

Helping Your Child to Relax

There will inevitably be times when your child will find school more difficult and stressful than usual and moving to a new class, key stage or year group can be one of those times. Their feelings may manifest themselves in a variety of ways. Difficulty sleeping, moodiness, withdrawal or reluctance to go to school are some of the most common.

If you feel your child is experiencing stress or anxiety, then do arrange to speak to the teacher to see if there is anything happening at school and anything that can be done to support them. Also, have a look at your home life and see if anything could be a cause, such as moving house, a new baby, relationship difficulties or stress in a parent which can also be factors.

Here are some ways in which you can build chill out time into your regular routine so that you can encourage your child to develop strategies to manage stress.

- Make 'down time' a rule for everyone in the house.
- Encourage good use of 'down time' by making new books available to read, introducing a new style of music to listen to or helping your child to learn a craft.
- Don't fill your child's week with organised clubs and activities.
- Encourage good time-management techniques. Younger children can be shown how to learn a couple of spellings a night rather than leaving them all to the last minute, for example. Older children can learn to pack their bags the night before school or make a 'to do' list.
- Try to eat together as a family every day and ban phones and other devices from the table. Family meal time is a great time to talk, decompress, reflect on the day and share ideas.
- Plan regular family activities such as a bike ride, movie night or trip to the park.
- Play board games or card games together. Teach your child the games you knew as a youngster and let them teach you their favourites.
- Prioritise sleep. Younger children in particular benefit from a regular bedtime routine. Make late nights an exceptional treat, even at weekends.
- Regularly review your child's workload, to include school work, socialising time, clubs, sports and activities. Make sure that you continue to be able to achieve a daily spell of 'down time'. As they get older, include them in this.
- Let your child see you following 'down time' rules too. Teach them that stress is a fact of life for everyone and that what matters is being able to manage it effectively.

