we experience dramatic changes to our daily/ weekly routines which can be dysregulating for both children and adults. Planning ahead on how you can support yourself or your child from becoming overwhelmed and to get motivated and energised to participate in activities. If it is your child that is becoming overwhelmed, remember that co- regulation is the start of self- regulation: you need to model the emotional state that your child needs to shift to.



## What is self- regulation?

Self- regulation is intertwined with how the body understands, manages and reacts to information from our senses- both about what is happening in our environment and what is happening without our own body.

# Boosting and Calming Energy Levels

## Boosting Activities

Dance to your favourite music—save a playlist of your favourite upbeat tracks.

Get moving in an enjoyable way—riding a bike, bouncing on a trampoline, visiting a playground, or doing an obstacle course around the living room or garden.

Eat crunchy food or drink a cold drink.

Try stretching.

Do upbeat exercises or follow short workout videos online.

Get outdoors! Depending on the activity you choose, e.g., walking or jogging, cycling or focusing on the natural environment, this can be calming or energising.

## Calming Activities

Use a weighted lap pad or backpack.

Do heavy work like push-ups, pushing against a wall, or carrying something heavy.

Drink a thick drink, like a smoothie, through a straw.

Try short calming yoga sessions or breathing exercises.

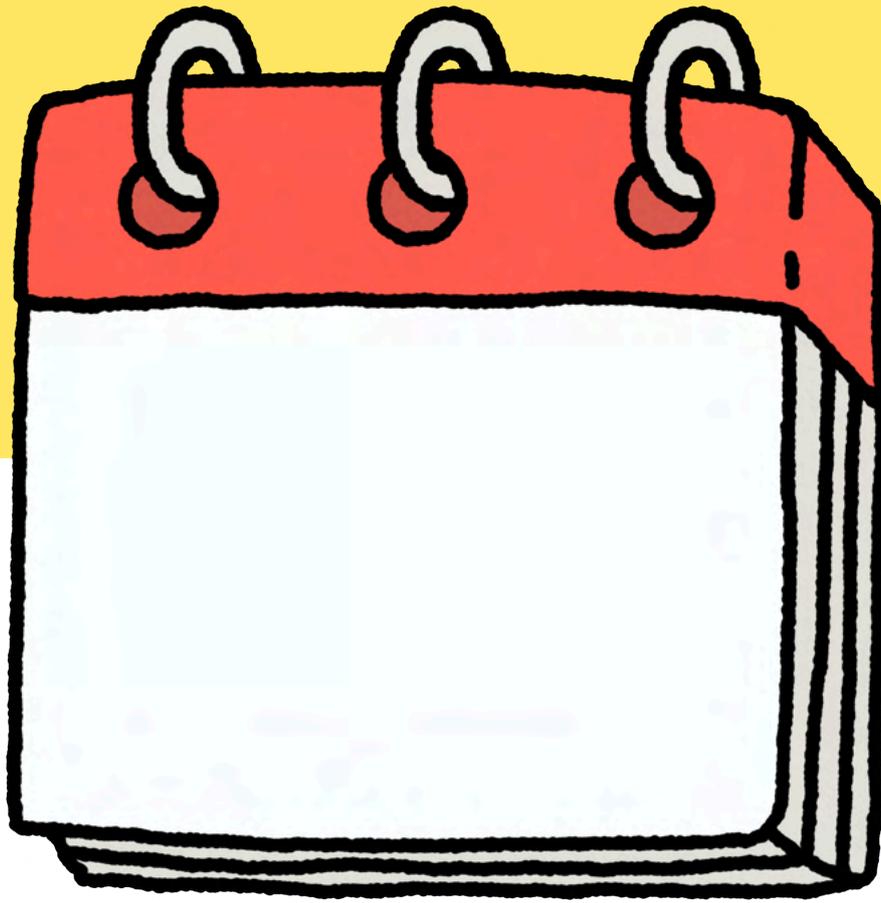
Try the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique.

Use a swing if you find that kind of motion soothing.

Create a calming sensory space at home.

Save helpful apps to your phone or device, such as calming visual displays, breathing exercises, or yoga sessions.

Create a calming playlist of music.



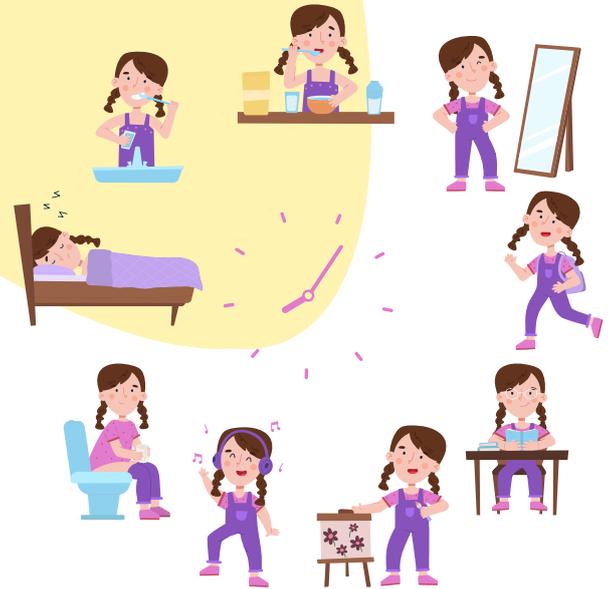
# Routines at Home

# Routine and Structure

Create a visual weekly planner.

