**Anxieties about returning back to school.**

Do you have worries about returning to school after being at home for long? Then take a read through this,

Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling that we all experience at times. It is a word often used to describe when we feel 'uptight', 'irritable', and ‘nervous’, 'tense', or 'wound up'. When we are anxious we normally experience a variety of uncomfortable physical sensations. These include:

* Increased heart rate
* Muscular tension
* Sweating
* Trembling
* Feelings of breathlessness

As well as this, anxiety affects us mentally too. For example, when anxious, we often worry for large periods of time, so much so that our worry can feel out of control. These worries are often about a variety of issues and commonly our mind jumps quickly from one worry to another.

**Physical Symptoms**

* Tense body/Muscular pain
* Dizzy/Faint Chest tight or painful
* Stomach Churning Trembling or tingling sensations
* Heart racing/palpitations breathing faster or slower than usual Concentration difficulties.

**Thinking styles**

* You often worry 'what if' something bad happens
* Your mind jumps from worry to worry
* You often imagine the worst case scenarios

Fortunately, there are a number of strategies that we can use to reduce our anxiety. These include:

* Understanding more about anxiety.
* Learning how to challenge your unhelpful thoughts and see things in a more realistic light.
* Improving your problem solving skills.
* Learning how to reduce the amount of time you spend worrying.
* Learning how you can feel more relaxed (physically and mentally).
* Learning how to stop avoiding the things that make you anxious.

The symptoms we experience when anxious are often referred to as the 'fight or flight' response. This comes from the idea that people primarily experience anxiety to help them either fight or run away from danger. For example, if you saw a burglar, two options open to you would be to either - fight them off (fight) or try to run away (flight). Our fight or flight response would kick in to help us at this point. For example:

* Our hearts would begin beating more quickly (supplying blood to our muscles).
* We would sweat (to cool us down).
* Our muscles would become tense (ready for action).
* We would take deeper breaths (to supply oxygen to our muscles).

In essence, all of these responses would aid our escape or improve our ability to stay and fight the intruder. When considered in this way, we can see how the symptoms of anxiety are helpful to us. Indeed, all of the physical symptoms we experience when anxious play a helpful role in protecting us in such circumstances.

**Techniques to aid**

This simple technique involves focusing on and slowing down our breathing patterns. Many people find this simple exercise very relaxing. It can be particularly helpful for those who feel dizzy or light headed when they feel worried or stressed. This sometimes happens because people's breathing changes and gets quicker when they feel distressed.

Remember, you can use this exercise to help you relax at any time. You could even use it to help you get off to sleep. However, it is particularly useful if you ever feel light-headed, dizzy or faint.

**Beginning**

* Get into a comfortable position.

**Middle**

* Work out a stable breathing rhythm. Perhaps try to breathe in for three seconds, hold this breathe for two seconds, and then breathe out for three seconds. It can be helpful to count as you do this

E.g. **IN: 1 - 2 - 3, HOLD: 1 - 2, OUT: 1 - 2 - 3, HOLD: 1 - 2.**

**Ending**

* Repeat this action for a few minutes. You should soon begin to feel more relaxed. If you were feeling dizzy then this should also get better after a few minutes.

**Things to consider**

**Don't fear** the symptoms of anxiety. Anxiety is a natural and healthy reaction that is not dangerous.

Try not to escape situations you fear half-way through. Stay, and your anxiety will eventually decrease.

Your anxiety will reduce each time you confront a feared situation. Try to confront your fears as often as possible.

You may also find it helpful to challenge any unhelpful thoughts as you face a fear.

Look out for other situations that you avoid due to anxiety. Try to gradually reduce your avoidance more and more.