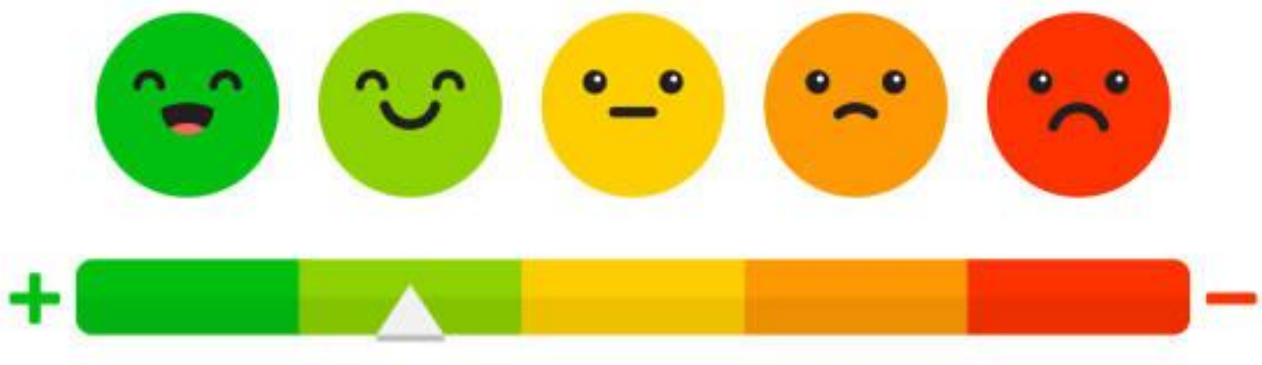
Do You Feel Worried or Anxious About Going to School?





Are you feeling worried or anxious about school?

Worrying or anxiety is a normal feeling that we all experience from time to time. It can even keep us safe from harm or help us perform in difficult situations. However, sometimes anxiety or excessive worrying can become a problem especially when it stops us doing what we want or need to do.

Many children and young people worry about school. This is normal. Anxieties are part of life and learning to deal with them is part of growing up. However sometimes our feelings can make us not want to attend school.

When you think about school, are you…

- Worried
- Scared
- Bad Tempered
- Feeling ill or pretending to feel ill
- Struggling to sleep
- Feeling unsure of yourself
- Feeling Low
- Worrying about friendships



You are not on your own. We all feel like this from time to time because of things that happen in our life at home, school or elsewhere.

There may be some things at school that can make you feel this way, such as…

- → Problems with friendships
- → Changing school
- → Bullying
- → Feeling too different to other people
- → Worried about your appearance



- → Pressure to achieve your target grades
- → Don't like the noise in school
- → Not understanding or coping with school work
- → Not being good at sports



- → Worried about getting change for PE or games
- → Not getting on with some teachers
- → Anxious about exams and tests



There may also be something outside of school that may make you feel this way, such as…

- → Death of somebody important to you
- → Parents arguing or splitting up
- → A parent who is ill



- → Members of your family feeling worried
- → Death or loss of a pet
- → Birth of a new brother or sister

- → New people moving into your home
- → Difficulties in getting to school
- → Parents not understanding your feelings

What happens when you don't attend school?

It is very important to try to overcome these difficulties as soon as possible. Sometimes you might feel that staying at home is the best thing to do as it makes you feel better.

The more time you spend out of school, you may start to feel worried about the lessons you've missed and having work to catch up on. You may also worry about not seeing your friends which might make you feel like staying at home.



