



Helping Parents Cope with their Child's Return to School

Parents have mixed feelings about the ease of lockdown and embracing the “new normal.” Parenting is tough during normal times, however, it has changed dramatically during the social isolation that has been mandated by COVID-19. Helping yourself and your child cope with the back-to-school transition, post lockdown can be very stressful. Both parent and child will communicate their fears and anxieties differently. The onslaught of information on the various social media platforms has added to the panic, confusion and ambivalence of already emotionally vulnerable parents whose coping mechanisms have been undermined during the lockdown period. Both parents and children will have to keep their anxieties in check and navigate through this uncertain transition as calmly and patiently as possible to prevent long lasting psychological distress.

Consider why your child may experience re- entry anxiety following the lockdown.

- Grief/loss of a loved one
- Changes in lifestyle and hygiene practices
- 'Normal' won't be the same as before COVID-19
- Pre-COVID-19 stresses, like school bullying
- Anxiety over learning difficulties
- Existing mental health issues
- Feeling unsafe and out-of-control in public
- Fear of COVID-19 infection and 'second-wave'
- Anxiety of social distancing
- Chronic illnesses

This is a stressful time for all parents. You may want to practice some of the following useful tips.

- Maintain contact with the school.
- Sending your child to school is your choice.
- Join a virtual parenting group.
- Keep calm as you are not alone.
- Change expectations and adopt the 'new normal.'
- Practice self-care.
- Reset and take time out.
- Ask for help.

Counselling and support are readily available to you via WhatsApp, Skype, Microsoft Teams and telephonically. Kindly contact Mrs. Samantha Rajcoomar via email at rajcooms@dut.ac.za for an appointment. You will then be contacted according to your preference of digital communication for a confidential consultation. Referrals to external Health Care Providers will be made, if deemed necessary.

How can you help your child transition back to school?

- Get back into routine.
- Create a plan around transitioning.
- Focus on what you can control.
- Revisit social distancing rules and good hygiene practices.
- Create a psychological safe space to talk.
- Provide reassurance and explore the positives.
- Physical touch makes a huge difference.
- Keep children safe with open COVID-19 communication and be an empathetic active listener.
- Establish how much they already know and understand your child's thoughts.
- Be honest and always answer their questions truthfully.
- Be supportive if your child is scared or confused.
- Problem-solve any concerns together.
- Give them space to share how they are feeling and let them know you are there for them.
- It is OK not to know all the answers.
- Use this as an opportunity to learn something new with your child!

Seeking Help

In light of the current COVID-19 crisis, it is critical that you as parent distinguish between normal acceptable behaviour and concerning behaviour.

If you are concerned that your child is more distressed than expected, is taking longer to recover from the psychological transition or is struggling to cope, it is important to seek professional assistance.

SA Depression & Anxiety Group	0800 212 223
Childline	0800 055 555
Coronavirus 24-hotline:	0800 029 999
COVID WhatsApp no.	0600 123 456
Suicide helpline	0800 567 567
GBV Command Centre	0800 428 428
South African Police Service	08600 101 11
SA Depression & Anxiety Group	0800 212 223