



SWEDA

SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH
EATING DISORDERS
ACROSS THE SOUTH & WEST

GETTING READY FOR A NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Tips for young people who are worried about food & body image



GETTING READY FOR A NEW SCHOOL YEAR

Going back to school after the holidays is a big change. This can be hard to deal with if you are also trying to recover from an eating disorder. You might have some worries on your mind:

Changes to routine

Wearing uniform

Stress about exams or homework

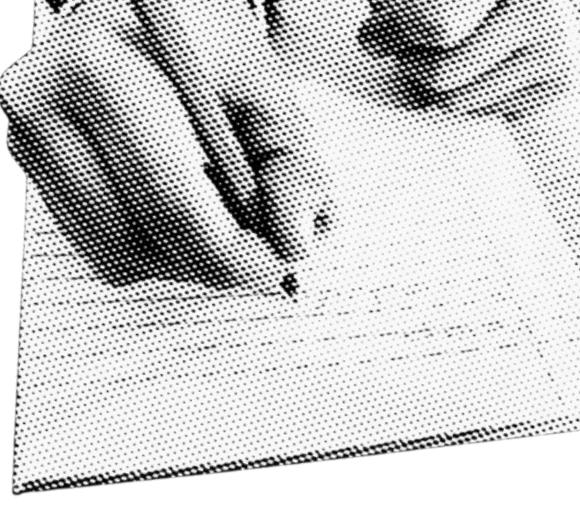
Less time with family or friends

Worrying about bullying

Dealing with lunchtimes

In the next few pages, we share some tips from our therapy team for getting ready to switch back into school mode during recovery.

let staff know

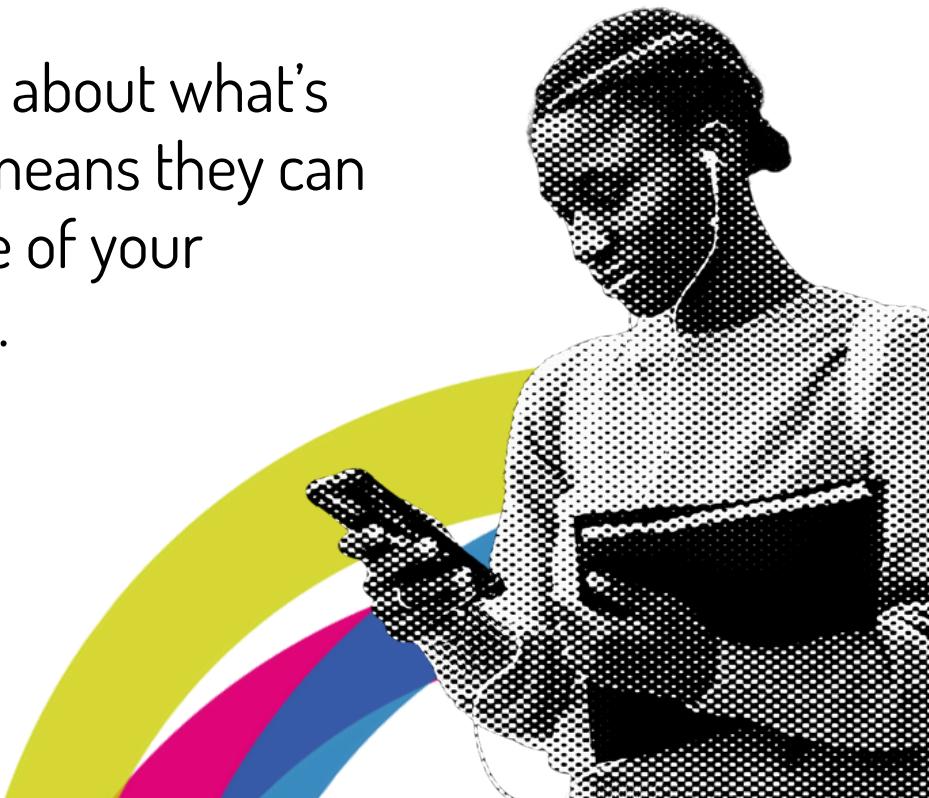


Let your school know ahead of time about any changes that might help you make the most of being at school. (Or you can ask a parent or carer to speak to the school on your behalf).