Plan anchor points like a daily walk or a set lunchtime.

Use countdowns and reminders for outings or appointments.



## Bedtime Routines

Consistency is key, so try to stick to your child's usual bedtime routine as much as possible, even when the school routine is disrupted.

This may include having a set bedtime, engaging in calming activities like reading or sensory play before bed, and using sensory aids like weighted soft toys or white noise machines to help your child relax and fall asleep.

By maintaining a consistent bedtime routine, you can help your child feel more secure and regulated, which can lead to better sleep and a smoother transition back to the school routine when the **19** holidays end.



# Chores

Helping with chores can be fun (really!), particularly chores that involve push or pull activities as these provide regulating sensory input.

Examples include carrying or sorting laundry, carrying items back to the owner's room, washing windows (wiping vertical surfaces is great practice and 'crossing the midline'-coordinating moving the arms across to the opposite side of the body), and sweeping the floors or yard.



## Creating a sensory space at home



Create a quiet, calm space in your home where your child can go if they become overwhelmed or overstimulated. This could be a sensory room, a quiet corner, or simply a designated area where your child can relax and take a break from sensory input. Have available some sensory/ fidget items that they find particularly useful.



# Activity Ideas at Home for Primary- aged Children

# Creative & Imaginative Play

## Make a Fort

Use blankets, pillows, and furniture to create a cozy space for imaginative play.



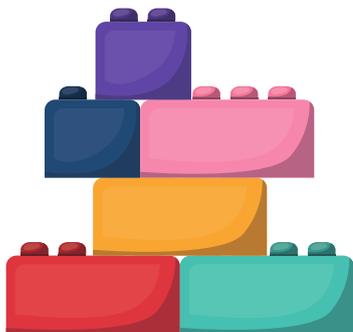
## DIY Crafts:

Engage in activities like making friendship bracelets, paper airplanes, or creating decorations for the home.



## Homemade Playdough or Slime

These tactile activities are great for sensory exploration and creativity.



## Build a Lego City:

Use building bricks to create elaborate structures and encourage problem-solving skills.



## Have a Dress-up Day

Encourage children to create unique outfits and put on a fashion show.



## Create a Treasure Hunt

Hide objects around the house and provide clues for the children to find them.

# Active & Energetic Play

## Obstacle Course

Use household items to create an indoor or outdoor obstacle course.



## Dance Party:

Put on some music and let loose with a fun dance session.



## Simon Says

A classic game that encourages listening skills and following instructions.



## Hide and Seek

A timeless game that can be adapted for different spaces and ages.

# Educational & Learning Activities

## Board Games

Choose age- appropriate games that offer opportunities to learn while having fun.



## Reading Challenge

Encourage children to read books and participate in a reading challenge.

**Simple Science Experiments**  
Explore basis scientific concepts with fun and engaging experiments.



## Nature Scavenger Hunt

Organise a scavenger hunt in your garden or a local park, looking for specific items.

## Storytelling

Encourage children to create their own stories, fostering their imagination and language skills.



## Learn a new language

Utilise online resources or language learning apps to introduce new languages.

# Other Fun Ideas

## Baking or cooking together

Involve children in age- appropriate tasks like mixing ingredients or decorating treats.



## Family movie night

Create a cosy atmosphere and enjoy a movie together,



## Indoor Camping

Set up a tent or fort in the living room and enjoy a night of camping indoors.



## Have a spa day

Use homemade scrubs and face masks for a relaxing spa experience.



## Create a time capsule

Gather items and memories to be opened in the future



## Learn a new skill

Explore online tutorials to learn a new skill like braiding hair, drawing or origami.



# Activity Ideas at Home for Secondary-Aged Children

# Creative & Skill- Based

## DIY Projects

Crafting, building or making things like a cardboard castle, slime or tie- dye shirts.



## Creative Writing

Start a collaborative story, write a play or keep a journal

## Learning a new skill

Take an online course in coding, play a musical instrument, learn a new language or practice magic tricks!



## Cooking & Baking

Try out new recipes together, from simple snacks to elaborate meals.

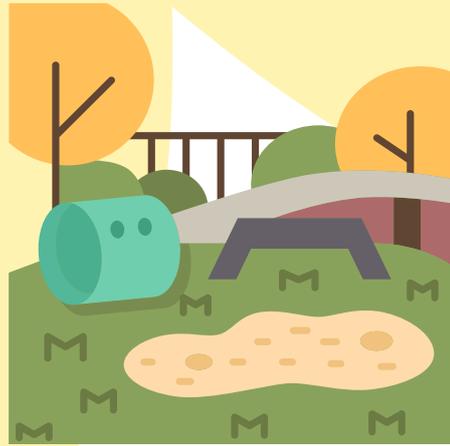
**Home Movie/ Podcast**  
Write, direct and film a short movie or create a family podcast.



