

Returning to school

1. All feelings are OK

You may be feeling happy and excited about returning to school or perhaps you are feeling nervous and worried. You might even be feeling a mix of all of these.

...That's OK!

- Talk about how you're feeling with a trusted adult and/or your friends.
- Naming the feeling out loud can really help.
- Sometimes expressing your feelings through writing or listening to your favourite artist can also help.
- Talking, squeezing a stress ball or moving our bodies through walking, exercise or playing a favourite sport can really help us.
- Try to understand your feelings, they are part of who you are!



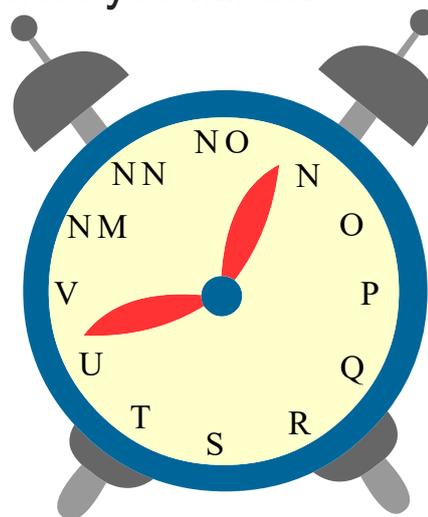
2. Routines are important

It's important to enjoy the rest of your summer holidays, but it is also important to prepare for your routines when you return to school too:

- Get an early night - You might be used to staying up a little later over the past few months. Going to bed earlier will make you feel more awake, alert and ready for your school day.
- Get up and dressed in the mornings - Practice waking up a little earlier and plan to get dressed and washed before having your breakfast. This will help get you prepare for school time when you will have less time in the morning.
- Wind down in the evenings- a good way to wind down is to turn off the TV, computer or phone an hour before you plan to go to sleep. One way to help you do this is to consider having a bath or a shower, reading

a book, or perhaps do some breathing or relaxation exercises. Find something that you enjoy. Winding down before bed lets our brains know we are ready to sleep and this will help us have a good night's sleep.

- Have a chat – talk to your Mam and Dad or a trusted adult about the routine. You have had a different routine for the last six months so it's ok if it takes a few days to get into a nice flow of your new routine. Your parents/ guardian can help you do this, and talk to your friends – they will all be settling into a new routine too.
- As it gets closer to school time, set yourself a goal for your routine, or plan your week ahead and choose the wind down activities you will do.



3. Returning to school & covid19 - the school day

As you know everyone including your parents, teachers and the government, is working hard to ensure that you are safe when you return to school and that's why things will look a little different when you go back. Your school may already have been in contact with you, but here's some additional tips that might help you:

- Most importantly, remember the habits you have developed over the last few months – wash your hands, keep your distance from people, use your elbow when coughing or sneezing, and dispose of any used tissues.
- At school, wash your hands regularly throughout the day. Your school will also have hand sanitiser for you to use on your hands.

- If you're not feeling well, you will not go to school.
- There will be more adults cleaning your school regularly, and more people will be wearing face masks. Depending on your school, age and set-up, you may also be required to wear a mask at times.
- Remember this is a new way for everyone and it will take time for you and everyone else to get used to.
- If you are feeling overwhelmed with the changes, take a moment. Take a big deep breathe in and slowly blow it out. Tell a teacher or a trusted adult, who will listen to you and support you in how you are feeling.
- You can also have a look at www.gov.ie and see if there's any extra guidelines that you were wondering about.
- Make sure when you are seeking information that it is from a trusted source.



4. Our minds and bodies are connected

Our brain and our body are always talking to each other. When we feel something we often feel it somewhere in our bodies such as our tummy or chest.

- It is important to pay attention to this as it can tell us information on what emotion we are feeling.

- Returning to school can bring up lots of feelings for us and there are things we can do to help us feel calm and relaxed during these times.
- The Heart Body Mind section of the Barnardos website has lots of activities for you to try. See www.barnardos.ie/hbm.
- As you return to school try some of these activities with your parents, teachers, and classmates and be a Heart Mind Body Champion!

5. Try to stay positive

Thinking about happy things, spending time outdoors, and staying interested in the world and the people around you will help you stay positive.

- If you enjoy sport, reading, baking or whatever hobbies you have, make sure you spend time enjoying these.
- Remember your family, friends, teachers and government are all working hard to make sure you go back to school safely and enjoy your studies for the year ahead.