

# Back to School Campaign Witherslack Group

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[www.adhdfoundation.org.uk](http://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk)



# Session Aims



Why can transition be challenging?

What role does anxiety play in this?

What support strategies can we put in place to make the transition smoother?

# Why is transition important?



Part of school life

Change is a part of life

For our ND children, effective transition is crucial

***“Effective transition supports children to feel safe and secure, providing a link between the certainty of their existing class and the brave new world of their new one” (ADDitude Magazine)***

# Why is transition important?



*“A good transition can mean the difference between floundering and flourishing”*

*“Transition puts an enormous demand on children – socially, linguistically, emotionally, academically and practically.”*

***ADDitude Magazine***

# Positives

Seeing friends again

A fresh start

New challenges

Routine



# However...



We know  
all of these  
things can  
also cause  
anxiety!

# How can this look?



Breakdowns

Refusal

"Clingy"

Stomach-aches

Eating/sleeping

Extreme emotions



Unease

Dread

Worry

Nervousness

Impending danger





# What is Emotional Regulation?



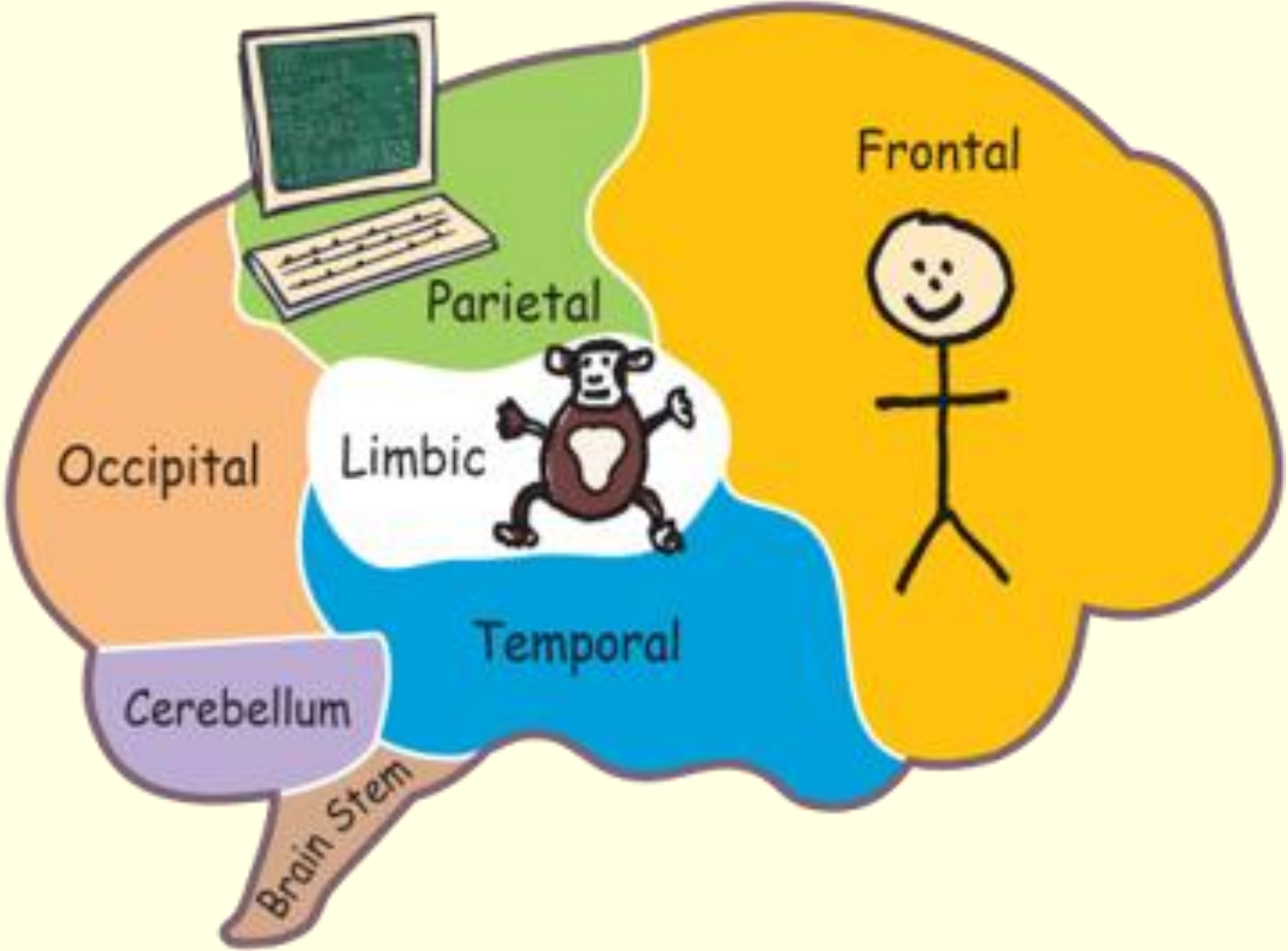
The ability to manage your emotions and behaviour related to the demands of a situation.