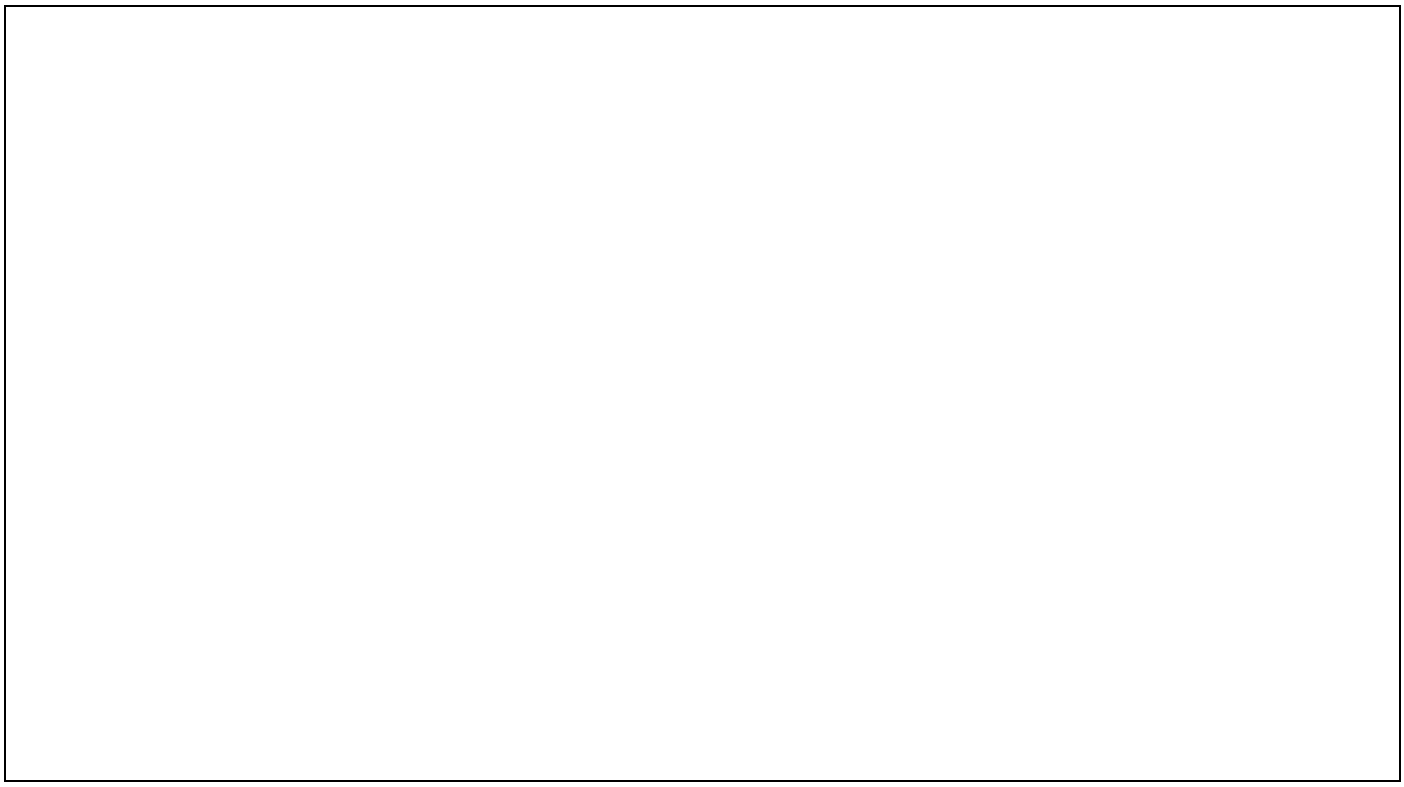
It is important to let an adult know if you are worried about anything in school or at home and get the help to make you feel better rather than worrying about things getting worse and getting stuck.

What do I do if I feel like this?