# Active & Engaging

## Obstacle Course

Create a fun and challenging obstacle course indoors or outdoors.



## Board Games & Puzzles

Enjoy classic board games like Monopoly, Scrabble or Codenames, or tackle a large jigsaw puzzle.



## Dance/ Fitness

Have a dance off, follow a workout video, or try Cosmic Kids Yoga



## Indoor Camping

Set up a tent in the living room, tell stories and enjoy the experience.

**Scavenger Hunt**  
Organise a scavenger hunt with clues leading to a prize or treat.



# Other Ideas

## Family Game Night

Dedicate time for playing board games, card games or video games together



## Talent Show

Each family member can showcase their unique talents in a fun and entertaining way

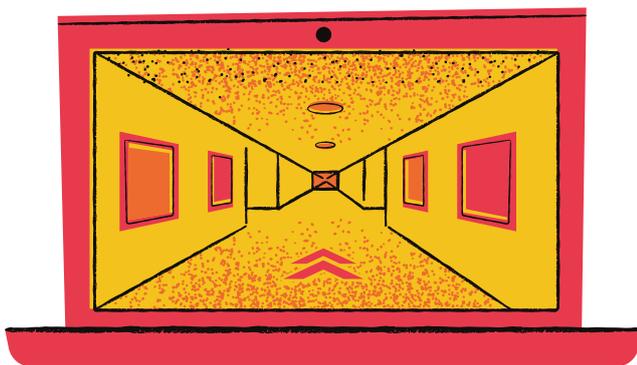
## Movie Marathon

Choose a theme or series and enjoy a day or evening of movies.



## Virtual Tours/ Experiences

Explore museums, historical sites, or even travel the world virtually.



## Reading Challenge

Start a family reading challenge, with everyone reading the same book or choosing their own.





# Nature Activities

# Mother Nature's Match Box

## You will need:

- An empty matchbox (any size) or other similar container
- You may want to have wipes or hand sanitiser
- Find a location that is safe and likely to contain natural objects. This might be in a park, wood or forest, or some other type of natural space such as a garden.

## Before you begin

- Ensure you have your matchbox or container with you.

**Connect:** Tune into nature; take a moment to enjoy all that you can see, hear and feel.

Take time to look at your surroundings and notice where you might find interesting natural objects

**Gather:** Collect fallen leaves, acorns, pinecones or other nature-related objects.

**Share in the experience:** look together to find interesting and familiar natural objects. Talk about what you are trying to find. Look, smell, touch or hear the sounds the objects make.

As you collect objects one by one, place them inside your matchbox/container as a keepsake or to explore further at home. When you have collected enough things, close your box and finish the activity.

## Activity add-ons

- Why not make the activity more fun and collect seeds from fallen trees (such as acorns)? You could fill your matchbox with a small amount of soil and attempt to grow them into seedlings.
- Decorate a rock at home with paints or crayons.



# Treasure Hunt

## You will need:

- A treasure list. Make a list or draw pictures of items you might see on your walk. These might vary according to the time of year and the age of your children- for example, you might include a rock, a stick, a blackbird, a dog, a cow, a flower, a leaf, moss, a duck, or a squirrel.
- A pen so you (or your child) can tick or cross the items/ images they find off the list.
- Snacks, water, raincoat

## Before you begin

- Plan your route. You can use a local route, an urban walk, or explore farther away and incorporate this in a nature-based day out at a park.

**Connect with the senses:** tune into nature as you walk, see what you can notice as you walk along.

**Share in the experience:** you can ask your child to help you make the list or draw the pictures and find the items together.

Try to think ahead so your child has more success- e.g., if you see something first, don't tell your child, but encourage them to look in that direction so they spot it first!

## Activity add-ons

- As you find items, try to make up a story, poem or a song about it.
- Look closely at the smaller items as you find them. Point out details such as how the moss feels, how the birds sound when they sing.
- Find which tree the leaf belongs to by matching the shape and colour.
- You might gather some items and take them home to make an art project- e.g., a pinecone decoration, painted rocks.



# My Old Friend the Tree

## You will need:

- An outdoor space with trees to explore. This could be a local park, a garden or woodland nearby.
- Make sure your footwear is comfortable for exploring.

This activity is all about seeing how beautiful nature can be: Getting up close to nature and looking at it in detail.

**Share in the experience:** Think about befriending a tree yourself. Talk about what you like about your tree with your child.

You might want to talk about how trees can grow older than humans and how they help other wildlife by giving them homes.

Find a place with several trees and ask your child/children to pick one they like best. Encourage your child to tell you why they like that particular one.