The ability to resist highly emotional responses to upsetting situations.

To be able to calm yourself down when you get upset, to adjust to a change in expectations, and to handle frustration without an outburst.



# The Chimp Brain – Limbic System



**Dr Steve Peters**

CREATOR OF THE **GROUNDBREAKING** MIND MODEL



'The mind programme that helped me win my Olympic Golds'  
Sir Chris Hoy

The **MIND MANAGEMENT**

Programme for Confidence, Success and Happiness

# The Chimp Brain – Limbic System



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→ Prefrontal cortex  
P.F.C.  
"THE WISE LEADER"

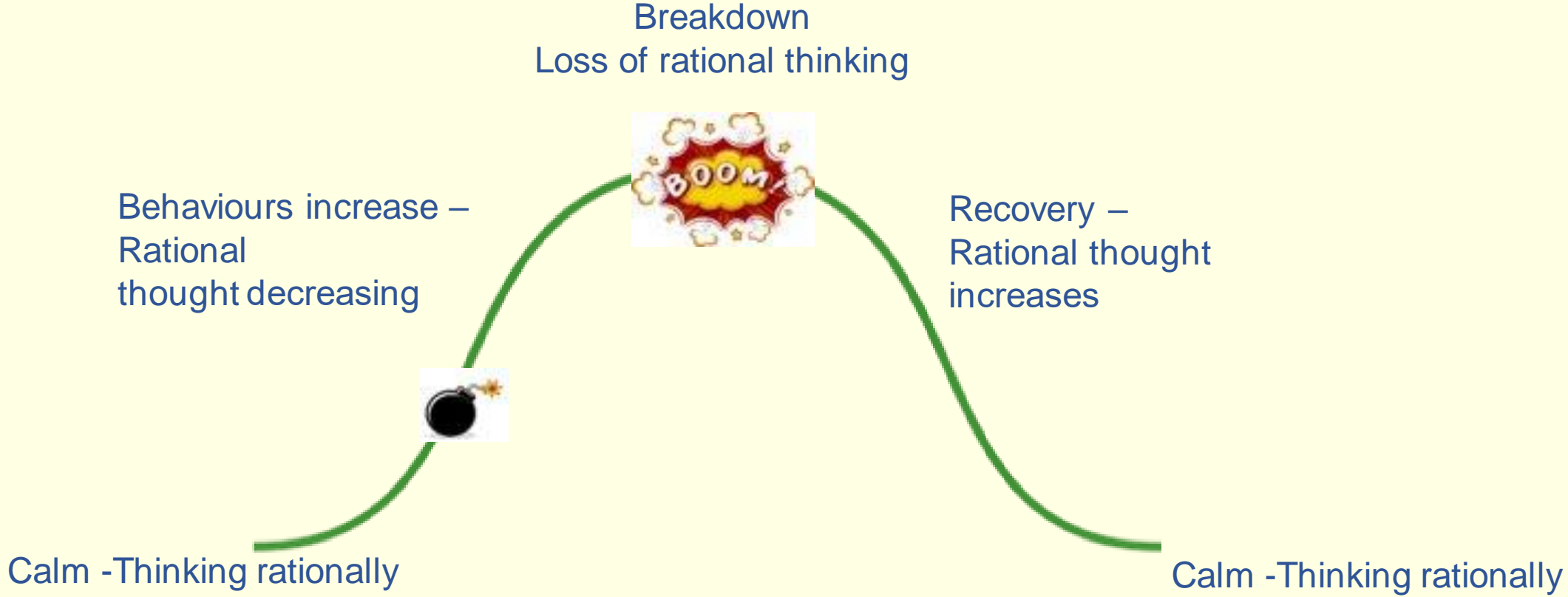


← "Flipped Your Lid"