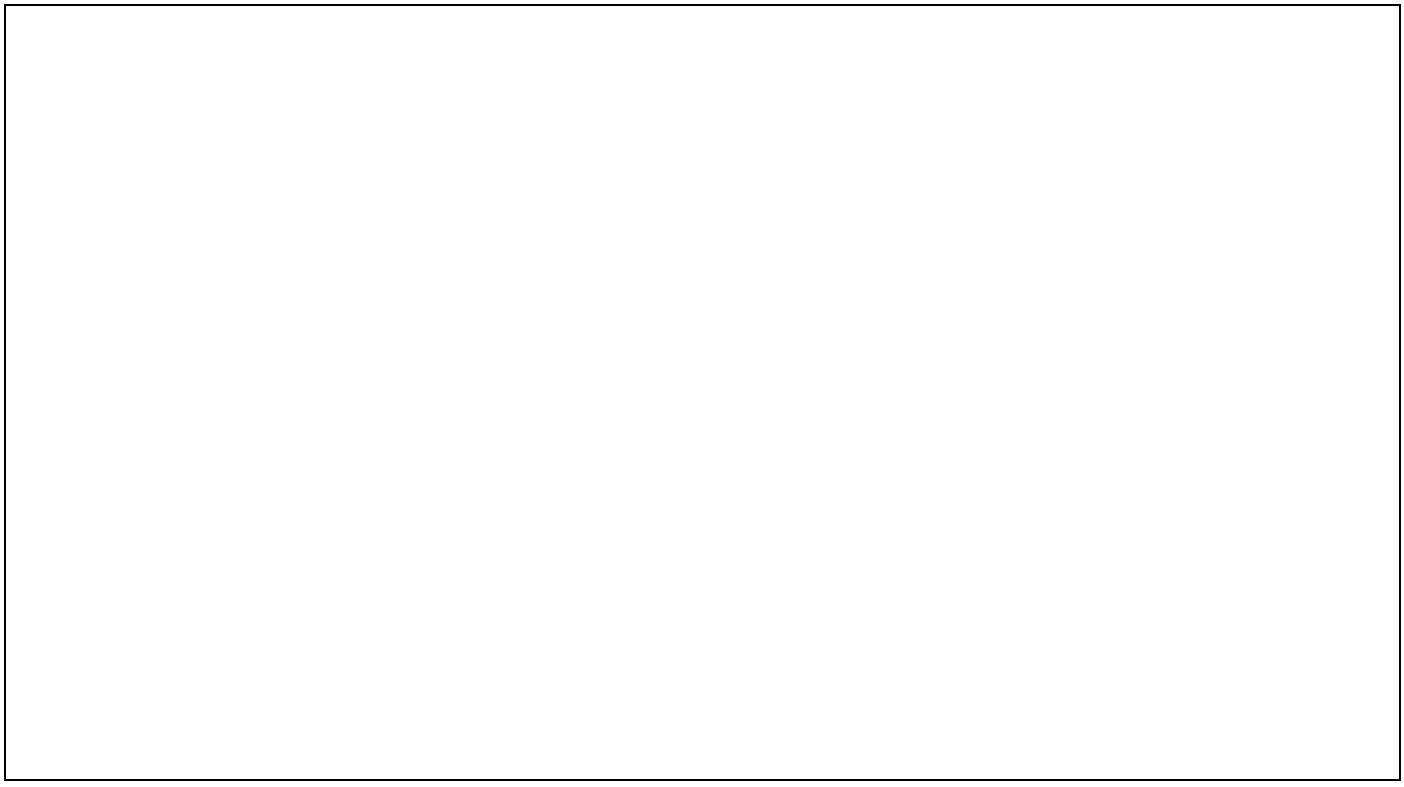
Most importantly, talk to somebody. This could be your parents, an adult at school, other family members or a friend. Use the list below to think about the things that are worrying you, you can either write these down or draw them in the boxes.

Most Worried About 	
Least Worried About 	

What is school like now? Draw below…



What would you like school to be like? Draw below…



What can your school do to help you?

Find an adult at school you trust and talk to them, they should listen and believe you. They can work with you and your parents to help find out what things are worrying you and what you and they can do to help you. They might also talk to some professionals about how to help you.

Things they could do include: These actions could be written up into a support plan so that you, your parents and school know what actions have been agreed to help support you.

This might also look like…

- Having a key person to talk to at school.
- Help with your school work or friends.
- Having a 'safe space' for you to go to at school.
- Talking to you about your timetable, lessons, and other worries.

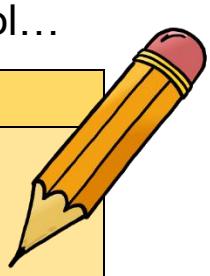


Benefits of going back to school…

Here are some people's favourite things about going to school:

- Seeing your friends
- Learning new things
- Going to your favourite lessons
- Playing outside break and lunch time
- Going on school trips

Everyone likes different things about school, and that's okay! Try using the list below to think about somethings that you like about school…



What are **3 things** you like about school?
1.
2.
3.

What can I do to get back to school?