Go and explore the tree up close. Look up and see how tall it is, look closely at any leaves it has. Feel its bark. Are there any holes in the tree where animals might make a home? Which animals do you think your tree might have as friends? Notice the shapes the branches make, can you see any shapes you know in there? What human name could you give your trees? Could you go back and visit them at different seasons to see how they change? Pick up a fallen leaf from your tree to take home.

## Activity add-ons

- Can you put your arms around the tree? How wide is the trunk at the bottom?
- Can you identify the tree from its leaf? Look it up on an app or in a book/website when you get home. This might be of interest to older children.
- You could go home and make up a bedtime story about your tree and its animal friends.
- You could draw a picture of your tree to go along with your story.
- You could do bark rubbings (see rub a dub tree), or the look up activity when you go back to visit your tree.

# Finding a Fairy Garden

## You will need:

- An outdoor space to explore. This could be a local park, a garden or woodland nearby. You could even explore a window box.

Share in the experience: Help your child to think about what might be in an imaginary fairy garden. Talk about fairies and how they might like to live in little gardens.

## Before you begin

- You might want to look at some pictures of fairies with your child before you go exploring. This will help them to understand what fairies are imagined to look like.
- You might want to remind them that fairies are make believe, or you might want to encourage some magical thinking.
- Think about where you might look for a fairy garden – at the bottom of a tree, underneath a plant, tucked behind a large rock or behind a wall.

Look out for a place where a fairy garden could be. Looking for very tiny plants could be an ideal location for a fairy garden. For example, at the base of a tree where some moss is growing – sometimes you might also see tiny mushrooms growing on trees if you look closely. Look closely at the soil, or ground and see if you can see any tiny fairy footprints. Whilst you look for the footprints encourage your child to see what they notice – are there any insects for example, or small pebbles?

## Activity add-ons

- Why not add some things to the fairy garden location – you could add some moss, or a shiny pebble.
- You could draw a picture of a fairy and take this with you or cut it out ready to add to the fairy garden.



# Nature Art

## You will need:

- A place to walk in nature.
- Clothing for the weather conditions.

**Share in the experience:** Let your child be the 'boss' and design the art creation, you can be their 'helper', gathering items with them. Or you could make your own version, so your child sees this is fun for all ages of people.

## Before you begin

- Think of a place in nature where you can leave your natural art. This could be in a private/shared garden, in a local woodland or even at a community field or green space.
- Make sure you have footwear that is comfortable for exploring.
- You might inspire your child by showing them photos on the internet of nature-based art such as the leaf patterns and rock towers by the artist, Antony Gormley.

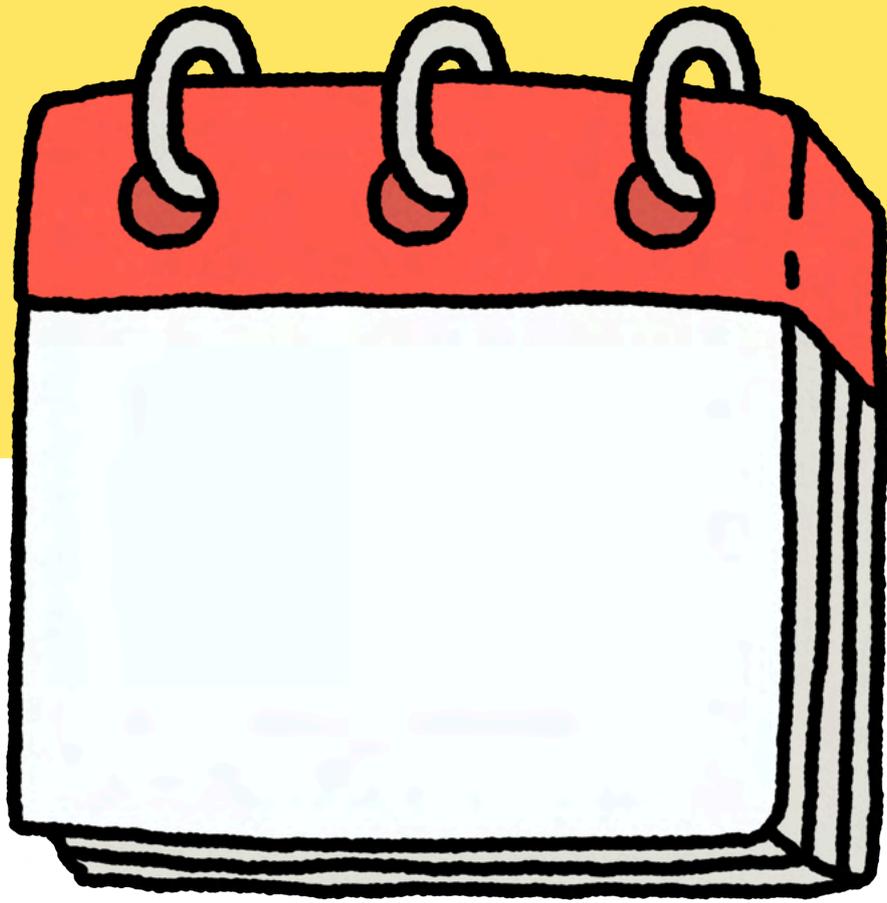
Gather up fallen objects and let your child think about what kind of art or sculpture they would like to make e.g. a tower of rocks? A pattern made of leaves and sticks?

