MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAM

NHS
Humber Teaching
NHS Foundation Trust

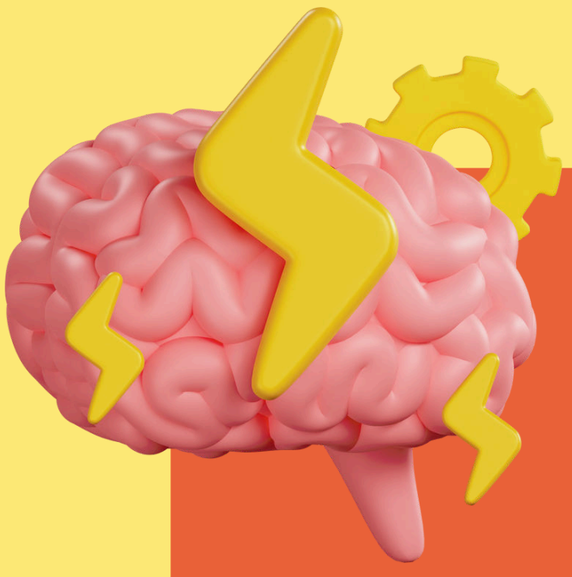
Top tips for starting your journey into secondary school

A guide for young people

Introduction

Moving from primary to secondary school is exciting - a rite of passage. But it can also be a daunting or anxious time. This resource has been created to help you make a smooth transition to your new school. You may be feeling anxious or nervous about the change you are about to embark on but these are all normal feelings and so it's okay to feel like that.

We have put together some top tips on how to manage this next step so hopefully things will feel a little easier for you. We've also added some coping cards which you can refer to when you need them. There are some activities too, but ultimately it's about what works for you, so let's get into it, are you in?



What is mental health?

Everybody has mental health, let's start there.

Mental health is about **how we think, feel and act**. Just like physical health, we all have it and we need to take care of it.

Our mental health is on a spectrum which can range from good to poor:

- **With good mental health**, our thinking can be flexible, helpful and realistic, we may feel confident and act calmly.
- **With poor mental health**, we might find that the way we're thinking, feeling or acting becomes difficult to cope with. We might not enjoy things we used to like doing. We might feel sad or angry for longer than usual. Or we might feel like we can't control how we feel or behave.

Top Tips

Be prepared: Make sure you've checked your school supplies list and pack your bag with everything you need the night before. Being organised will reduce stress and make you feel more relaxed.

Stick to a routine: Go to bed on time each night before school to help your body clock get into sync. Have a set time for homework and doing things you enjoy. Routines and consistency help you to manage your time and reduce anxiety.

Join a club: Try joining clubs and activities, you will learn new skills and connect with others over a common interest. Making new friends will make the transition to a new school a lot easier.

Share how you're feeling: Talk to a trusted adult or friend about your feelings. Sharing your feelings can help you to feel better and get the support you need.

Look after yourself: We all have things we need to do to look after ourselves, like getting enough sleep, eating well and taking care of our personal hygiene. Staying on top of these things can make us feel good and help us feel more able to take on life's challenges.

Ask for help: Asking for support could be your magic weapon. If you're struggling with school work, friendships or anything school related, don't struggle alone, ask for help. Teachers and parents are there to help and support you.

Embrace the change and believe in yourself!

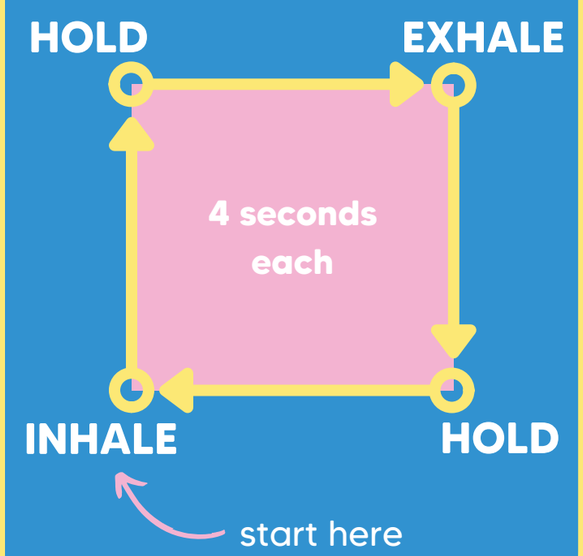
Coping Strategies

Breathing and grounding techniques for stress and anxiety are great go-to strategies for when you need to calm yourself down, whether that be in school, at home or anywhere.

Coping strategies only take a few minutes, they can be done anywhere and for as long or as short as you like. You will benefit if you do them regularly as part of your daily routine, so get to know them and practice them when you're calm so that you're better prepared to use them when you need to.