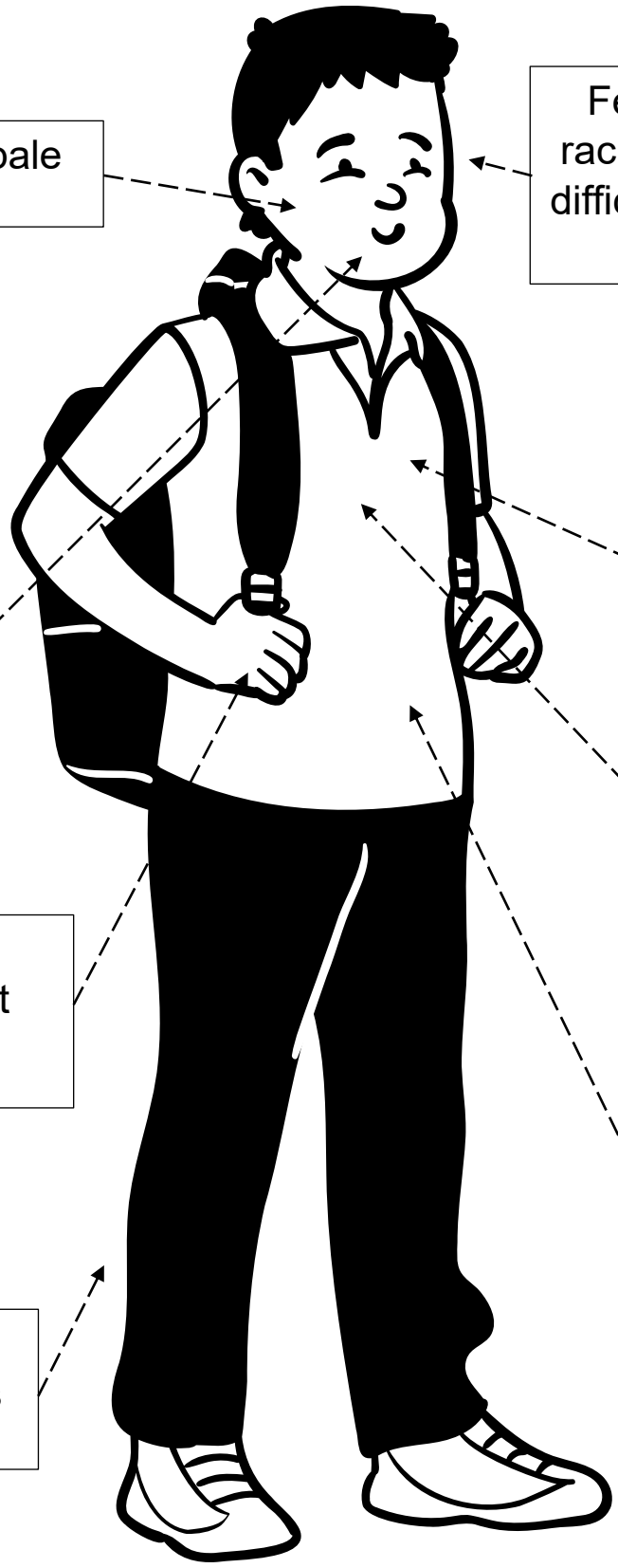
If your worries are so great that you are not attending school, it is important that you work with your school and your parents to help you get back to attending school as soon as possible.

Things you can do to help include…

- Make you views known and decide whether / how much you want to be involved in the planning of how you will go back to school (you can change your mind about this!).
- Work with your parents and teachers to think of things that will help you.
- Think about a time that you did cope with a worry. What did you do then?
- Keep in contact with your friends and what is happening at school.
- Catch up on some of the schoolwork that you might have missed.
- Take little steps to get back into the routine – don't expect that everything will get back to normal or will be okay immediately.
- Remember that every day is a fresh start!
- Acknowledge the steps you have taken and celebrate the small successes.

When you are feeling worried…

Your whole body reacts when you are anxious.



Skin goes pale

Feeling tired, racing thoughts, difficulty sleeping

Dry mouth or throat

Heart beats faster

Shortness of breath

Sweaty palms and feeling hot

Muscle aches and headaches

Bad stomach, poor digestion and bowel problems

Try to notice when you start to feel any of the signs above and stop take a moment. There are many different strategies to help you feel relaxed and calm when you are feeling stressed or anxious and you will need to find the ones that work for you.