Encourage your child to have it look any way they choose. Art is personal, it may look different to something you find aesthetically pleasing!

When they feel their work of art is complete, stand back and ask them to tell you more about it, e.g., how they chose the materials, what they might name it, and how they feel about it.

Celebrate their art.





# **Routines and Activities Outside of the Home**

# Travelling/ Journeys/ Holidays



**Prepare in Advance.**

**Contact your travel provider** and find out if they offer any assistance or accommodations for travellers with additional needs. Some airports and airlines have sensory rooms or offer early boarding.

**Plan to travel at quieter times where possible.** Choose to leave home before or after rush hour to minimise any delays to your journey.

**Consider the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Lanyard:** The Sunflower Lanyard Scheme is a simple tool that you can use to voluntarily share that you have a disability or condition that may not be immediately apparent. This can help you receive extra assistance or more time in public spaces.

**Use sensory stories or videos:** Before your trip, use sensory stories or videos to familiarise your child with the process of travelling to your destination. You can also show them pictures and videos of the place you are visiting and talk about the kind of sights, sounds and smells they can expect to experience there.



**Pack your own supplies:** If you or your child prefers toiletry or food items that won't be available at your destination, pack supplies with you if possible. Take your own face cloth, towel and pillowcase if the textures/ scent of these are important to you.

**Exercise before long journeys:** Whether that's adults going for a walk or run or children playing in a playground.

**Wear layers to manage temperature:** the temperature on planes and trains can vary a lot. If you struggle with interoception (recognising and understanding signals from inside your body) you may not realise that your discomfort is due to being chilly or too warm.

**Break up long car journeys:** If you are travelling by car, break up long journeys with frequent stops that offer the opportunity to get out of the car and move around.

**Maintain bedtime routines:** Try to maintain your child's bedtime routines as much as possible, even when travelling.

**Soothe ear pressure:** To soothe ear pressure during take-off and landing, suck on a lollipop or drink through a straw.

**Pack crunchy snacks for sensory regulation:** Just make sure they are allowable through security if flying.

**Bringing your own entertainment:** Pack your or your child's own preferred entertainment preloaded on a tablet with headphones or earbuds.

# Food and Outdoor Eating

Involve your child in planning, preparing and packing food for outdoor eating.

Pack familiar snacks that your child is used to eating at home. This will give them a sense of familiarity and comfort.

When trying new foods, explain to your child what to expect in terms of taste, texture and smell. This can help them to feel more prepared and less anxious about trying something new. Encourage trying new foods gradually.

When on holiday in self-catering accommodation, be prepared to cook. You may consider bringing ingredients and perhaps a favourite plate/ bowl and cutlery. This may help your child to feel familiar with and comfortable with eating.



# Sensory- Friendly Venues

A sensory- friendly venue is a location that has been designed or adapted to minimise sensory input and create a more comfortable and accessible environment for individuals with sensory processing difficulties. This could include things like lower lighting, quieter sounds, and reduced visual clutter, as well as other accommodations such as designated quiet spaces, access to sensory tools, and trained staff who are familiar with sensory issues.

The goal of a sensory- friendly venue is to create a welcoming and inclusive space for individuals who might otherwise find certain environments overwhelming or overstimulating.

There isn't a single directory of sensory friendly accommodation, venues and days out but you can search for 'autism- friendly' or 'sensory- friendly' hotels, venues and activities near you. Theatres and cinemas often use the term 'relaxed- performances' to describe showings with toned- down voice and movement, changes to lighting and relaxed rules about the audience making noise.



# Swimming

Neoprene is a great choice for the pool if you're sensitive to cold or enjoy the squeeze of compression- wear.

Try finding out about quieter times and accessible spaces in the car park or ask about quieter swim sessions.

Arrive swim-ready, if possible, with a comforting robe or onesie over the top to avoid the noise and bright lights of changing rooms.

You can bring flipflops for use in the changing rooms and around the pool, or wear wetsuit boots or water shoes that haven't been worn outside.

Different swim aids can differently affect balance and body position in the water with some being more helpful than others depending on balance and proprioceptive needs.

Goggles can be helpful if you don't like water in your face and eyes or get anxious about that happening. Look for ones that meet your sensory preferences, such as Frogglez.

Fins/flippers can be used in lessons and lane swims for extra proprioceptive feedback.

Use accessories like swim hats or earplugs to reduce noise and water in the ears.

Some people find transitioning from wet to dry uncomfortable: it's fine to wrap up warm in a robe and travel home to change.



# The Beach

**Prepare ahead of time:** Talk to your child about what to expect at the beach. Show them pictures or videos of the beach so they can get familiar with the environment. Discuss what activities they might want to do and what they will need to bring.