For example, would it help to have a safe, quiet place to eat away from the noise of the canteen?

Would it help if you had a separate changing room for getting dressed for PE?

If staff are informed about what's going on for you, it means they can be more considerate of your concerns and needs.



routine

Help yourself be ready for change.

In the week leading up to going back to school, start getting back into your term time routine.

Set a morning alarm to help you get used to waking up early. Start going to bed earlier, to help move into a new sleep schedule.

Science tells us that getting good, regular sleep can make a big difference to how we feel. And not getting enough sleep makes it harder to deal with everyday stresses.

So it really does help to get ready for a term time sleep routine. Go get those zzz's!



connect with friends

If you're feeling stressed or nervous about going back to school this autumn, remember you are not alone. Other friends might be worried too, and it can be helpful to reach out and talk to each other about this so that you're looking out for each other.

Before you go back to school, connect with friends you trust. Perhaps you can walk to school together, or meet at the school gates, so that you're going back ready with your support system.



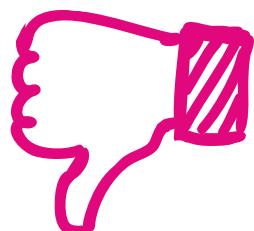
uniform



People can feel all sorts of things about school uniform. If you are having a hard time with eating and body image, uniform can make things a lot harder, or a lot easier – it depends.

For some people, school uniform can be reassuring: everybody is wearing it, so nobody stands out, nobody is looking at you, you can wear baggy jumpers and cover up if you're feeling self-conscious.

For others, it can be stressful. If you have sensory needs, for example, uniform might feel scratchy or uncomfortable. Or you might be worrying that uniform doesn't fit you well or is unflattering.



uniform



Our tip: Give yourself a practice run.

Maybe a week before school starts, set out your uniform. Try it on to help you get used to the idea of wearing uniform again.

Make sure that you've got what you need. Does anything need changing so that you are more comfortable?

Do you need to give yourself some options in case you feel more or less confident on different days?



Lunchtimes

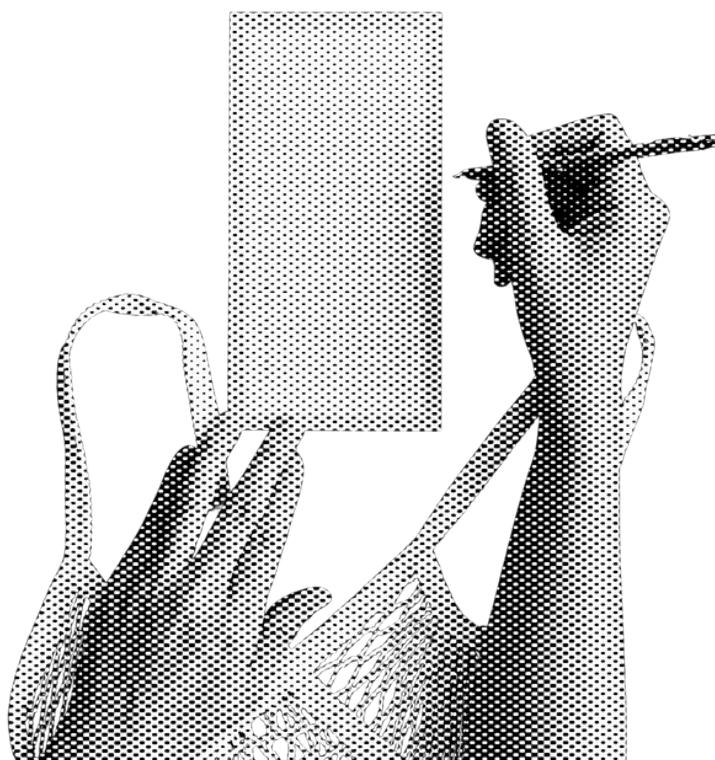


Helping yourself get ready for lunchtimes is a great step in your recovery journey.