To get started, try using some of these…

Try relaxing your body…

1. Sit or lie somewhere quiet and comfortable
2. Stretch out your arms and make a fist with your hands, then relax
3. Push your legs out, wiggle your toes, and then relax
4. Shut your eyes tight and make a scrunched-up face, and then relax



Try calm breathing…

6. Take a slow breath in through your nose while counting to 4
7. Hold your breath in for 1 or 2 seconds
8. Slowly breath out through your mouth for 4 seconds
9. Wait 5 seconds before breathing in again
10. Repeat 5 times.



Try visualisation…



1. Close your eyes
2. Take slow deep breaths in and out
3. Think of your favourite place, maybe somewhere that you go on holiday
4. Focus on the place and imagine you are there
5. What can you see? What can you smell? What can you feel?

Try physical exercise…

This helps your heartbeat faster and can make you feel good. You might like running, cycling, swimming, playing football, rugby, basketball, or cricket. Choose an exercise you love and try to do this often.



Try balanced thinking…

If you are worrying a lot and having sad thoughts, try thinking of a happier thought instead. Every time you notice yourself thinking a sad thought or worrying – stop and tell yourself the happy thought instead, like 'I am brave', 'I am kind' or 'I am strong'.



Try 5 , 4 , 3 , 2 , 1…

Think of 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste.



Mapping the landscape of your school

With thanks to Lancashire Educational Psychology Service

1. The physical environment

- Look carefully at a map of your school.
- Use highlighter pens to mark how the areas on the map make you feel.

Green = I feel calm and relaxed in this space

Yellow = I feel anxious/uncomfortable in this space

Red = I would like to avoid this space as it makes me very anxious

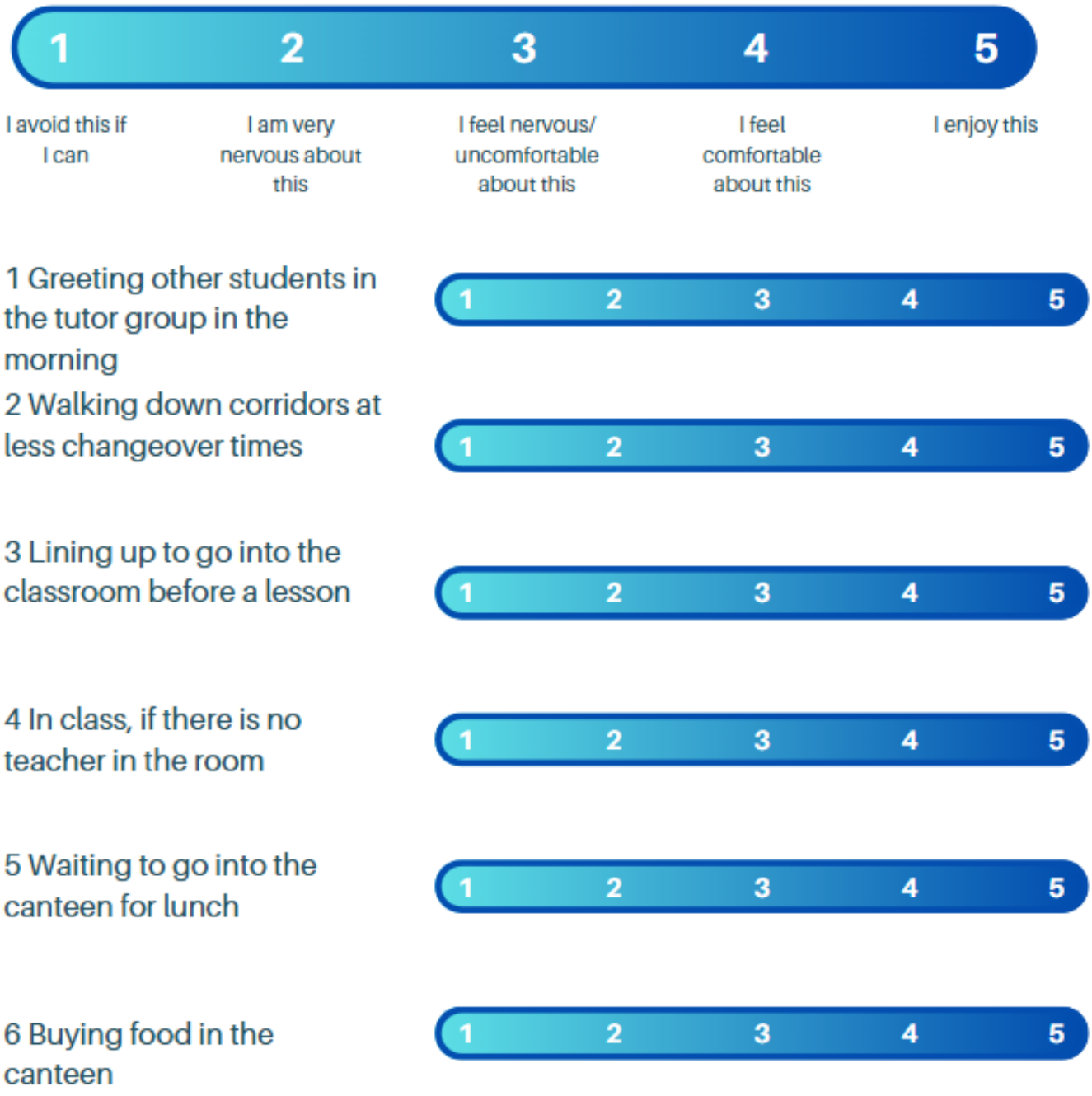
For the areas that you have coloured red, are there any circumstances e.g., time of day, which make you feel more safe?

