

Transition to Second Level

AN ADVENTURE AND A CHALLENGE

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PARTICIPANT PACK

Junior Cycle what's new.

Supporting teens to manage change.

Identifying common areas of concern.

Trouble shooting and Supports.

Embracing change and being open to new opportunities.

Junior Cycle what's new.

- **Wellbeing as a central pillar.**

Now considered a specific area of learning 400 hours have been allocated. CSPE, SPHE, PE along with other areas of learning possibly literacy, numeracy, digital skills are incorporated into this important element of education.

- **Skills and knowledge based.**

There are 8 key skills students will develop in Junior Cycle. Literacy, Numeracy along with the 6 below are embedded into every subject. Students will be expected to demonstrate both subject specific knowledge and skills in each subject area.



- **Classroom assessments and assignments.**

Homework may look different, there is a bigger emphasis on project work and presentation of research than before. Tests and house exams remain in most schools, but assessment practices are changing to include demonstrating the key skills and competencies.

- **Changed exam and grading.**

Final grades in most subjects are composed of 90% terminal exam and 10% Assessment of skills. Practical classes give more weight to skills.

Distinction	90 to 100 %
Higher Merit	75 to 89 %
Merit	55 to 74 %
Achieved	40 to 54 %
Partially Achieved	20 to 39 %
Not graded	0 to 19 %

- **New terminology. CBA, SLAR, JCPA.**

There is a language to everything school is no different. As well as changed grades from A,B,C to merit, higher merit and distinction, students will have Classroom Based Assessments and will no longer receive a Junior Cert but a Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement.

- **Independent learning, projects and research.**

Students will be required to do more independent learning. They may need to research and present their work. They will make models of atoms and PowerPoints to design gardens in maths class. This means more organisation, getting materials, watching for deadlines and getting everything done. It's difficult for the student who is precise and likes clarity around tasks, it's about developing skills and independence.

- **New subjects at Leaving Cert. PE, Computers, Politics and Society**

The new subjects at leaving cert have implications for Junior Cycle. PE may have a workbook and assignments, digital skills may have projects and assessments. There is a maximum of 10 subjects at Junior Cycle you may want to consider the choice of subjects considering senior cycle subject options.

Supporting teens to manage change.

The ability to cope with change is a key life skill. Resilience is the ability to cope with change positively and successfully.

- **Whose stress is it?**
May seem obvious but it is important to identify whose stress are we addressing. Is it your worries for the student or the students worries for themselves that are at issue? The answer will give you very different solutions.
- **Stress gets a bad press. The stress response why we feel it?**
We are incredibly well engineered and adapted to life. Our stress response is designed to support us to rise to a challenge. It creates more blood flow, open blood vessels, releases hormones that increase our energy and encourage us to care for others. Research suggests it's not stress that is a problem it is our attitude to it. We need to understand stress and distinguish it from anxiety. For those who don't believe stress is bad for them, stress ceases to be a risk factor for their health.

Suggested Viewing: How to make stress your friend | Kelly McGonigal
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcGyVTAoXEU&t=150s>

- **Coping with change is a key skill.**
 1. Resilience can be supported and developed.

8 Ways to Build Resilience in Children:

1. Let them experience disappointment so they learn sadness doesn't last forever.
2. Validate their fears and help them make plans to do things even if they're scared.
3. Let them take (reasonable) risks and experience natural consequences.
4. Encourage them to try new things, make mistakes, and learn from their mistakes.
5. Give them opportunities to make their own decisions and help them problem solve.
6. Tell stories of people who faced hard times, persisted, and grew stronger as a result.
7. Reframe challenges as short-term problems, and opportunities for learning.
8. Remind them that although we can't control everything that happens to us, we *can* control how we respond.

Learn more at www.GoodDaysWithKids.com

2. Encourage a growth mindset.
3. Experience disappointment and failure.

Growth mind means understanding that intelligence and ability are not fixed and that through your actions and decisions you can influence your outcomes for better or worse. It's your attitude that counts most. This includes seeing FAIL as first attempt in learning.