← The big emotions, anger, fear,  
anxiety etc...  
The AMYGDALA - The alarm center  
Acts on instinct  
fight, flight or freeze

Adapted from Dr. Daniel J. Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain found in *Mindsight: The New Science of Personal Transformation* (Bantam Books, 2010)

# The Emotional Curve



# "Why do we get the worst of it?"



Masking

Fatigue

Over-stimulated

Emotionally overwhelmed

Transition

Defensive detachment

# What to do

Reassure that the feelings are valid.

Ask what is worrying them.

Discuss with school as early as possible.

Praise and reward effort.

Normalise these feelings.



# What not to do



Try not to brush the feelings away.

Avoid transference of anxiety/stress.

Don't make promises.

Don't always remove devices.

Don't panic about the long term.

# Which blob are you?



Right now?

When you get some time off?

During COVID/lockdowns?



# Visual Timetables



Somewhere to refer-back to.

Communicate with school.

'If and then'

Use for smaller tasks eg. Getting the bus, getting ready in the morning.

*Twinkl*

# Mood Diaries/Trackers

Helps to externalise feelings

Keeps track of patterns

Use as evidence of masking

Helps with all-or-nothing thinking

Not a behaviour report



# Reasonable Adjustments in School



Starting school later

Entering through a different entrance

Pre-warning of change to routine

Visual timetables

Personal objects

# Worry Journals/Monsters

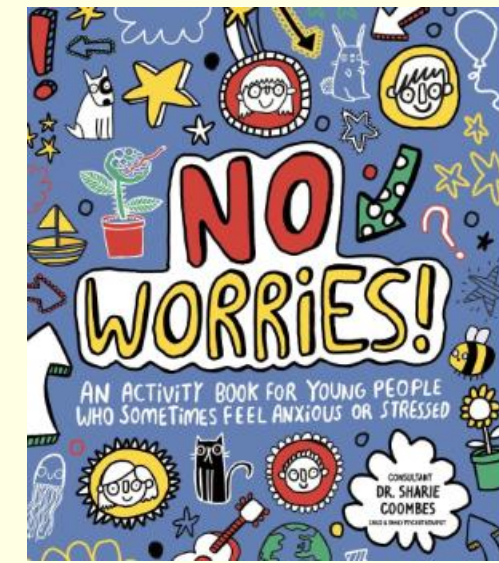


Write or draw worry

Feed to the monster

The worry can then be discussed

Worry journals may also be appropriate



# Early Stages of Breakdown



Refrain from asking questions about school if this is a trigger.

Allow alone time – let them tell you about school if they want to.

A healthy snack.

Reduce clutter and noise at home if possible.

Redirect - distract the child from the emotional landscape and re-direct their attention.

Validate their feelings.

It's ok to be upset – it's good to let it out.

I hear you, I'm here for you – I'll stay with you.

I'll be over here when you need me.

It's ok to feel this way.

# During The Breakdown



Think “Flip your lid” – Where are they functioning?

Reduce language and hold off referring to consequences of behaviour – this adds to the threat response.

Be present but reduce attention.

Make sure that they are safe and those around them are safe.

Allow them to calm.

# When Logical Thought is Regained



Maintain a calm tone of voice.

Offer them a drink.

Acknowledge their feelings – “I can see that you got angry and that now you're feeling upset”

Give space to allow the child to process what happened.



# Labelling Feelings



Help your child to name their feelings by giving it a label.

Naming feelings is the first step in helping children to learn to identify them.

