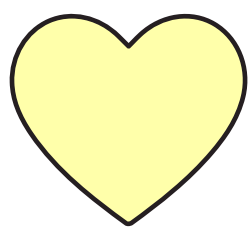# RETURN TO SCHOOL COUNTDOWN

Cut out each activity, fold and place in a box/jar/container. Each day, choose at least one activity to complete. If you don't have a printer, just choose at random.

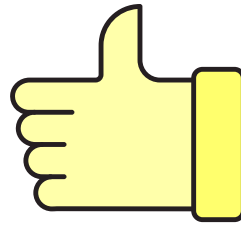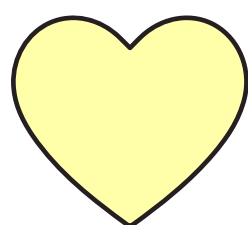|		
Make a card for a person you've missed (friend or staff member)	Draw or write about 1, 2 or 3 things that worry you about going back to school	Draw your classroom
Draw or write about 1, 2 or 3 things you're looking forward to when you go back to school	Draw or write about one thing you have achieved during lockdown	Write a list of all the people in school who can support you when you return to school
What is one question you'd like to ask you teacher about returning to school?	Draw or write about an ability or strength you have. Start with "I can…"	Draw or write about something you admire about one of your school friends or a member of staff (e.g. always does their best, a good friend)
Create a cartoon strip 'how to' guide for something you can do (e.g. How to ride a bike, make a cake, ask someone to play etc.	Draw or write about one of your hopes for the future	Choose a "hopeful" song or, if you're really into music, make a "hopeful" playlist
What are 3 things you're grateful for? If one of them involves a person, make them a card.	Share a story about lockdown with a friend (written, drawn, a comic strip, phone/video call).	Complete the Anna Freud "Reflecting on lockdown" activity

If you think you might benefit from further support, please ask your school's Mental Health Lead about the Mental Health Support Team. You can also call 0115 854 2299 or go to nottinghamshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/camhs-self' if you'd like to self-refer
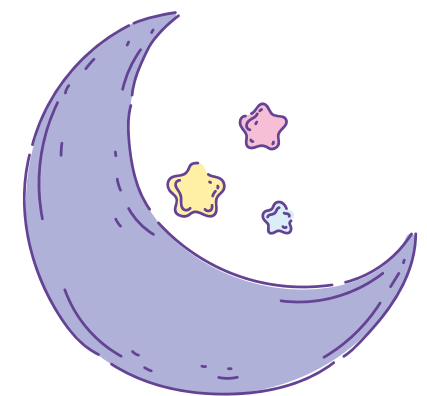
RETURN TO SCHOOL COUNTDOWN