Characteristics of a Fixed Mindset	Characteristics of a Growth Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believes intelligence and talent are fixed • Believes effort is fruitless • Believes failures define who they are • Hides flaws • Avoids challenges • Ignores feedback • Views feedback as personal criticism • Feels threatened by other's success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believes intelligence and talents can be developed • Believes effort is the path to mastery • Believes mistakes are part of learning • Views failure as an opportunity • Believes failures are temporary • Embraces challenges • Welcomes feedback • Views other's success as inspirational

It's important to reward not just effort but learning and progress, and to emphasize the processes that yield these things, such as seeking help from others, trying new strategies, and learning from setbacks and failure to move forward effectively.

This image sums up.

it



4. Positive self-talk.

What is the tape that's running in your head? "I am capable, competent and I can learn how to do this." Or "I can't do this there is too much to manage". It really matters what we tell ourselves and the language we use to say it. Strong aggressive self-talk is very destructive. For us as parents and educators, its important how we speak to and about our students. It links with the growth mindset and is crucial to how we learn and manage stress in our lives.

5. Develop emotional language and use it.

Being emotionally literate means, we can express our emotions effectively, appropriately and productively. It's the ability to put feelings into words so those feelings can be understood by yourself and others. As a society we are not good at expressing feelings or needs, this allows communication to break down and misunderstandings to happen. I might say "where were you all day" when I really mean, "I worry when I don't know where you are I'd feel better if you gave me a text, let me know you are ok." Restorative Practices available now in many schools helps support emotional literacy.

6. Gratitude and compassion for yourself and others.

Gratitude, or appreciation for the good things that happen in life, is an essential part of building wellbeing. When you're going through a tough time it can be hard to remember to be grateful for the good stuff, there are benefits that can be gained from working gratitude into your everyday life.

Increasing your gratitude is useful because:

- it's an instant mood booster and feels great in the moment,
- you're likely to feel closer to friends and family,
- you're likely to enjoy your life more,
- it's good for your physical health,
- it's easier to cope with tough times,
- good things in life don't stick in our heads as easily as bad events.

- **Care for the carer, parenting is a difficult task, what are your supports.**

This is a challenging time for parents and teachers. Who is supporting you and what are you doing to support yourself? Our students and children will take our lead if we model the positive, life enriching habits we want for them. Everything I have outlined here applies to you to.

Identifying common areas of concern.

Organisational

I have grouped these because the solutions are related.

1. Finding my way around different classrooms.
2. Being late for school, for class or for the bus.
3. Loosing stuff.

Schools will have induction programs, guided tours are part of this induction. Assure your child that they will be given time to get to know the school and a couple of weeks to settle in. Remind them, it's new for everyone. It is a good idea to encourage them to find out who is in their classes. It is good for conversation starters in the early weeks, a buddy to travel with helps to get everyone to the right room and no one left behind.

Being late, can be a big worry. The fear of being lost, the embarrassment of walking into a class that started, wondering will there be a desk free, who will you be beside how will the teacher react.

A couple of pointers here.

- Seats are usually assigned so their desk will be there.
- A couple of weeks grace will be given.
- Becoming familiar with your timetable is important. Students should check their journal the night before and check what class they have, what materials they need, and where the rooms are. On arriving at school students should go to their lockers sort their books and equipment, get the books for the classes to morning break. Change the books at break for the classes to lunch and at lunch prepare the books for the afternoon classes. It is a lot to do, it will take practice they will get very quick at it. But in the beginning its difficult and a cause of lost books, forgotten books and lateness. Some students use big Ziplock pockets to keep their books together. So being early for school 15/20 minutes makes the day run smoother.
- Being organised they will lose less, put names on everything, encourage them to keep belongings, in lockers or bags. Most lost items can be found if named and looked for.
- Having spare uniform is useful, often easy to acquire from friends or family, ties particularly go missing.
- If you are using locker having a spare key or the number written and kept in your car is a good idea.