It helps a child to develop emotional language so they can tell us how they are feeling.

I think that you're feeling happy

I think that you're feeling sad

I think that you're feeling angry

I think that you're feeling worried



# Understand – Label Other's Feelings



Label your own feelings.

Ask your child to tell you how they think another person might be feeling.

Using films, book characters on YouTube can be a great way of doing this.

Give them lots of opportunities to read facial expressions.



# Fight, Flight or Freeze

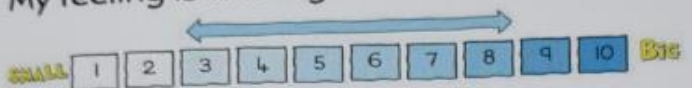


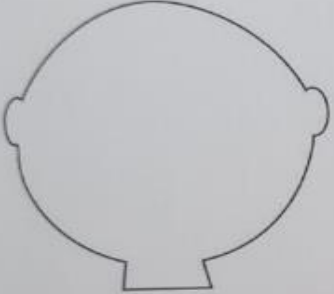
# Labelling




What happens to your body when you feel worried/nervous/angry/sad/excited?


I feel...

My feeling is this big... 

Facial expression... 

Body signs... 

To make myself feel better I can...  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Just use the outline if more appropriate

Use a photo if more accessible

When we can establish the child's physical response, we can start to implement self-regulatory strategies.

# Calm Spaces



# Regulating - Relaxation

## CALM DOWN WITH TAKE 5 BREATHING

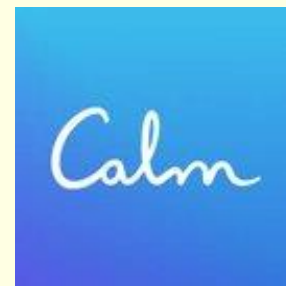
1. Stretch your hand out like a star.
2. Get your pointer finger ready to trace your fingers up and down.
3. Slide up each finger slowly ~ slide down the other side.
4. Breathe in through your nose ~ out through your mouth.
5. Put it together and breathe in as you slide up and breathe out as you slide down. Keep going until you have finished tracing your hand.



How do you feel now?  
Are you calm or would you like to take another 5 breaths?



Mind shift



MOVE MOOD



CLEAR FEAR



# Regulating - Grounding



[consortiumeducation.com](http://consortiumeducation.com)



[active.com](http://active.com)



[homa.co.com](http://homa.co.com)