**Test out the feeling of sand:** If this is the first time you are taking your sensory child to the beach, let them play with the texture of sand at home first. Some people really don't like the texture of sand on their skin. Ensure you have a towel or blanket to sit on.

**Choose the right time of day:** For people who are sensitive to the sun and heat, it's best to plan beach trips early in the morning or late in the afternoon when the sun is not as strong.

**Bring appropriate gear:** Make sure you and your child have a hat, sunglasses, sunscreen, and appropriate clothing. Some people may prefer to wear long sleeves and pants or a wetsuit or rash guard to protect against sunburn.

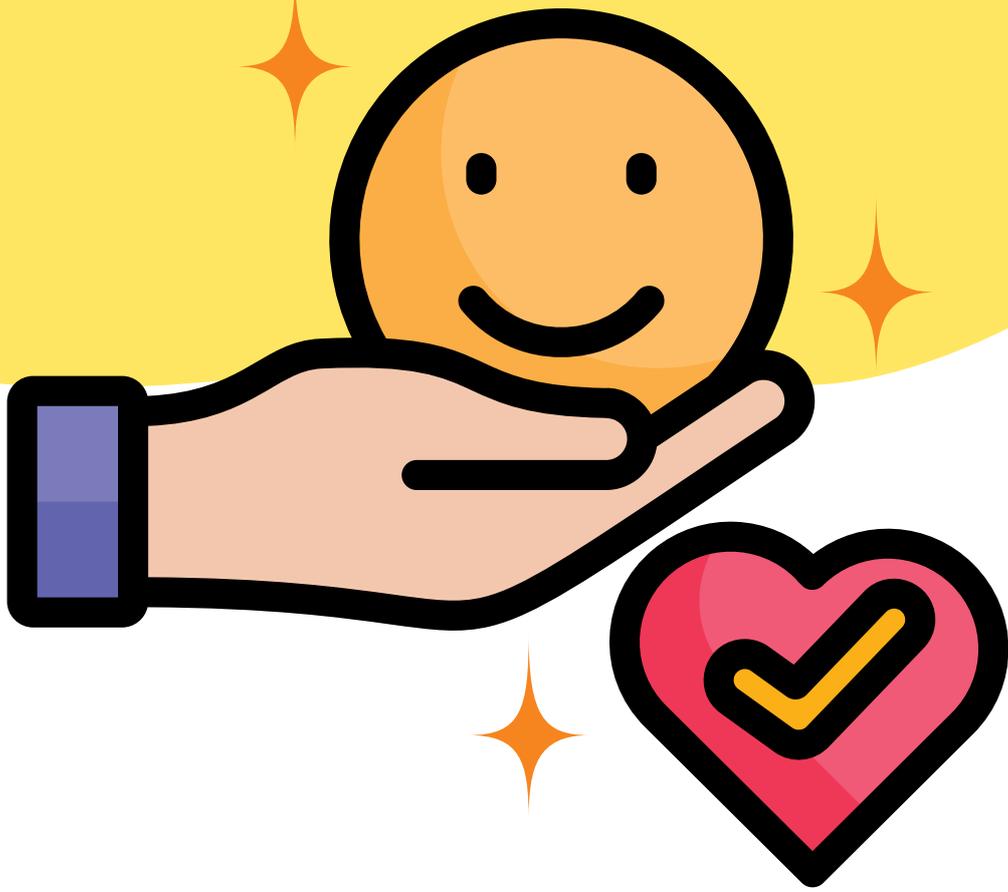
**Find a quiet spot:** Look for a quieter spot on the beach away from crowds and noise. Bring a beach tent or umbrella to provide some shade and a quiet space for you or your child to relax.

**Be prepared for the water:** If your child is sensitive to water, bring a small bucket or container for them to play with water at their own pace.

**Plan for breaks:** Take frequent breaks in a quiet area away from the sun and noise to allow you or your child to rest and recharge.

Bring sensory and fidget items that your child likes. Includes familiar drinks and snacks.





# Supporting Wellbeing

# My Feelings Workbook

Teaching children to notice and understand their feelings can help them manage those feelings.

Activities like labelling emotions, discussing past situations and noticing facial expressions can help children recognise and express their emotions.

## HOW DO I FEEL RIGHT NOW?



# Keep Safe and Cope Well Plans

Keep safe and well plans were co-produced with children and young people in Cheshire East and are available for all Primary and Secondary schools.

[www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/schools/keep-safe-and-cope-well-plan](http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/livewell/schools/keep-safe-and-cope-well-plan)

These are designed to be a pocket- sized support plan for children and young people to use at school and home.

They encourage children and parents/ carers to find their own solutions to problems they are facing and try new coping skills and interests. A child- led approach that recognises emotional difficulties, promotes problem solving, identifying protective factors, and building resilience at both school and home.

## What will the plans achieve?

- Improved communication between child, parent and/ or carers
- Improved self- awareness- identify when they are struggling and know their coping strategies
- Increased self- esteem
- Increased confidence to speak to a safe adult when they are struggling
- Improved knowledge of mental wellbeing
- Identify support networks in school and at home
- Identify local support and national support and helplines.