4. Having the right books, workbooks, copies.
5. Homework.

6. Remembering the rules.

I have grouped these together, indeed the previous point sits well here too, because the solution here is **THE JOURNAL**.

The Journal is invaluable as an organisational tool it has the timetable, the school rules, term dates, and should have the homework written in it.

- Keep a copy of the timetable at home. Colour coding for each class is helpful. It is the plan for the week, what you need and when. From PE gear to ingredients, cornflake boxes for making castles to leaves for science class, the timetable can have you prepared for your whole week, avoiding many of the issues that beset the new first year student, if they use it.
- Homework should be written for every class, if not assigned write what was done p25 -36. This is the record of what a student needs to know. "What's on the test".
- Homework should be done if possible when its given. Students will have History 3 times a week. If homework is left unless they are checking their journal the night before for the next day, they will forget to do it.
- Homework should become a good habit, an organised place to do it, kitchen table is fine, a set time where possible, begun and finished in 1 to 2 hours.
- The phone and Homework. All the research says phone out of the room. If they need it for research or dictionary you should monitor it, and only allow it used for the subject specified. Left on the table it will be a distraction.
- Students need to be clear about what they have to do for homework, encourage them to ask the teacher if they are confused. Most teachers are happy with written evidence of engagement. This has been mentioned as a major cause of stress at home.

7. New Teachers

They will have had one teacher and no room changes. Changing every 40 minutes or every hour is a new experience. Teachers will have different 'house rules. They will like some more than others. Independent learning is a vital skill for all learners, it is good to emphasise it is their responsibility to engage with the class and the material. Talk about why it is important for them, education is a key to next steps in learning and working. The focus should be on the on the subject not the teacher, we won't like everyone, but we can learn to work with. If the situation continues to be an issue, your school will have a policy on how to approach the situation. Do voice your concern, again sooner rather than later.

Social Concerns

Adolescence is a time of huge emotional change and development. During 1st and 2nd year teenagers can be seen to 'try out' new friends. They may expand or move from the circle of friends they had in primary school. This is perfectly natural and normal particularly if the new friends share the same interests and values.

1. Not being with my friends.
2. Not making new friends.
3. Changing social circles.

- In the initial weeks I would recommend encouraging a widening of friendships beyond the friends they may already have.
- Its easy to make connection in the early weeks. Lots to talk about, teacher, classes, the food, great opportunity to engage. They may want to be stick to the group they came in with, but widening your circle is important.
- If the circle of friends is small, when a friend is absent from school it may be hard to join other groups. If friendships change, they may be left alone later in the year when it's hard to make friends.
- Mixed groups of friends are very healthy, it adds balance to groups and develops the concept of friend rather than boyfriend.
- School extracurricular activities are important here, opportunities to meet and socialise in a safe supervised environment.
- Being able to drop and collect, it keeps your child connected, you informed and is an opportunity for conversation in a life that's very busy and time poor.

4. Older students

5. Bullying

Older students are not usually an issue, the first years have just been used to being the oldest, this is a new role for them. Again, I have found most senior students to be very supportive and helpful towards first years. Many schools have mentor programs and that is very supportive of the settling in process.

Schools have come a long way in relation to Bullying, do check the school policy it will be on their website. Keeping good communication going with your child, notice mood changes or if they stop talking about a particular friend. The key thing is if you are worried, talk to someone. Better do some investigation and satisfy yourself they are safe, than let a situation develop into a more difficult issue.

6. Managing social media.

This is a webinar in itself, keeping connected to your teen gets harder, they want independence and privacy. You want communication and to know they are safe. It is about monitoring, creating rules and boundaries and some compromise. If you can have the phone out of the bedroom for sleep that's huge.

Most schools have phone usage policies you should make yourself aware of them.