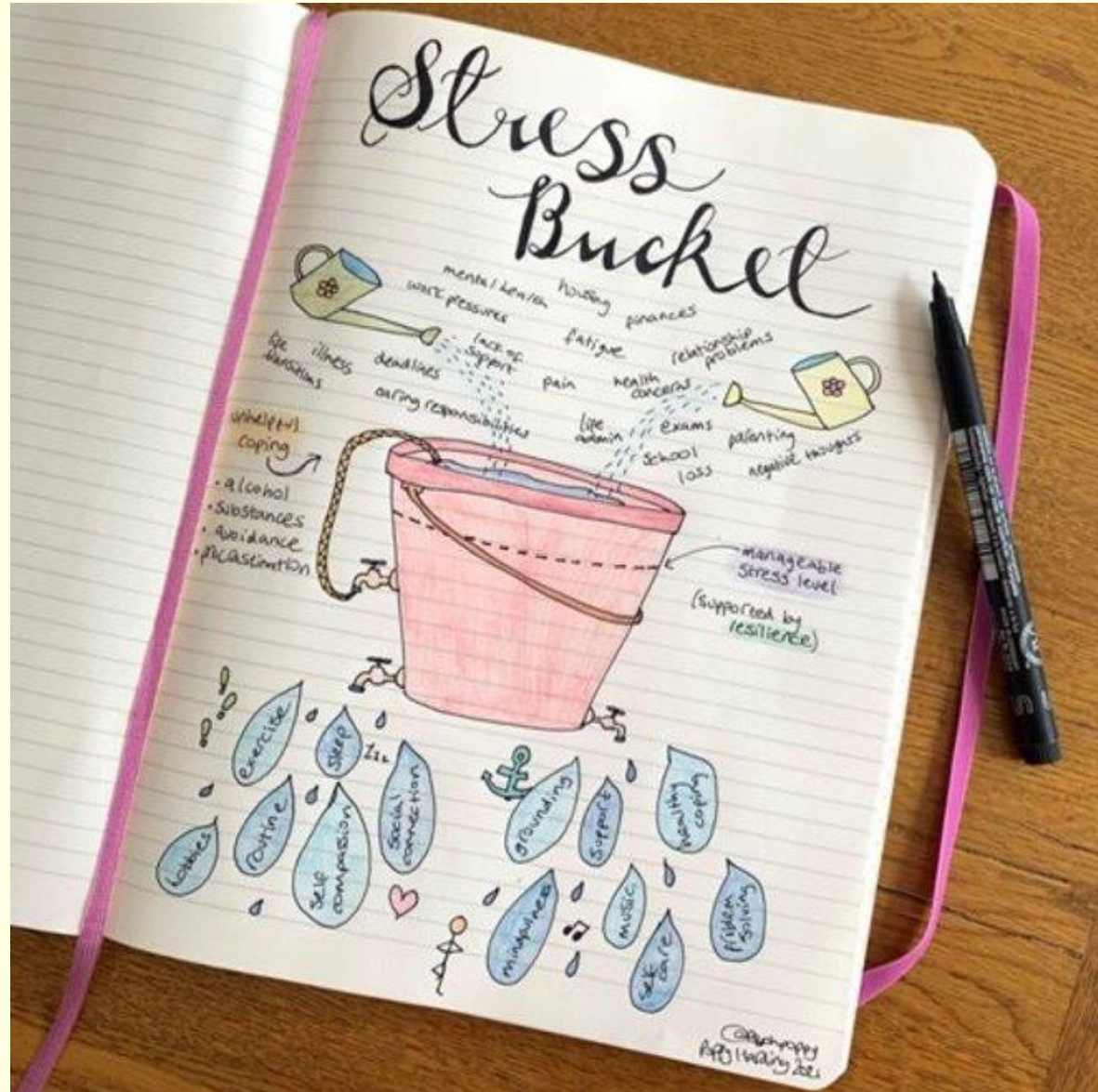
[fledglings.org.uk](http://fledglings.org.uk)



[sensorydirect.com](http://sensorydirect.com)



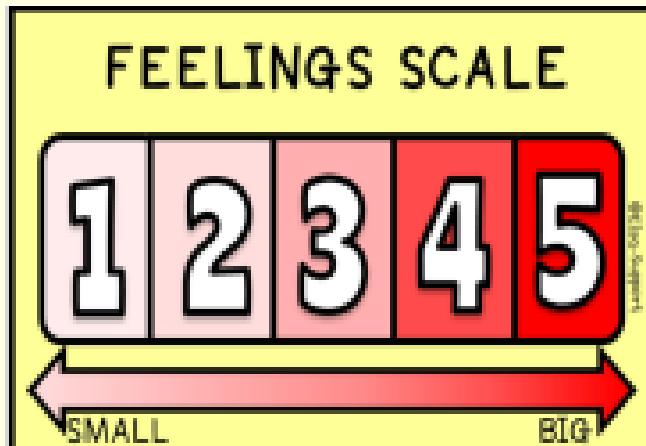
# Stress Bucket



# Feelings Scales



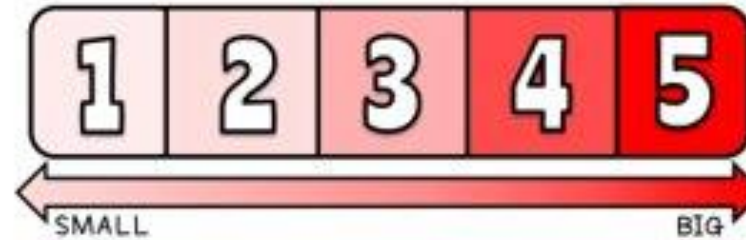
Rating	Looks like	Feels like	I can try to
5			
4			
3			
2			
1			



## MY FEELINGS SCALE

Today I feel...