What might the school do to help you feel safer in your 'red' areas?

2. The social environment

During the school day children work with their class and talk to other children and adults. Sometimes this can be fun but sometimes we can feel nervous about being with other people.

What things that you do with other people make you happy or upset you?



7 Sitting in the canteen



8 Break times when I have to go out with the other students



9 Changing for PE



10 Taking part in PE, games



11 Talking to subjects teachers



12 Talking to support staff/staff



13 Getting to school and home from school:

Walk



Bus



Taxi



14 Talking to other students in my tutor group



15 Talking to classmates



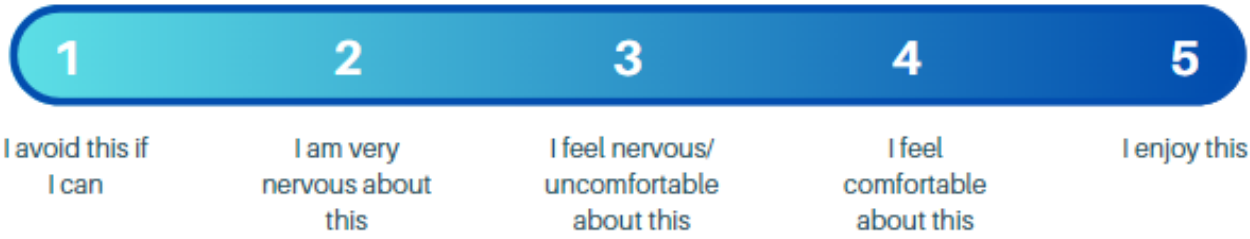
For the situations that you find most difficult – please write down what would make them easier for you.

What could make a difference…	
Situation	**Idea**

3. The learning environment

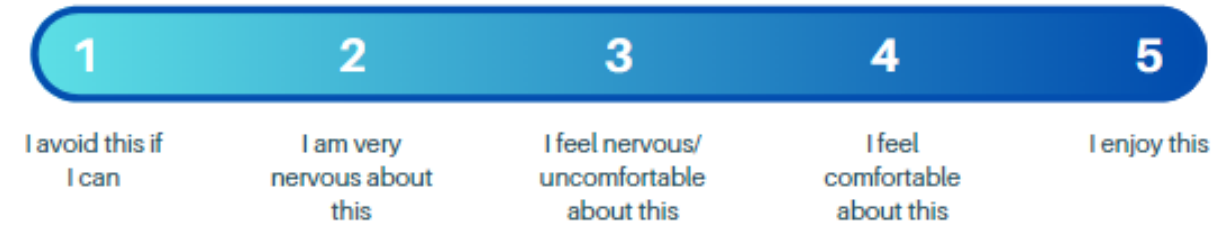
Subject preferences

Many different subjects are taught in school and some we find easier and more interesting than others. Rate the subjects on the list on a scale of 1-5.



