

COOLMINDS

TALK IT OUT!

A GUIDE FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE

Returning to School

see
see
see

HELP! I'M FINALLY GOING BACK TO SCHOOL...



The coronavirus pandemic has brought about many changes in our daily lives in a very short period of time. For many this has created feelings of fear, isolation, and anxiety, which we've addressed briefly in our "Staying Well During the Coronavirus Outbreak" booklet [here](#).

While the improving coronavirus situation is good news, transitioning back to on-campus classes presents another change in our daily lives, which might take some time to adapt to. This booklet primarily aims to help young people in Hong Kong cope with going back to school after the class suspension due to the Covid-19 outbreak. However, if you're reading this as you get ready to go back to school after long holidays, or if you're coming back to school after a leave of absence, this booklet may be useful to you too.

There are lots of reasons why we might feel nervous or apprehensive about returning to school.

For example, we might feel anxious because we haven't seen our friends in a long time, and we might worry that our social circles may look different or that we'll have been forgotten.



We might worry about the amount of content that we missed (like science classes with a laboratory component, or other in-person classes we weren't able to make-up online) and fear that our teachers will have unrealistically high expectations on us.

We will have to adjust to a new schedule, which might involve getting up earlier, spending more hours away from home, and not being able to study as flexibly as we've grown used to.



**YOU ARE
NOT ALONE!**

Hong Kong Christian Service (HKCS), surveyed nearly 4,800 F1-F5 students in HK and discovered that:

- 70% surveyed students wanted to return to school to study
- 60% wanted to return so they could see their classmates again
- 57% anxious about re-adjusting to attending school again.
- 70% concerned about catching up on time lost during the shutdown
- Nearly half of surveyed students reported worsened academic stress.
- Higher stress for seniors preparing for the HKDSEs next year.
- 70% worried they would be infected by the coronavirus



Tips for a smooth back-to-school transition

1 prepare in advance

- A week or so before school officially starts, get used to going to bed at a reasonable time and getting up earlier.
- To avoid distractions in the middle of the night, it can be helpful to switch off the wifi function on your phone, or to charge your electronic devices in another room if you aren't using the alarm function. You could also consider buying a cheap alarm clock to minimise distractions.
- It is also a good idea to be mindful of the amount of caffeine you're drinking, particularly in the afternoon and evening.
- A minimum of 8 to 9 hours of good sleep a night is recommended for teenagers. Having better sleep facilitates learning, enhances memory, and can give you more energy to socialise with your classmates!

2 reconnect with your peers

Your classmates are all in the same boat! You may have already stayed in touch virtually in the past few months, but it's always good to talk to someone and connect socially - it could help you feel less alone, and might even make you feel more excited to go back. It can also help validate your friends' feelings if they are struggling with the same thoughts.

ALWAYS
THINKING
OF YOU...

3 Know your limits and when to ask for help

- Before your first day back, it may be worth brainstorming a plan to ensure that you will have the right level of support when you need it.
- This plan can involve other individuals like your parents, your school counsellor, your teachers, or other people you trust and feel understand you.
- You can use it to write down a list of resources you can turn to for support (if you want to find a list of community organisations in Hong Kong, please click [here](#)), things you notice that you feel or do when you start to get anxious or upset, and your personal coping skills.

Turn to our "Returning to School Toolkit" page as a starting point!!



4 Know when and how to say no

✧
Saying no doesn't mean being rude, selfish, or unkind, and you do not need to apologise or create explanations that other people will accept. You can still be polite and decline an offer, e.g.:
"Thank you for asking, but I can't/don't want to"

Your self-worth is not based on how many times you agree to doing things for other people at the expense of your own wants/needs. Ask yourself - is it really worth it to join in or go to this event? It is better to say no now than to feel guilty or frustrated later, especially if you have past experience and know that you won't enjoy it or don't have the capacity to do something. By knowing when and how to say no, not only will you gain a sense of control and freedom, it can also be an empowering experience when you overcome the fear of rejection.