If you get meals from the school canteen, make sure you've got money on your canteen account. This way, you're setting yourself up to succeed in this part of your recovery.

You can also look at the menus for the year, which your school should share in advance. Knowing what your options are means you can prepare yourself to know what you can / will eat.

If you take a packed lunch to school, talk to your parent / carer before they go food shopping. Write a list of things that you can and will eat, so that you're set up well for your first week back.



classmates

You might be feeling worried about being around other students again and how they might behave. Not everybody is so tuned in to the impact their words can have.



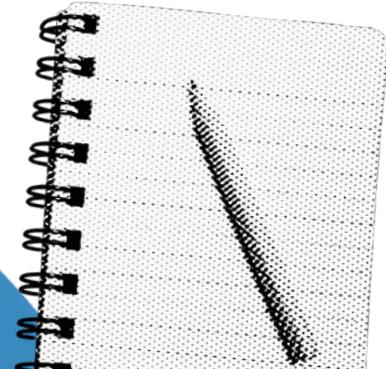
Name calling



Comments about your appearance or how you eat

Classroom 'banter' that is upsetting or hurtful

Speaking to a staff member about what you are worried about is a really important step. If it's hard to speak about it face to face, you could try writing a letter or a note that you can give to an adult you trust.

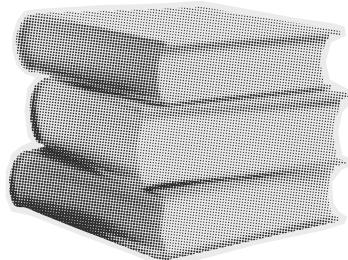


It also can help to find some grounding techniques and ways to create space for yourself at school:



Wearing headphones when you walk to and from school

Having a safe, quiet place to go to at lunchtime



An after-school club you can look forward to

A book you can dip into when you need distraction

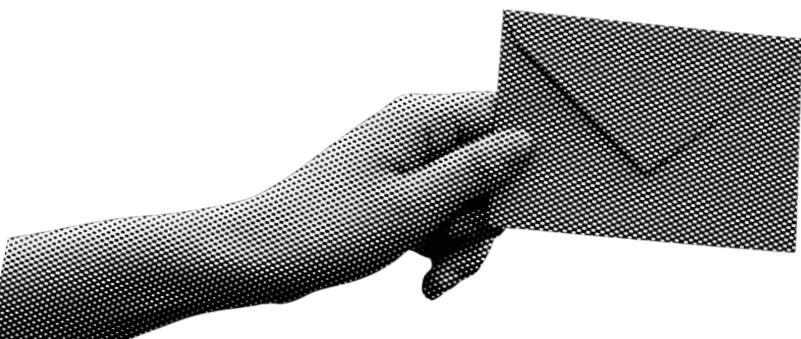
bullying



Bullying is repeated, intentional, hurtful behaviour aimed at a particular person or group of people. Bullying can take many different forms, such as physical, emotional, verbal, sexual, or online bullying.

Again, talking to a trusted adult is the most important step to creating change.

We understand it can be very hard to speak up. That's why we suggest writing stuff down, and then when you're ready, you can pass these notes to someone you trust, if speaking up feels scary.



Worried about going back to school?

These mobile services are here for you:

Childline: Call 0800 1111 or visit childline.org.uk

Tellmi app: messaging and advice service

Shout: Text 8528 to chat

Worried about food or eating?

SWEDA is here to help young people who are worried about food and body image.

We have a friendly team of therapists who can listen to what's on your mind and help you find a way forward.

Visit sweda.uk.org to find out more.