Subject	Rating	Subject	Rating
Science		**Art**	
ICT		DT	
Reading		Geography	
PE/Games		French etc.,	
Drama		Welsh	
Topic work		English	
RE		Dance	
Maths		Music	

Classes involve different ways of working and some we will find more comfortable than others. Use the 5-point scale to indicate how you feel about different things that happen in class.



1 Answering questions in class



2 Listening when the teacher explains what we are going to do in the lesson



3 Following instructions



4 Knowing what to do to start a task



5 Working on my own



6 Working with a learning partner



7 Working in a group



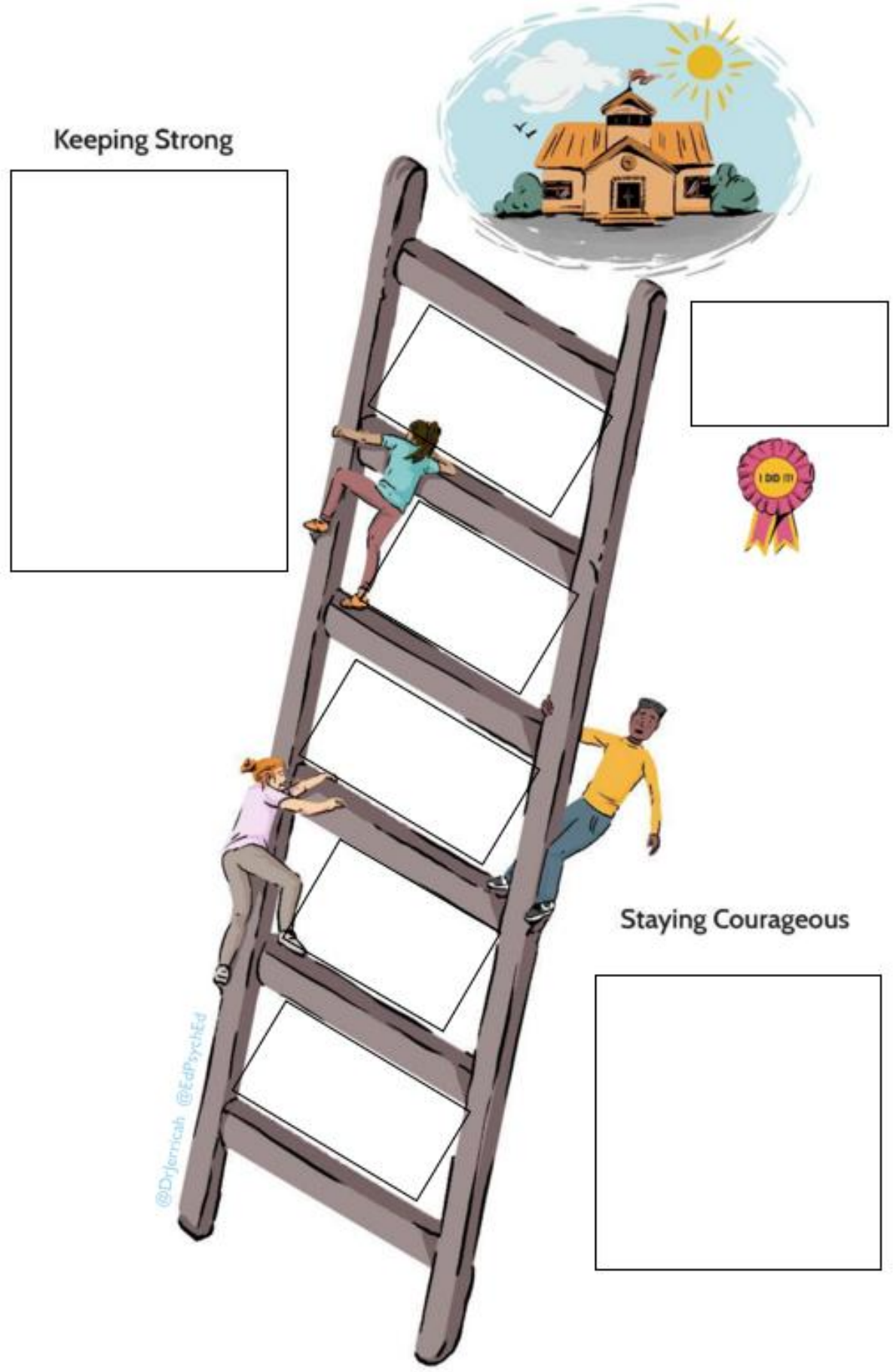
8 Asking a teacher for help when I have not understood something