There is so much more here I have included some websites to support you and if you want further support, I'm sure your local education centre would be happy to organise something for you.

Trouble shooting and Supports.

The first few weeks are exhaustion, emotionally and physically. Good healthy eating and sleeping habits are important and set up good habits for the rest of the term.

- Be prepared and organised, plan a head.
- Be informed. Lots of information in this pack and the school website.
- Take an interest, not an inquisition. Ask open questions, no yes or no answers. Who, what, when, where, how?
- Try, to collect on time, take then to activities, can be difficult, it's worth it. Verbal communication can wane in the teens but being present is powerful.
- Listen. Often advice is not heard positively.
- Don't engage in shouting matches, "I want to help, but we have to respect escorted, when we can speak with each other, I'm here for you."
- Take a breath, take another. Calm is a superpower.
- You don't understand, you do care, you worry.
- You are not alone.
- If in doubt always seek help and support.

SUPPORTS

- School website
- School Journal
- Principal and Management Team
- Year head
- Guidance Councillor
- Class Tutor
- Chaplain
- Any adult the student is comfortable with.
- The Secretary
- Friends.
- Parents Association

Useful websites for Parents

National Parents Council Post Primary <http://www.npcpp.ie>

Scoilnet <https://www.scoilnet.ie/go-to-post-primary/>

School Days <https://www.schooldays.ie>

Mental Health <http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/teens/>

Parenting Positively http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Teenagers_Wellbeing_d3.pdf

Web Wise <https://www.webwise.ie/>

Spun Out <http://spunout.ie/>

Reach Out <https://ie.reachout.com/>

Useful Resources

Booklets to Support Transition to Secondary School

- The Institute of Guidance Councillors
<http://www.colaistemhuireask.ie/cmamain/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Parents-The-Transition-To-Secondary-School.pdf>
- HSE
<https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/inline-files/Transition-to-Post-Primary-School-Sample-Transition-Programmes.pdf>
- Transition from Primary to Post-Primary for Pupils with Special Educational Needs
https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/Resources/Inclusion/Transition_Booklet.pdf

Websites Helpful Factsheets

National Council For Special Education

<https://www.sess.ie/resources/transition-primary-post-primary>

Seomra Ranga

<https://www.seomraranga.com/2020/02/primary-secondary-transition-booklet-for-parents/>

National Parents Council

<https://www.npcpp.ie/information-for-parents/from-primary-to-secondary/>

Helpful Factsheets

Available from

www.getselfhelp.co.uk/unhelpful.htm © Carol Vivyan 2009, permission to use for therapy purposes www.get.gg



Positive Steps to Wellbeing

Be kind to yourself



Our culture, genes, religion, upbringing, education, gender, sexuality, beliefs, and life experiences make us who we are. We all have bad days.

Be kind to yourself. Encourage rather than criticise yourself. Treat yourself the way you would treat a friend in the same situation.

Exercise regularly



Being active helps lift our mood, reduces stress and anxiety, improves physical health, and gives us more energy.

Get outside, preferably in a green space or near water.

Find an activity you enjoy doing, and just do it.

Take up a hobby and/or learn a new skill

Increase your confidence and interest, meet others, or prepare for finding work.



Have some fun and/or be creative

Having fun or being creative helps us feel better and increases our confidence.

Enjoy yourself!



Help others



Get involved with a community project, charity work, or simply help out someone you know.

As well as benefiting others, you'll be doing something worthwhile which will help you feel better about

yourself.

Relax



Make time for yourself. Allow yourself to chill out and relax. Find something that suits you – different things work for different people.

Breathe... (imagine a balloon in your belly, inflating and deflating as you breathe in and out)

Eat healthily

Eat regularly, eat breakfast, eat healthily, eat fruit and vegetables, drink water.



Balance sleep

Get into a healthy sleep routine – including going to bed and getting up at the same time each day.



Connect with others



Stay in touch with family and friends - make regular and frequent contact with them.