Below you'll find our top 8 go-to coping strategies for bringing a sense of calm over your body and mind. You can download these, plus an extra special bumper pack by clicking the link in our Instagram bio.

BOX BREATHING



5, 4, 3, 2, 1

5 — 5 things you can see

4 — 4 things you can touch

3 — 3 things you can hear

2 — 2 things you can smell

1 — 1 thing you can taste

FIVE FINGER BREATHING

Hold one hand out. With your other hand, trace each finger up as you breathe in and trace each finger down as you breathe out.

BODY SCAN

Sit quietly or lie down.
Start at one end of your body and focus on each body part.
Notice any areas of tension then soften and relax.
Continue until your whole body feels completely relaxed.

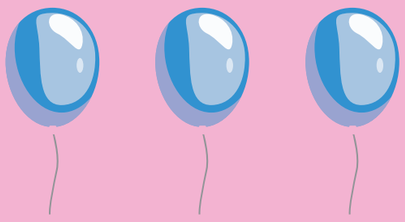
ROOM SEARCH

Sit quietly and scan the room.
Look for and say what things you can see that fit into a particular category.

e.g.
Things that are (colour)
Things that are (shape)
Things that are (material)

BALLOON BREATHING

Take a deep breathe in and fill your belly like you're inflating a balloon, count 1, 2, 3, 4 to breathe in and fill the balloon in your belly.



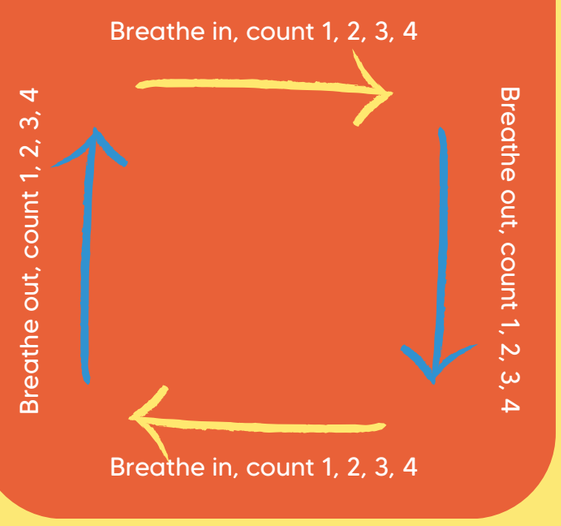
Pause and let all of the air out like you're letting a balloon deflate, count 1, 2, 3, 4 to breath out and let the balloon go down

EARTHING

Take off your shoes and walk on natural surfaces like grass, sand or soil.

SQUARE BREATHING

Imagine you're drawing a square...

