First term of secondary school

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About us

Charlie Waller was a strong, funny, popular, good-looking and kind young man, with a close and loving family. To the outside world, he had everything to live for. Yet in 1997, at the age of 28, Charlie took his own life. He was suffering from depression.

In response to this tragedy, his family founded The Charlie Waller Trust, to open up the conversation around depression, and to ensure that young people are able to understand and look after their mental health and to spot the signs in others.

Charlie sits at the heart of our story, our vision and our purpose.

Our vision

A world where people understand and talk openly about mental health, where young people and those who support them are equipped to maintain and enhance their mental health and wellbeing, and have the confidence to seek help when they need it.

Objectives for this session

Exploring

Having a chat about your thoughts and feelings about supporting a young person during the transition period.

Understanding

Understanding and exploring key anxieties for young people transitioning to secondary school.

Practical

Learning tools and positive strategies for young people and supporting them during their first term of high school.

Before we begin

Timings

The webinar will be approximately 90 minutes. We do not have any scheduled comfort breaks but please feel free to step away from your screen if needed.

Recording

Please note that this webinar will be recorded and published on our website for others to watch on-demand.

Sharing personal experience

Only if you're comfortable doing so, you may be asked to share your own personal experiences during the session to help with education and training.

Safety and openness

Sensitive topics may be discussed during this webinar, please feel free to step away if needed. We want to foster a sense of safety and openness during this webinar where everyone listens to one another and supports each other's perspectives. At the end of the session, we will sign post to organisations to access further support.

Before we start: how confident do you feel about supporting your young person to start secondary school?

Confidence scale

What's different about school/life today?

What's the same?

Moving up!

Moving to secondary school: what's changing for young people?

- New buildings, teachers, and routines
- More independence & responsibility
- Different rules & expectations
- Navigating new friendships
- Increased homework and organisational demands

...what else?

Worries and anxieties – what's going on?

Key worries:

- Finding their way around
- Making friends
- Keeping up with work
- Having a good relationship with teachers
- Fitting in socially

What *is* anxiety?

Let's explore what happens in your mind and body!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GQSfW4xrKSk

Practical ways of supporting a young person during their first term of high school...

What builds resilience in transition?

- SLEEP – Rest and routines help with focus and mood
- MOVEMENT – Staying active supports both body and mind
- FRIENDSHIPS – Positive connections ease the change
- SELF-COMPASSION – Being kind to yourself when things feel tough

Wellbeing action plans:
https://charliewaller.org/mental-health-resources/wellbeing-action-plan-for-young-people

Resilience Rucksacks

The Resilience Rucksacks programme, designed with young people, highlights four key themes that support a smoother transition to secondary school: sleep, movement, friendships, and self-compassion. By focusing on these areas, children can build simple habits that strengthen confidence and wellbeing during times of change.

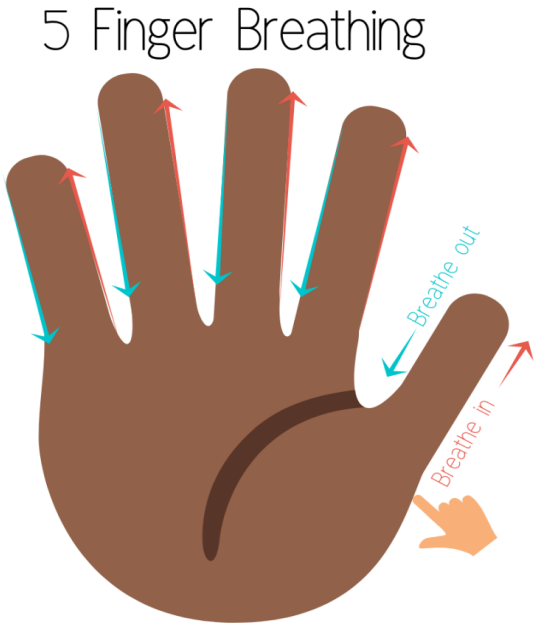
Resilience Rucksacks - Reading Resilience Network

A personal space for calming down

- Choose a box, basket, or bag
- Fill with items that help your young person feel safe and relaxed
- Include sensory items (stress ball, fidget toy, scented items)
- Keep it in an easy-to-access spot

Use your breathing!

Using your breathing is a really easy way to switch off your fight or flight response. Take a deep breath in, hold, and exhale for a little longer than you inhaled. Using your fingers to guide you is an excellent help –you always have your hand nearby!



Grounding techniques

Most often, the things we worry about are things that have happened in the past, or might happen in the future… grounding techniques help you focus on the here and now. This can help distract you from your worries….

5, 4, 3, 2, 1… use your senses; what do you notice?

Problem solving

Step 1 – Write down the problem

Step 2 –Possible solutions

Step 3 – For and against

Step 4 – Choose a solution

Step 5 – Action plan

Idea/solution	Pros	Cons	Score

Remember! Now that you have solved your problem, try to let go of your worry. Try to refocus on something that will make you feel good about yourself.

Sometimes we can't solve our worries...

When we can't control our worries, we need to find ways to let them go... we can ask ourselves things like:

What is the worst thing that could happen?

Have I experienced something similar before?

What is the likelihood that it will happen at all?

How realistic is this worry? What proof do I have that it is true?

What would I say if it was a friend or family member who worried about this?

Supporting neurodivergent young people

- Self awareness and advocacy
- School rules
- Time organisation and organisation
- Navigating the school
- Study skills

with thanks to Pooky Knightsmith!

Top tips for supporting your young person

Focus on the basics -5 Ways to Wellbeing (wellbeing action plans)
Remind your young person they are not alone
Provide some familiarity
Check in regularly
Some of these things take time/practice –don't give up!
Give them a packed lunch
Help with organisation
Consider social media
Celebrate positives!

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Sign up at
charliewaller.org/mental-health-training-support/mental-health-webinars

The Charlie Waller Trust

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