These plans focus upon 4 core sections of importance to support the wellbeing and safety of young people:

- 1.Struggling- recognise thoughts, actions and feelings
- 2.Coping- what can I do?
- 3.Help from others
- 4.Helps me right now- if I am feeling distressed, what can I do?  
Local and national signposting services.

## Struggling

My thoughts.....



My actions are....



My feelings are.....



## Help from others

People at home I can talk to.....

Services I can contact.....



## Coping

What can I do.....?

How do I feel when I'm using these coping skills.....?



## Helps me right now

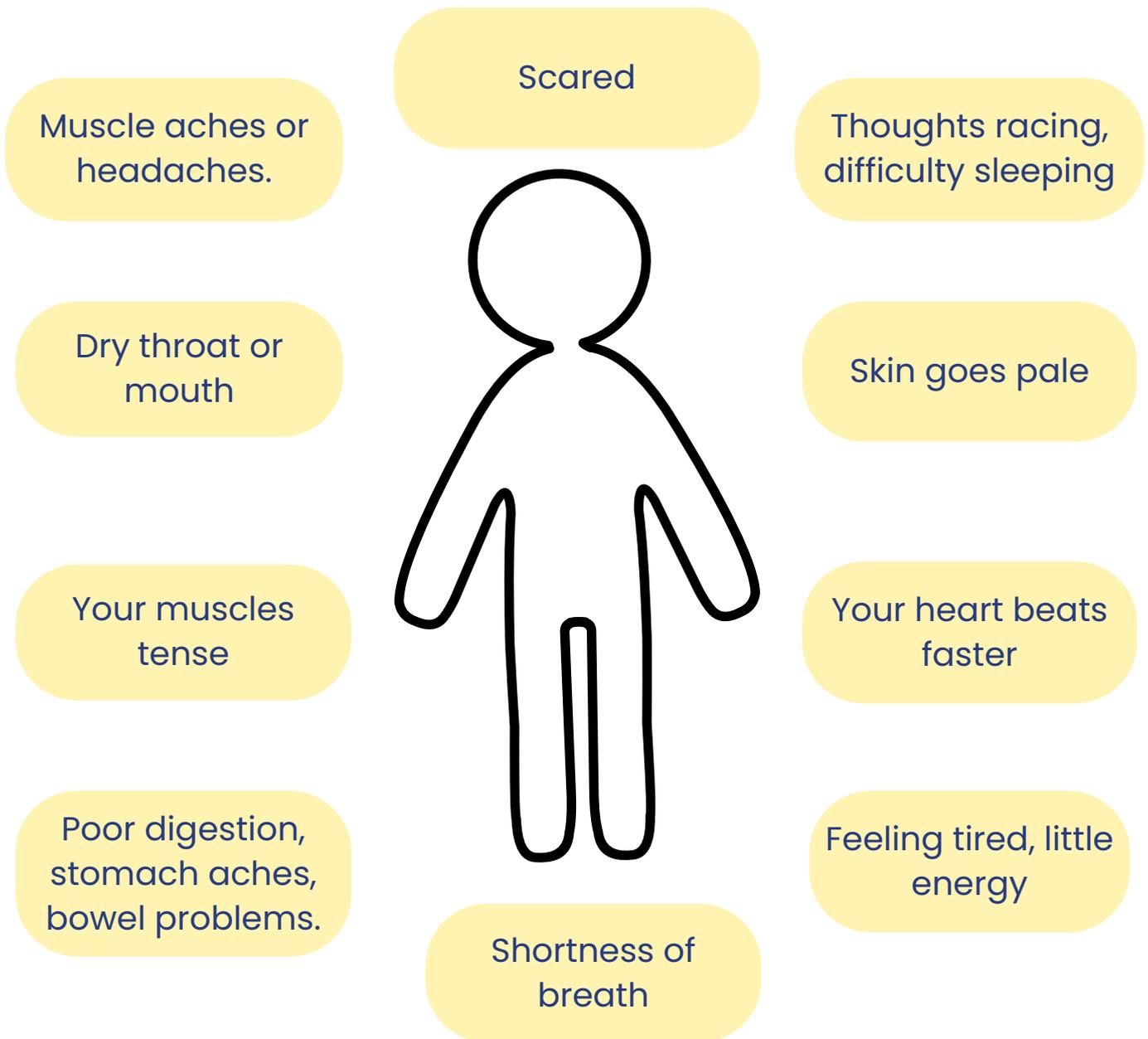
If I am feeling distressed, I can speak to.....

The best way I cope in this moment is.....



# Body Maps

Your whole body reacts when you feel worried or anxious.



Try to notice when you start to feel any of the signs above and stop to take a moment. There are many different strategies to help you feel relaxed and calm when you are feeling stressed or anxious and you will need to find the ones that work for you.

To get you started, try some of the options on the following page...

### **Try relaxing your body**

Sit or lie somewhere quiet and comfortable  
Stretch out your arms and make a fist, then relax  
Push your legs out, wiggle your toes, and then relax  
Shut your eyes tight and pull a scrunched- up face, and then relax.