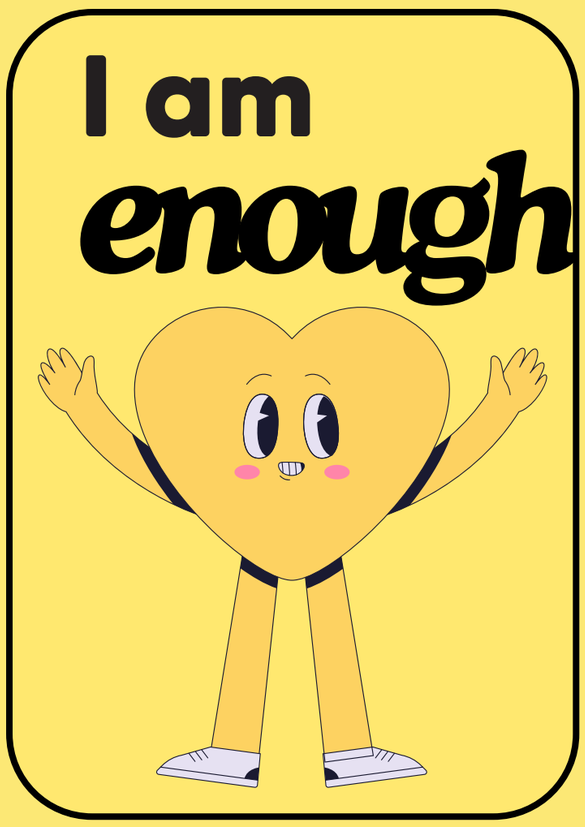


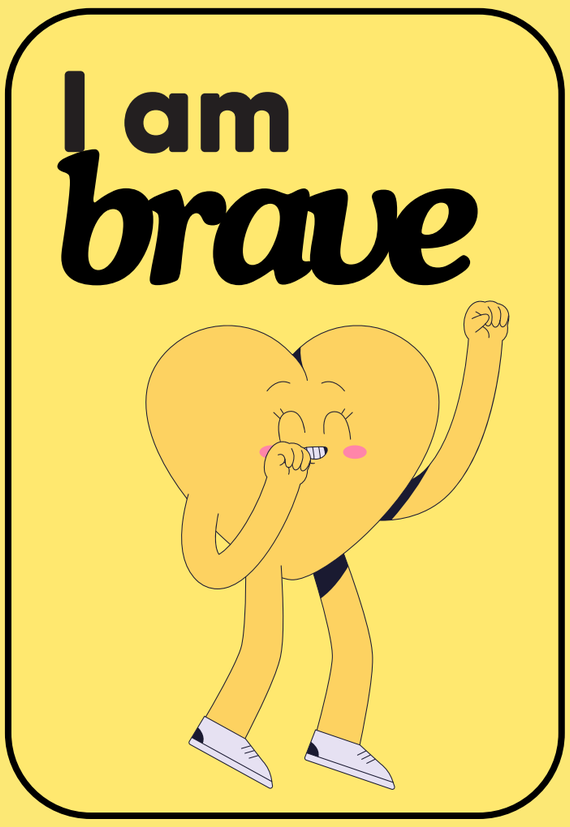
Positive Affirmation Cards

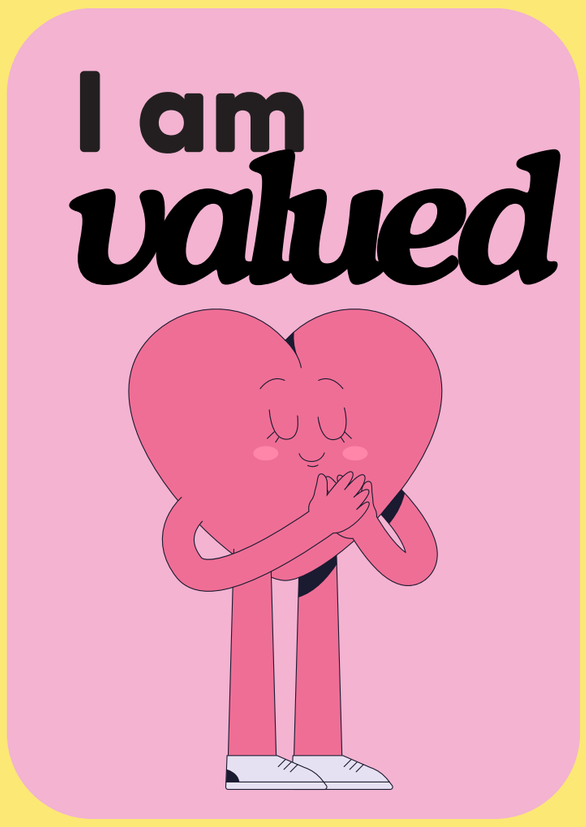
When we are facing change and going through a transition it’s natural for our thoughts and feelings to become more negative, but it is important to recognise this, catch the thoughts and re-frame them.

Positive affirmations are a powerful tool for building confidence, resilience, and positive self-talk. Positive affirmations can significantly impact your mindset and guide you toward self-acceptance and self-love by reinforcing the positive things you see and think about yourself.

Use the cards below to start your own collection of positive affirmations and each day add a new card to your deck. Practising this daily will have a dramatic benefit on your mindset.