Beware drink and drugs



Avoid using alcohol (or non-prescribed drugs) to help you cope – it will only add to your problems.

See the bigger picture

We all give different meanings to situations and see things from our point of view. Broaden out your perspective and consider the bigger picture ('the helicopter view')



What meaning am I giving this? Is this fact or opinion? How would others see it? Is there another way of looking at this? How important is it, or will it be in a year's time? What can I do right now that will help most?

Accepting: 'It is as it is'

We tend to fight against distressing thoughts and feelings, but we can learn to just notice them and give up that struggle.











Some situations we just can't change. We can surf those waves rather than try to stop them.


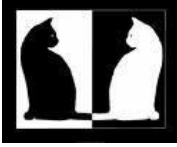


Allow those thoughts and sensations just to be – they will pass.

Unhelpful Thinking Habits

Over the years, we tend to get into unhelpful thinking habits such as those described below. We might favour some over others, and there might be some that seem far too familiar. Once you can identify your unhelpful thinking styles, you can start to notice them – they very often occur just before and during distressing situations. Once you can notice them, then that can help you to challenge or distance yourself from those thoughts, and see the situation in a different and more helpful way.

Blue text (italics) helps us find alternative, more realistic thoughts.

 <p>Mental Filter - When we notice only what the filter allows or wants us to notice, and we dismiss anything that doesn't 'fit'. Like looking through dark blinkers or 'gloomy specs', or only catching the negative stuff in our 'kitchen strainers' whilst anything more positive or realistic is dismissed. <i>Am I only noticing the bad stuff? Am I filtering out the positives? Am I wearing those 'gloomy specs'? What would be more realistic?</i></p>	 <p>Judgements - Making evaluations or judgements about events, ourselves, others, or the world, rather than describing what we actually see and have evidence for. <i>I'm making an evaluation about the situation or person. It's how I make sense of the world, but that doesn't mean my judgements are always right or helpful. Is there another perspective?</i></p>
<p>Prediction - Believing we know what's going to happen in the future. <i>Am I thinking that I can predict the future? How likely is it that that might really happen?</i></p> 	<p>Emotional Reasoning - I feel bad so it must be bad! I feel anxious, so I must be in danger. <i>Just because it feels bad, doesn't necessary mean it is bad. My feelings are just a reaction to my thoughts – and thoughts are just automatic brain reflexes</i></p> 
<p>Mind-Reading - Assuming we know what others are thinking (usually about us). <i>Am I assuming I know what others are thinking? What's the evidence? Those are my own thoughts, not theirs. Is there another, more balanced way of looking at it?</i></p> 	 <p>Mountains and Molehills Exaggerating the risk of danger, or the negatives. Minimising the odds of how things are most likely to turn out, or minimising positives. <i>Am I exaggerating the bad stuff? How would someone else see it? What's the bigger picture?</i></p>
<p>Compare and despair Seeing only the good and positive aspects in others, and getting upset when comparing ourselves negatively against them. <i>Am I doing that 'compare and despair' thing? What would be a more balanced and helpful way of looking at it?</i></p> 	<p>Catastrophising - Imagining and believing that the worst possible thing will happen. <i>OK, thinking that the worst possible thing will definitely happen isn't really helpful right now. What's most likely to happen?</i></p> 

 <p>Critical self Putting ourselves down, selfcriticism, blaming ourselves for events or situations that are not (totally) our responsibility</p> <p><i>There I go, that internal bully's at it again. Would most people who really know me say that about me? Is this something that I am totally responsible for?</i></p>	<p>Black and white thinking - Believing that something or someone can be only good or bad, right or wrong, rather than anything in-between or 'shades of grey'. <i>Things aren't either totally white or totally black – there are shades of grey. Where is this on the spectrum?</i></p> 
<p>Shoulds and musts - Thinking or saying 'I should' (or shouldn't) and 'I must' puts pressure on ourselves, and sets up unrealistic expectations.</p> <p><i>Am I putting more pressure on myself, setting up expectations of myself that are almost impossible? What would be more realistic?</i></p> 	<p>Memories - Current situations and events can trigger upsetting memories, leading us to believe that the danger is here and now, rather than in the past, causing us distress right now. <i>This is just a reminder of the past. That was then, and this is now. Even though this memory makes me <u>feel</u> upset, it's not <u>actually</u> happening again right now.</i></p> 

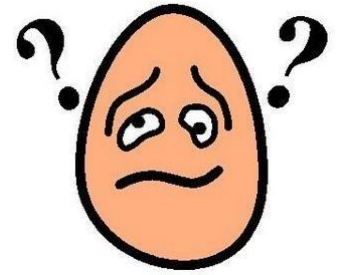
Rumination & Worry

Worry

Future focused – danger and our own inability to cope.

Leads to: anxiety, stress, fear ☹️ What if?

Imagining the worst will happen.



Rumination

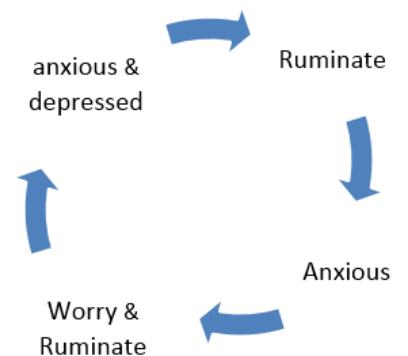
Past focused – loss and personal failings can lead to depression, sadness, shame

“If only “

Regret. “ I should have..., I shouldn’t have...”

Thinking style

- Like what we do in ‘problem solving’ – but in overdrive!
- Constantly chewing things over, regurgitating. Repeatedly thinking about the same thing, it becomes a circular thinking pattern
- This becomes our default thinking habit.
- Thoughts keep returning – get more difficult to get rid of.
- In ruminating and worrying, we’re trying to reduce the distress and overcome it, but actually making it worse and this can lead to a bigger problem.
- It interferes with clear thinking, daily activity, our ability to cope.
- Often leads to unhelpful behaviours to help us escape from our thoughts
- (self-harm, drinking, drugs, comfort eating etc)
- The more we ruminate or worry, the stronger the habit becomes, and the harder it is to change.
- **The less we ruminate or worry, the weaker the habit becomes.**



What can I do?

- Notice that the mind is going down that rumination/worry route
- You have to interrupt the cycle. It takes persistence.
- Tell yourself: I don’t have to think about that right now. It can wait until I feel stronger.
- There’s nothing I can do about my thoughts – I can’t stop them, but I can choose not to focus on them.
- Do something that will take up your attention and help you feel better. Distract re focus on something you like.
- What can I do right now, that will help me feel better, and be effective for this situation?
- Right now, what can I do that will take me one step in the right direction?

Gratitude Exercises

Journal About Gratitude

Take a few minutes every evening to write down five good things about your day. The entries don't have to be major events—they might be as simple as a good meal, talking to a friend, or getting through a difficult challenge.



Write a Letter

Think about someone who has had a major impact on your life, someone who you would like to thank, or someone who you appreciate having in your life. Write a letter with specific details about what it is you appreciate about them, and send it.

Visit Someone who you Appreciate

Write a letter to someone you appreciate as described above, but instead of mailing it, deliver the letter in person. Don't tell them why you're visiting! Read them letter, and then allow them to keep it as a memento.



Say "Thank You"

Keep your eyes open throughout the day for reasons to say "thanks". Try to recognize the small actions people do every day that might be overlooked such as a colleague who always goes the extra mile, or a friend who always seems willing to listen.

Take a Gratitude Walk

Go for a walk and make a special effort to appreciate your surroundings. You might notice the smell of flowers, a pretty building, or a soothing breeze. Spend a few minutes focusing on each of your senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) to find new things you may not have noticed.