Going back to school after a long break can create a lot of pressure because you might feel like you have to try extra hard to please people. You might feel like you have to say yes to everything simply because you've not seen your friends for a while and they secretly expect you to. But if someone's asking you to do something you're uncomfortable doing, remember *you always have a right to say no.*

5 Don't be too hard on yourself

In the past few months, you've spent a lot of time learning remotely, and returning to a full day school schedule could be really overwhelming. Just like you would prepare in advance physically, **it is also important to prepare in advance mentally!** Remember to give yourself time to adjust to being physically back at school, and give yourself the credit you deserve for holding up so far. It can also be encouraging to reflect on how much you have grown in the process.

When the Coolminds team asked students to list some of the positive things they experienced whilst staying at home, here were some of their responses:

Learning to be a more independent thinker
Developing better time management skills
Feeling well rested
Having more family time

6 Set realistic expectations

It has been nearly five months since school has been closed. Even though schools are starting soon, there isn't much time left before summer holidays begin. It's important to set realistic goals and expectations on how much you can accomplish within these 2-3 months.

- Set some achievable goals that will help you have a clear sense of direction and idea of how the near future will look.
- This can help relieve pressure and any unnecessary stress from this transition.
- Communicate with your teacher to minimize any distress that may be caused from this back-to-school transition.

SELF-REFLECTION JOURNAL

looking through
the memories...



I **recognise** and **celebrate** that I've had to cope with a lot in these past few months. Here's what I'm proud of **achieving** and **overcoming** during my break from school: 🙌

What are some **positive experiences** I've had during this break?

Things I'm **looking forward to** when school starts 🥰

SMART goals

Specific are your goals clear and defined?
Measurable can you keep track of your progress?
Achievable if your goals are too difficult or easy, it's hard to stay motivated
Relevant can you identify what your contribution to your goal is?
Time limit be sure set realistic timescales.

my goals

Personal Goals:

Friendship Goals:

Academic Goals:

RETURNING-TO- SCHOOL TOOLKIT

Things that make me **anxious** about returning to school. What are my **fears**?

What can I do to **make myself feel better** when I'm upset?



Here are some **people** at school I can turn to for **support**

Here are some **places** I can go to where I feel **safe at school**



What are some things **I notice about myself** when I'm feeling...



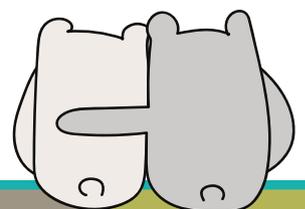
a) **Anxious**

b) **Sad**

c) **Stressed**

What are some things **others** notice about me when I'm feeling these emotions?

And what can they do to **help me feel better**?



EMERGENCY SUPPORT

If you are experiencing strong levels of distress or trauma which are interfering with your life, remember that you do not have to face it alone, and that **help is available**.

For emergency support, please contact the hotlines below:

Emergency hotline: 999

The Samaritans 24-hour hotline (Multilingual): (852) 2896 0000

Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong 24-hour hotline (Cantonese only): (852) 2389 2222

Suicide Prevention Services 24-hour hotline (Cantonese only): (852) 2382 0000

OpenUp 24/7 online emotional support service (English/Chinese): www.openup.hk

More support services can be found [here](https://www.coolmindshk.com/en/emergency-hotlines/): <https://www.coolmindshk.com/en/emergency-hotlines/>

More non-urgent support services can be found [here](https://www.coolmindshk.com/en/communitydirectory/): <https://www.coolmindshk.com/en/communitydirectory/>



RESOURCES

www.coolmindshk.com

IG: [@coolminds.hk](https://www.instagram.com/coolminds.hk)

FB: [@coolmindshongkong](https://www.facebook.com/coolmindshongkong)

For more youth mental health information and resources, check out our Coolminds website. You can learn more about our upcoming events and trainings for parents, teachers and students, and read blog articles and stories written by young people in Hong Kong.



CONTACT US

Got a question?

Write to us [here](#) or email hello@coolmindshk.com

Want to learn more? Visit our [FAQ page here](#)



We're a project by:

