



Step up strong

A Year 6 guide for the transition to high school



Keep an eye on our socials for more information around this booklet, and the transition to high school.

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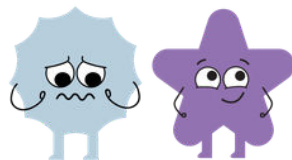
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What are my worries?

Thoughts aren't always facts.



Thinking about going to high school can cause us to worry about all sorts of things. Write down three of your worries. Over time, when something happens that shows the worry isn't true or isn't as bad as you first thought, write it under the worry.

For example:

I am worried that I will get lost.

- My new friend helped me get to Maths on time.
- I found my way to Science today by myself!

1.

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•

2.

•

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3.

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It is important that we help our brain to challenge negative thoughts. Our powerful [amygdala](#) senses danger in new situations, but we need to use our [prefrontal cortex](#) to disprove those fears so that we can feel happy, safe and confident. (Read more about your brain on page 3!)

Getting comfortable

Your brain grows with practice.

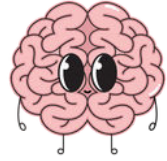
1. Cross your arms as you normally would.
2. Now try crossing them the opposite way.
3. How does it feel?
4. Shake your arms out, then cross them the “wrong” way again.
Repeat three more times.
5. Now how does it feel?



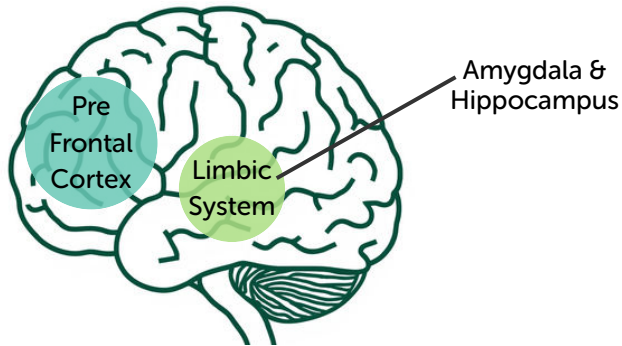
Things get quicker, easier and more comfortable with practice. This activity demonstrates the brain's ability to adapt and learn. New experiences feel uncomfortable because the brain prefers familiar patterns. Our [prefrontal cortex](#) needs time and repetition to learn new things. Just because something feels awkward or uncomfortable, like meeting new people, finding classrooms or trying new clubs, doesn't mean it's unsafe or wrong, it might just mean you need more practice!

Understanding my brain

Your brain is learning too.



Your brain has different parts that affect how you think, feel and act. Your **limbic system** is the centre for your emotions (excitement, anger, joy, worry, etc.). It reacts quickly and is already quite developed. Your **prefrontal cortex** is the thinking part of your brain that helps you make good decisions. This is the last part of your brain to fully develop.



As you grow, your brain is still developing. At your age, and for the next few years, your feelings can feel stronger and your logical decision making is still growing. This is why you might feel worried more frequently or more intensely than someone older, whose **prefrontal cortex** is fully developed.

Practicing our Brain HACK helps us understand and manage our reactions.

Hit pause – Take a breath

Ask yourself – What is really happening? How do you feel?

Choose – What are your options? What are the consequences

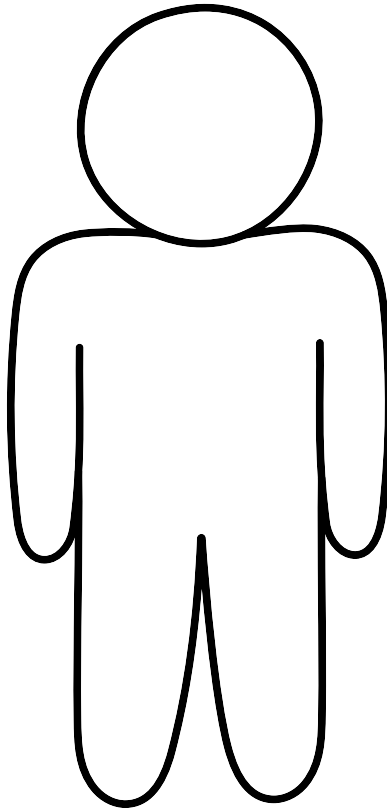
Keep control – You are in control of your actions

Healthy friendships

Be a friend, choose kindness.

On the inside of this figure, write all the qualities you bring to a friendship. Around the outside, write all the qualities you look for in a friend. You could include things like:

- Kind
- Trustworthy
- Honest
- Adventurous
- Reliable
- Funny



Positive relationships boost your emotional wellbeing, help you manage worry, and provide support if you are struggling. Remember - treat other people how you want to be treated.

Conversation starters

Every conversation starts somewhere.

Being prepared with a few conversation starters helps you to feel less anxious in social situations. By having a few open-ended questions ready, you can feel more calm and in control, helping to build your confidence.

Fill in some of your conversation starters below:

What do you usually do at lunchtime? Have you joined any clubs?

The image contains four hand-drawn speech bubbles. The top-left bubble contains the text 'What do you usually do at lunchtime? Have you joined any clubs?'. The other three bubbles (top-right, middle-left, and bottom-right) are empty and intended for the user to write their own conversation starters.

Active listening

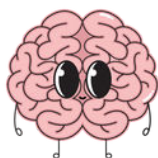
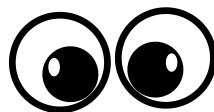
Listening shows you care.

When it comes to building and strengthening friendships and relationships it is important to show people that we value them and care about what they have to say. This helps us to build stronger bonds and reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings or arguments.



Listen carefully to all of their words and don't interrupt. Pay attention and use what you already know about them to try and understand them properly.

Look at the person who is speaking, and nod or smile to show that you are paying attention. This shows the person that they are valued.



Think about your own experiences. Don't take over the conversation, but reflecting on your own understanding and experience can help you make connections more deeply.

Ask questions like 'What happened next?', 'How did that feel?' and repeat back key points to check you understand.



Stay focused, keep your hands away from distractions such as your phone. Face the speaker and stay in the moment.

What's in my bag?

Be prepared, feel confident.

When there are lots of things to think about, it's important to focus on what you can control. Being organised helps you feel calmer and more confident at school. Being prepared can help you stay on track, feel less worried and cope if you get lost or unsure.

Draw or write what you are going to pack in your bag.



My weekly goals

One step at a time.

Write goals you want to achieve in the first few weeks of school. They might include trying something new, talking to someone, acts of kindness or completing homework.

My brave goal:

.....

.....

My friendly goal:

.....

.....

My helpful goal:

.....

.....

My learning goal:

.....

.....

Setting goals activates our brain's reward system (releasing [dopamine](#)), helping us feel happy, confident and proud. Don't just focus on studying, but also trying new things and being a good person. When we achieve goals, it helps us feel more in control and prepared for different situations.

Recognising my emotions, using my coping tools



Notice it, manage it.

Recognising your coping tools and using them when needed helps build emotional literacy, self regulate and act in a kinder way to yourself and others.

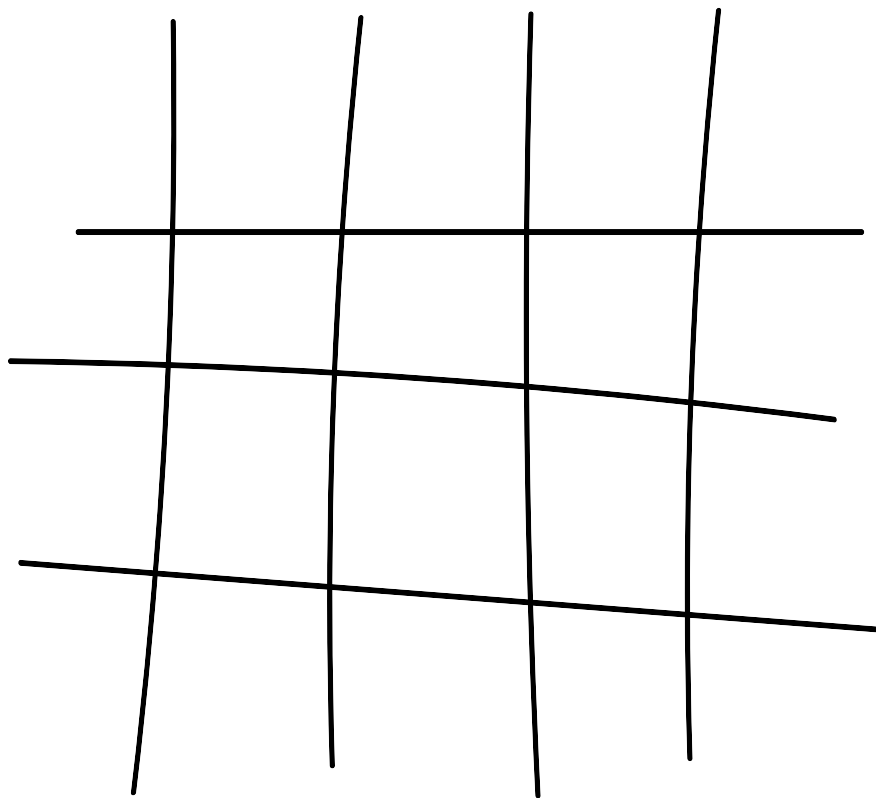
Emotion	Your coping tool
Sad	
Angry	
Jealous	
Confused	
Anxious	
Overwhelmed	

My safety net

Support is always around you.

Your safety net is made up of people who you share good times with, but also the people who listen to you, support you and help you feel better.

Fill in your safety net with your trusted people. These could be people at school, friends, teachers, people at home, or in your clubs.



Knowing what support is available reduces **cortisol** (our stress hormone). Building a sense of safety and belonging is crucial for our mental health.

Signposting

When you need more support.

It is normal to feel nervous during times of change. Speak to a friend, parent/carer, school staff or trusted adult if you need support.



Isle Listen has helpful advice and resources to guide you through different mental health challenges, and tips to boost your wellbeing.

islelisten.im/get-help/#advice



Talk is a single point of access for anyone under 18 seeking 1-1 mental health support. Your parents or teachers can refer you.

talk.islelisten.im



Kooth is a free, safe, and anonymous online mental health and wellbeing platform designed specifically for young people.

kooth.com

What are the names of the people or the places you can go for support in high school:

Find more help on our website
islelisten.im/get-help



Thank you to Canada Life International for supporting the printing of this booklet.