My feeling is this big...



I feel like this because...

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I can help myself feel better by...

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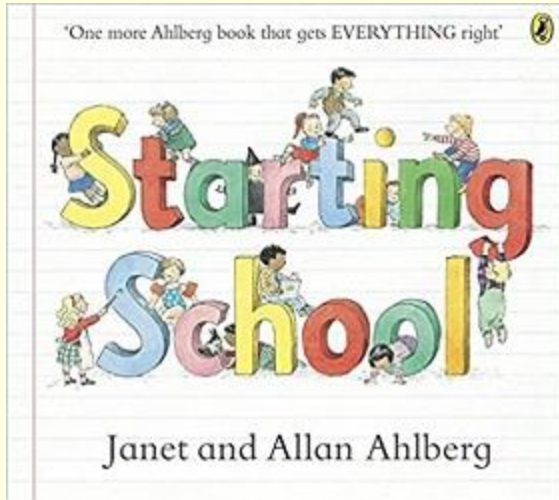
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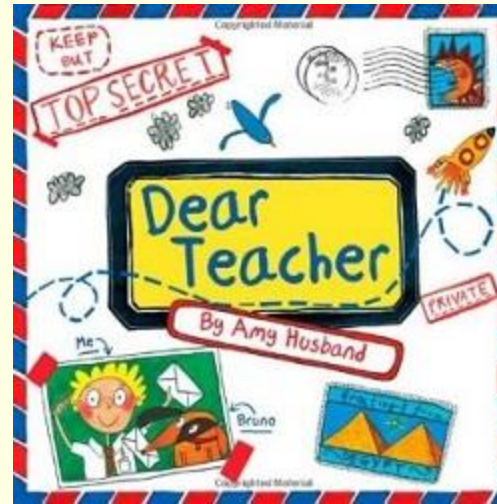
# Resources



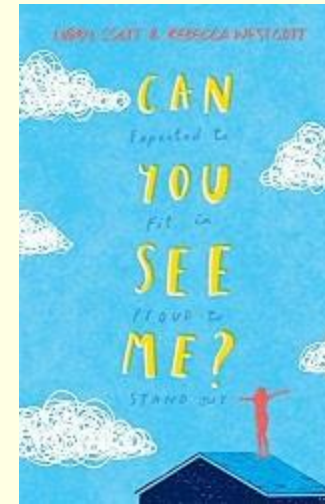
*Starting School  
by Janet and  
Allan Ahlberg*



*Twig by Aura  
Parker*



*Dear Teacher by Amy  
Husband*



*Can You See Me? by  
Libby Scott and  
Rebecca Westcott*

# SEPARATION ANXIETY

## Thoughts

- I will never see them again
- Something might happen when I am gone
- What am I missing at home
- I don't feel safe
- Something bad might happen at home
- They might not come back
- Something is scaring/worrying me at school

## Physical sensations

- Feel sick
- Tummy ache
- Fast heartbeat
- Hot
- Rapid breathing
- Butterflies
- Trembling or shaking
- Headache

## Book recommendations

- Huge bag of worries
- The kissing hand
- The invisible string
- Owl babies
- The kiss box

## Behaviours

- Delaying tactics
- Clingy
- Tears
- Running away
- Not sleeping
- Angry
- Attention seeking

## Strategies for support

- Celebrate achievements
- Give them a job in school
- Transitional object from carer
- Make a plan with carer and stick to it
- A morning transition group with fun things to do



## Top Tips

- Never sneak away
- Make a goodbye routine with your child
- Consistent approach
- Be kind, firm but don't give in
- Ask a familiar person to take them to school, it might break the cycle
- Don't hang around, pass your child to a trusted adult, say your goodbyes and reassure you will see them later. Leave

## Feelings

- Scared
- Worried
- Angry
- Agitated
- Panicky
- Tense
- overwhelmed

## Proactive work

- Emotions and feelings
- Mindfulness
- Relaxation techniques
- Likely/unlikely to happen scenarios
- Anxiety work
- Worry dolls
- Visual timetable
- Social stories
- Allocate time to talk to carer





Thank you!

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