9 Working in a quiet class	1 2 3 4 5
10 Working when other students are messing around	1 2 3 4 5
11 Reading aloud in class	1 2 3 4 5
12 Written work - handwriting	1 2 3 4 5
13 Recording what I have done using pictures, diagrams or graphs	1 2 3 4 5
14 Using the computer to record what I have done	1 2 3 4 5
15 When the teacher tells off another student	1 2 3 4 5
16 When the teacher is giving back our homework	1 2 3 4 5
17 When the teacher is marking my work	1 2 3 4 5
18 When I go into class and my usual teacher is not there, but a cover	1 2 3 4 5
19 When our class has been moved to a different room	1 2 3 4 5

20 Making sure I have all the books and equipment I need for the class	1 2 3 4 5
21 writing down homework so that I can understand what to do when I get home	1 2 3 4 5
22 When I have an LSA supporting me in class	1 2 3 4 5
23 When I have to stop what I am doing before I have finished	1 2 3 4 5
24 When the teacher writes down what we have to do as well as telling us	1 2 3 4 5
25 When the teacher uses pictures, diagrams, videos etc to help explain things	1 2 3 4 5
26 Homework	1 2 3 4 5
27 Sharing equipment in practical lessons, e.g. art or DT	1 2 3 4 5
28 When other students try to distract me.	1 2 3 4 5
29 When the teacher introduces a new topic	1 2 3 4 5
30 Class tests and assessments	1 2 3 4 5

Avoidance Hierarchy



Places to get further help

Childline comforts, advises and protects children 24 hours a day and offers free confidential counselling. Phone 0800 1111 (24 hours) www.childline.org

YoungMinds is the UK's leading charity championing the wellbeing and mental health of young people www.youngminds.org.uk

The Mix provides information, support and listening for people under 25. Phone 0808 808 4994 (24 hours) www.themix.org.uk

d-exy.com is a free, safe and anonymous online support for young people. They offer one on one online counselling, and also provide resources to help you manage your feelings. You can access this support via this link: https://www.d-exy.com/

Tidy Minds is a website for children and young people in Swansea to find the right support. It has a wealth of information and resources for you to explore. https://tidyminds.org.uk/

If you feel comfortable, you may also want to talk to an adult at school. They will be able to help you find more support in Swansea, or help you think about how they can help you in school.

You can also speak to your teacher about talking to a counsellor from the **Platfform Counselling Service** in school, if you think this might help you.



Book List

Here are some books you may wish to read yourself or discuss with an adult…

- Starving the Anxiety Gremlin by Kate Collins-Donnelly.
- Outsmarting Worry: An Older Kid's Guide to Managing Anxiety by Dawn Huebner.
- Help! I've Got an Alarm Bell Going Off in My Head! How Panic, Anxiety and Stress Affect Your Body by K.L. Aspenden.
- Mindfulness For Teen Anxiety: A Workbook For Overcoming Anxiety At Home, At School And Everywhere Else by Christopher Willard.
- Get Out Of Your Mind And Into Your Life For Teens by Joseph V. Ciarrochi , Louise Hayes and Ann Bailey.
- My Anxiety Handbook: Getting Back On Track by Bridie Gallagher, Phoebe McEwen & Sue Knowles (for secondary-age children).
- A Better Day: Your Positive Mental Health Handbook by Dr Alex George.
- A Better Day Journal: Fun and Calming Activities for Positive Mental Health by Dr Alex George.