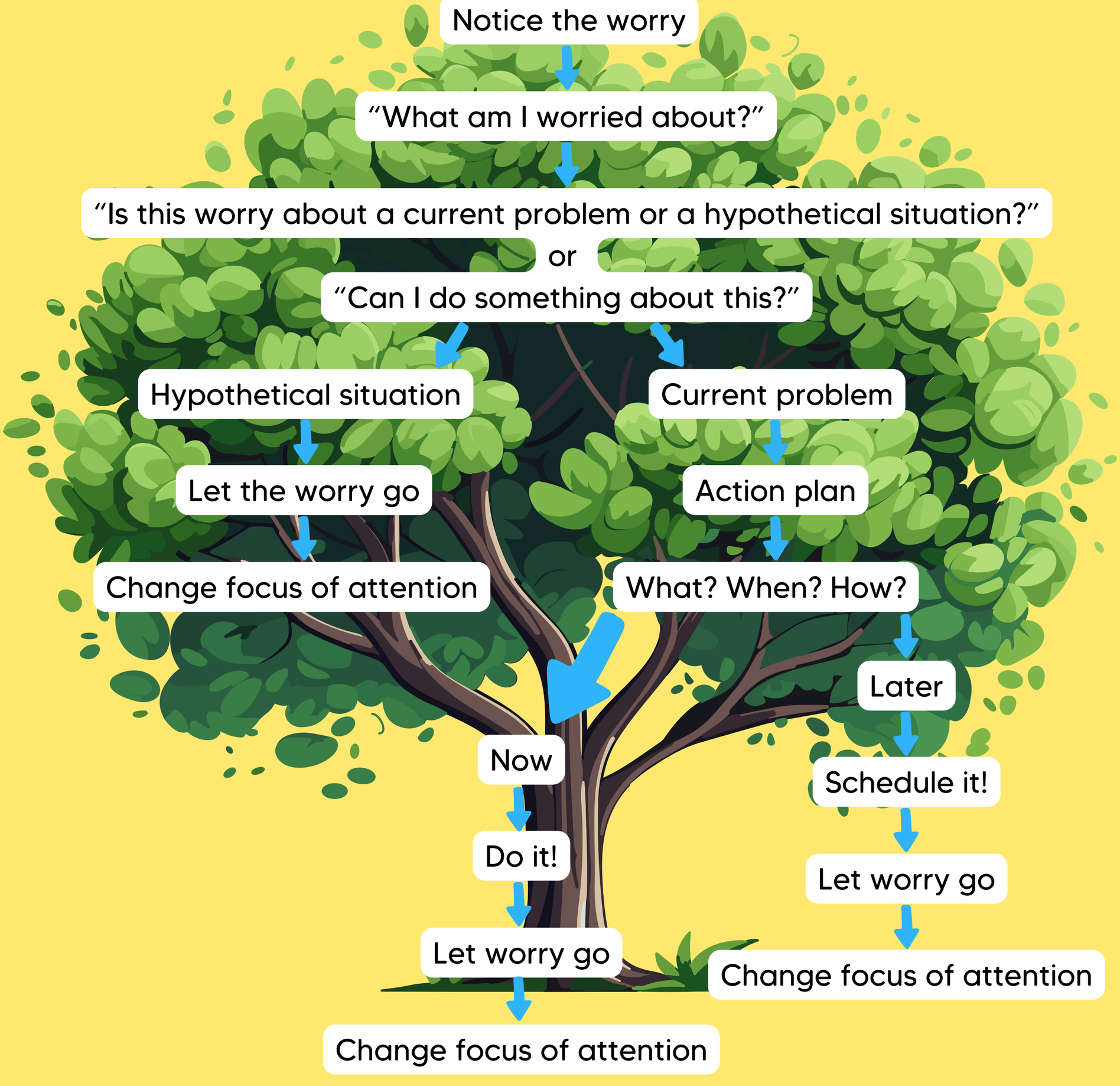


Activity 1: Worry Tree

Meet the worry tree, when you sit down to think about your worries, a structured technique called the ‘worry tree’ can help keep you focused on understanding the difference between problems you can solve and hypothetical worries that are beyond your control.

Application of the worry tree helps young people manage stress and anxiety by teaching them practical techniques rooted in Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

Using the tree below, think about all the things you may be worried about when thinking about the transition to secondary school, and follow through the arrows to challenge your thoughts.



Activity 2: Strength Spotting

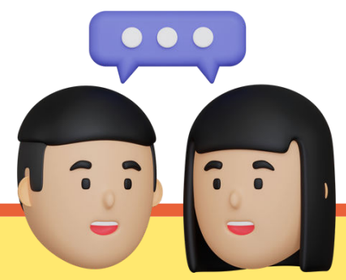
Spotting and tapping into your strengths can be game changing. It could be that you’re an amazing artist or great at sports, you could be a great listener or a supportive friend. We all sparkle and shine in different and unique ways.

Spotting your strengths will help you to see yourself in a more positive light, helping you to re-frame your negative thoughts quicker and more effectively.

Using the prompts below, take a moment to reflect on and celebrate your strengths, or your sparkle and shine as we like to say! Remember you are unique and that’s awesome.

Things I’m good at...

Things my friends would say about me...



Things I like about myself...

Things my family love about me...

Things I’m proud of...

I am unique because...

