



### Playfulness

When children laugh and feel a sense of fun, they are more relaxed and less defensive. With a playful manner you can help diffuse a difficult or tense situation for children and help them to keep difficult thoughts and feelings in perspective.



### Acceptance

Unconditionally accepting a child makes them feel safe, secure and loved.

When you actively communicate to a child that you understand what they might be going through, they feel safer.



### Curiosity

Using a curious, quiet, accepting tone helps children realise that you are genuinely trying to understand their experiences. It is not about interpreting or fact finding; it is about letting children know you want to get to know them in a sensitive way.



### Empathy

A genuine desire to “feel with” a child; to step into their shoes and connect with their emotional perspective.



Check out our video here:



A list of helpful Apps from the NHS is available here:



# Does your child worry about going to school?

This information may help.



North Ayrshire Council  
Comhairle Siorrachd Air a Tuath

Experiencing feelings of anxiety and worry at times is a normal part of life. It is common for us to experience higher levels of anxiety for a period of time e.g. when there are changes in our lives or a reaction to specific events. However, sometimes anxiety gets in the way of attending school.

It is important to help children and young people overcome these difficulties as absences mean that children miss out on valuable learning opportunities and risk losing friendship groups.



### What is anxiety?

Anxiety is linked to our thoughts (we might think things like, "I can't cope"), our body (we may feel embarrassed, angry or other feelings) and our actions (we might leave situations that make us anxious or avoid them altogether).

### What can you do?

One of the most important ways you can support your child is to calmly listen to them and acknowledge their fears. School staff will know there

is an issue with attendance and will be willing to work with you to help agree a consistent approach. Reassure your child that you and the school are working together to allow them to feel able to attend.

Try and keep a solution oriented, optimistic approach.



### What you can expect the school to do

- Listen to you and your child's concerns and acknowledge the challenges
- Maintain good communication with you and your child
- Work in partnership with you and your child to try and understand the difficulties your child is experiencing and find ways to make school a happier place and improve attendance
- Hold a meeting to discuss plans and ways forward
- Respond to any identified school-based needs such as academic support, dealing with bullying behaviour or support with relationships



### Talking to your child about their worries

Any child currently avoiding school is likely to become anxious when they are asked to talk about their difficulties or return to school.

A good place to start may be to follow some of the principles of a PACEful approach. (Dan Hughes)

**PACE** is a way of being and engaging with children and young people that focuses on four personal qualities: Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy. These personal qualities allow adults to support children to further develop their self-regulation and resilience. This way of engaging can help support pupils' feelings of a sense of safety, belonging and value.