These are the things you can do together each day to help improve your return to school
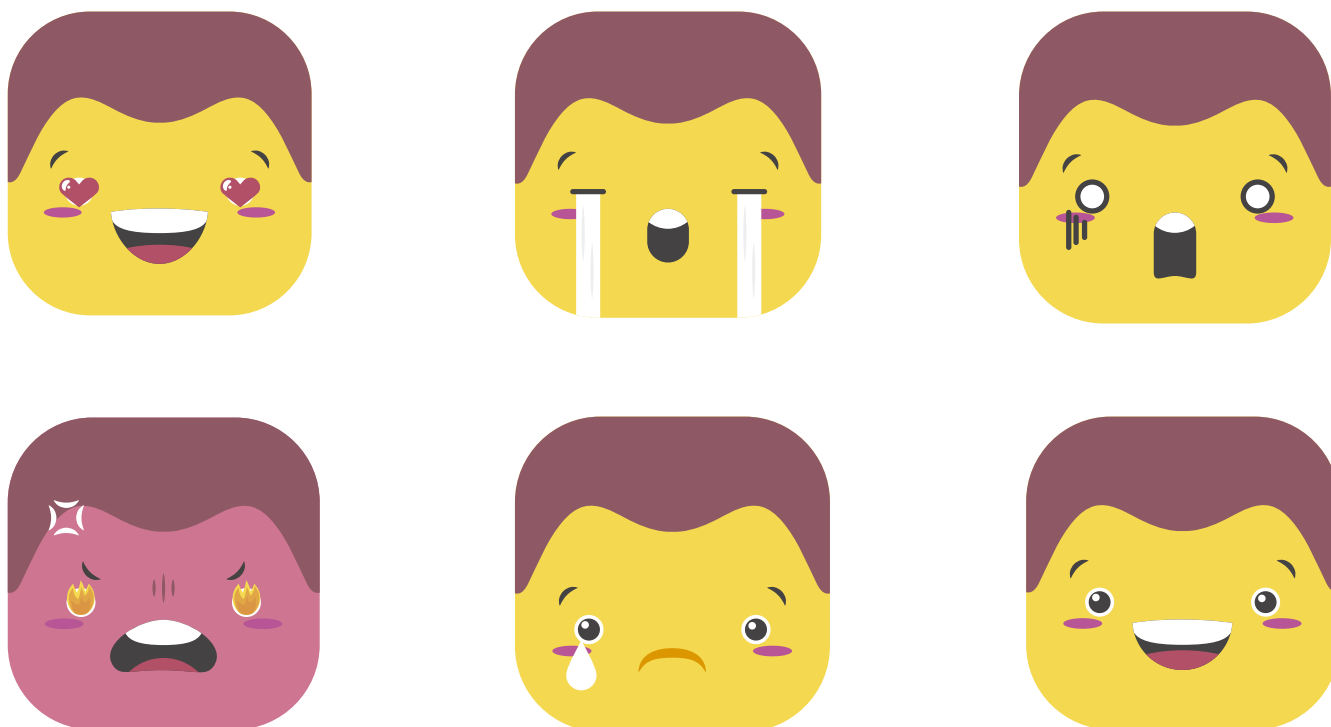
Think about what emotion/s you feel about returning to school. If this is difficult, use emotions cards to help (these can be found online or you can ask your school)

Top 10 bedtime tips

- Try to go to bed at the same time every night; this helps your body to get into a routine

- Follow a bedtime routine that is calming, such as taking a warm bath or reading

- Keep a "worry list" by your bed. If you think of any worries, write them down and save them for tomorrow

- Relaxation exercises, such as light yoga stretches, help to relax the muscles. Do not exercise vigorously, as it will have the opposite effect!

- Use your bed just for sleeping — not doing homework, reading or playing games

- Don't watch scary TV shows or movies close to bedtime because these can sometimes make it hard to fall asleep

- Avoid using smartphones, tablets or other electronic devices for an hour or so before you go to bed

- Listen to relaxing music or sleep stories

- Make sure you're cosy but not too warm

- Remove clocks from the room or turn them to face the wall

TIPS FOR PARENT/CARERS & SUPPORTING ADULTS

These are some things you can do each day to help improve your child's return to school

When your child identifies worries, concerns, questions, anxieties, it's important to listen and take them onboard. Instead of "you're too young to worry about that", try "I can see how that would make you feel worried". Instead of "you don't need to feel sad", try "it's understandable that this would make you feel sad". Instead of "just forget about it", try asking them what their feelings are about it.

Acknowledge

One of the most straightforward ways of acknowledging an emotion is to name it. Naming an emotion can help to stop the emotion in it's tracks and can open up a conversation about how the child or young person is feeling. It can be helpful to use a prompt, to help the child identify their emotions. For younger children, try searching online for "children's emotions cards". Teenagers might prefer to use a "Feelings wheel", which can also be found online.

Validate

Although a child or young person's response to an emotion may not be acceptable (hitting out, avoidance, bad language, etc.), it's important to validate the emotion/s that the child is feeling. People do not act out for no reason; it's a response to a thought or feeling. Validation acknowledges that these feelings exist and that they're real for them. Tell them that you understand how that could be (e.g.) upsetting, annoying, frustrating, etc.

Normalise

Normalising an emotion is helpful because it lets the child or young person know that emotions are something that everybody experiences and that there's no shame in having them. It's also important that they learn that emotions are not to be avoided, as they're a normal part of life and they all serve a purpose. It's OK to share your own emotions with the child. Whilst we don't want to transfer our worries onto them, we do want them to know that we understand what it's like to have these emotions and that they're a part of life. We do need to make sure, however, that we don't diminish their emotion. We're not trying to say, "everybody feels that way, so it's not really so bad", we're trying to say, "this is a normal emotion, which everybody experiences at times, and it's normal for you to experience it too". We need to make sure we validate before we normalise, otherwise the child can feel as though their emotions are being diminished or ignored.