### **Try Calm Breathing**

Take a slow breath in through your nose for about 4 seconds.  
Hold it for 1 or 2 seconds  
Slowly let it out through your mouth for about 4 seconds  
Wait 5-7 seconds before taking another breath  
Repeat 5-10 times

### **Try Visualisation**

Close your eyes  
Take slow deep breaths in and out  
Think of your favourite place, maybe somewhere that you go on holiday  
Focus on the place and picture yourself there  
What can you see? What can you smell? What can you feel?

### **Try Physical Exercise**

This increases your heart rate and releases endorphins that make you feel good. Running, going to the gym, cycling, skateboarding, surfing, horse- riding, swimming or team sports such as cricket or netball are all great exercise. Choose one you love and build your exercise routine around that.

### **Think Balanced Thoughts**

If you find yourself thinking a negative thought of worry a lot of the time (e.g., I will fail my exam), try thinking of a more balanced or positive thought instead (e.g., If I work hard, I will do ok in my exam). Every time you notice yourself thinking the negative thought- stop and tell yourself the positive.



# Returning to School

# Back to School Preparation

Returning to school after a long break can be a cause of anxiety for many young people. The best way to manage and mitigate this is to begin preparation in advance.

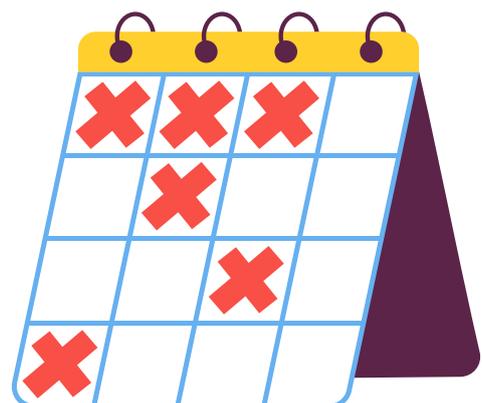
Use a month- to- view calendar and mark when your child will be off and when they will be going back to school. Cross days off leading up to this.

Begin talking about school 2-3 weeks before term starts, reintroduce the idea to ease anxiety. Talk positively about school- mention favourite subjects, friends, or trusted staff

Try to establish a regular routine 1-2 before, especially with bedtimes by phasing back. Also shifting mealtime routines back to fit within the school timetable may also be beneficial.

Practice morning routines: alarm, getting dressed, breakfast

Address anxiety with tools and strategies. Encourage your child to share any worries. Practice calming strategies.



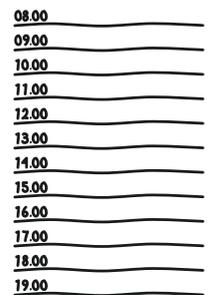
# The Day Before Returning to School

The day before returning to school can be a big transition for young people and teenagers. Preparing thoughtfully can help reduce anxiety, provide structure, and build a sense of control. Here are some strategies and routines that can support them (and their families or caregivers):

**Below is a suggested routine for the day before school starts:**

## Morning:

- **Keep it calm and structured:** stick to the school-day wake-up time to adjust the body clock.
- **Talk through the next day:** Use visual schedules or social stories to explain what will happen, especially if there are changes from last year.
- **Get organised together:** prepare uniform or clothes and get everything together you may need. Involving your young person can help them feel more in control.



## Midday

- **Include calming or sensory-friendly activities:** e.g., drawing, gentle movement, fidget play, or time in a quiet space- whatever suits their sensory needs.
- **Meal practice:** try a packed lunch “rehearsal” if they take one, especially for those who benefit from food predictability or who eat specific foods.



# The Day Before Returning to School

## Afternoon

- **Have a relaxing day:** do things which your young person enjoys to reduce anxieties and create an enjoyable day
- **Lay out clothes for the next day**



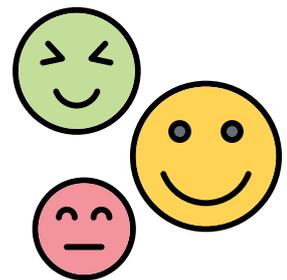
## Evening

- **Wind down early:** follow a predictable evening routine: bath/ shower, PJs, story or calming activity
- **Talk about positives:** Mention something specific they might look forward to: a favourite teacher, subject or friend.
- **Bedtime routine starts earlier:** aim for sleep at the same time as during the school year. Use relaxation techniques if needed.



## Tips for Supporting your young person emotionally

- **Validate emotions:** Acknowledge anxiety or reluctance without judgement
- **Avoid information overload:** Use simple, clear instructions or visual aids
- **Use transition objects:** Allow them to bring a familiar item to school if allowed
- **Practice drop-offs:** Even a short walk near the school can help ease the return
- **Communicate with school:** Let staff know about any changes, worries, or strategies that help.



Created with best wishes by the  
Smallbrook School Clinical Team.

We look forward to seeing you  
again after the break!