Activity 3: My Support System

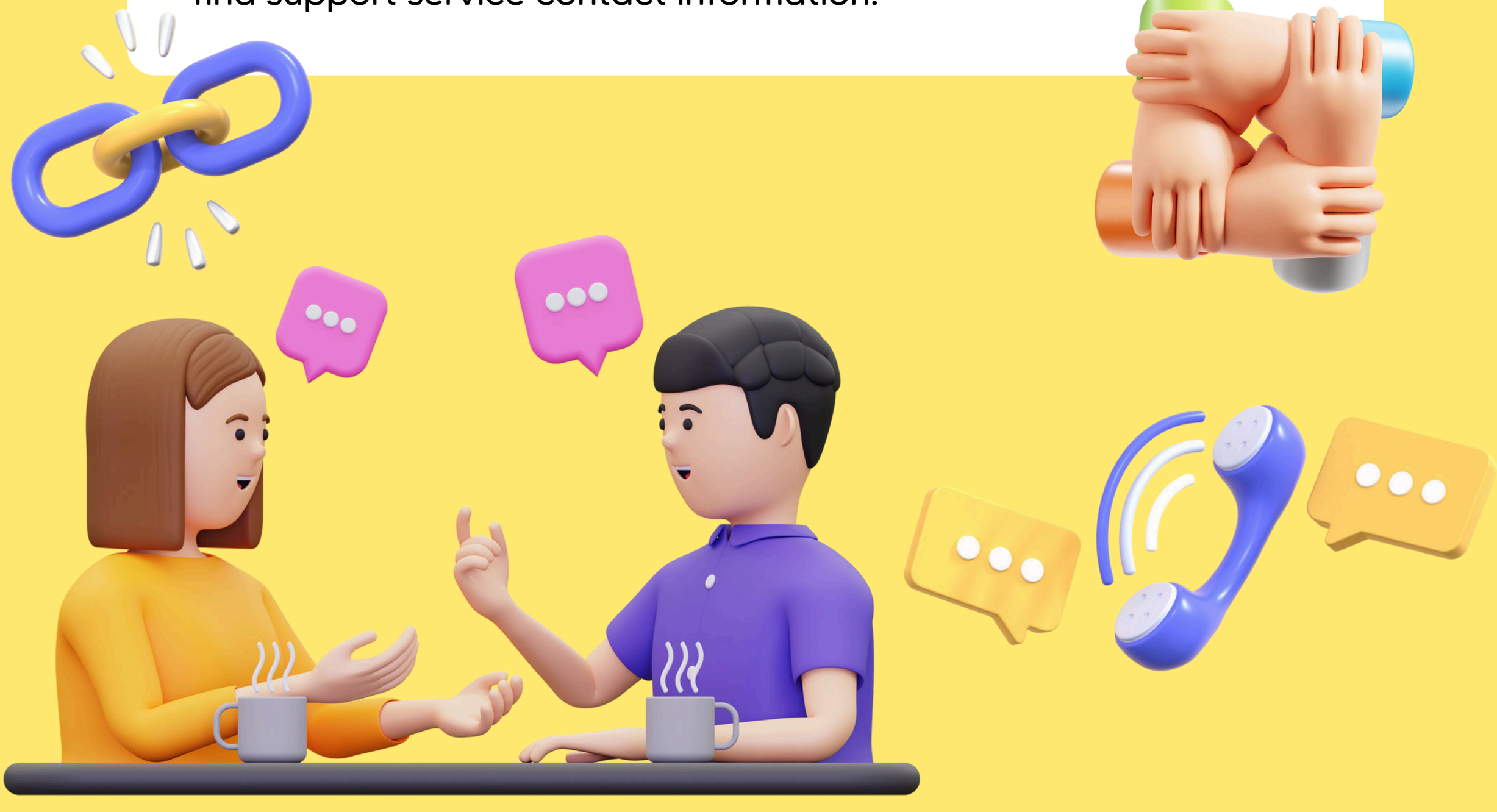
Big changes come with big feelings and emotions, sometimes new and difficult, that you might not know how to deal with.

To better help you prepare and deal with this transition, identify people who make up your support system who are there to help you.

These are the people you can turn to when things get hard or overwhelming, they can support you by listening to you, giving you advice or reminding you of the extra support that is available to young people if they need it.

Write down the names of all the people you can think of that you want to be in your support system. This can be anyone you trust, anyone who makes you feel good about yourself or even your pets!

Remember to connect with these people whenever you feel like you need some extra support. If you'd rather speak to somebody anonymously, go to the back page of this resource where you'll find support service contact information.



You've got this

You're entering a new chapter.

Think of all the new friends and connections you'll make.

With change comes new opportunity.

Time to show the world what you're made of.

You've got this.

Support services

Local Support

Hull & East Yorkshire
Mind
01482 240200
heymind.org.uk

Hull Thrive
howareyoufeeling.org.uk

Young Healthy Minds
eastridinghealthandwellbeing.co.uk

National Support

Childline
0800 1111
childline.org.uk

Young Minds
youngminds.org.uk

Anna Freud
annafreud.org

Kooth
Podcast
on Spotify