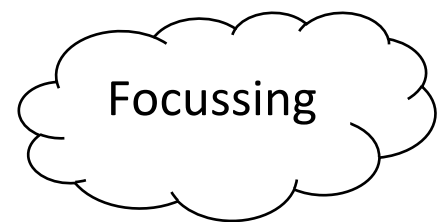
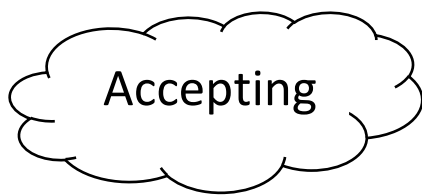


# Building children's confidence to thrive in secondary school

There are three stages to help children thrive during transition. But these stages can also be applied to adults as well. We will discuss these three stages and then look at five steps to help get your children ready for Secondary school.

It is important that when talking to your child about secondary school that you don't project your feelings or experiences of transitioning to secondary school on to them OR to dismiss their feelings. It is also important to discuss transition even if your child appears to be confident about the changes that they will be experiencing.



Stage one in preparing your child for transition often gets forgotten as we are all pushed for time. Stage one is about stopping to think about the situation that we are currently in. It is important to do this together and allow your child time to express how they are feeling and to allow your child to work through their emotions and thoughts so that they are able to process how they are feeling. It is important that you allow your child time to express their thoughts and feelings about lockdown/transition so that they are able to understand what is going on, not just in the world, but also inside their own world and head. They need time to process their emotions and feelings about what is going on for THEM and that they are able to share how they feel with you. It is important that we don't dismiss emotions and that we allow our children time to feel them.

Stage two is about celebrating, but we cannot celebrate until we can fully accept the situation we are in. Once you're happy that you've discussed the current situation and how your child is feeling about transition you can move on to celebrating. Look back over their entire time at primary school and celebrate where they've been. It is important to not just focus on what they've missed out on during lockdown. Ask them:

- What have they achieved?
- Who have they met?
- Where have they been?
- What have they overcome?
- What is their favourite memory?

It is important that we don't allow lockdown and COVID-19 to overshadow the celebrations and their overall Primary experience. Celebrate what has come before.

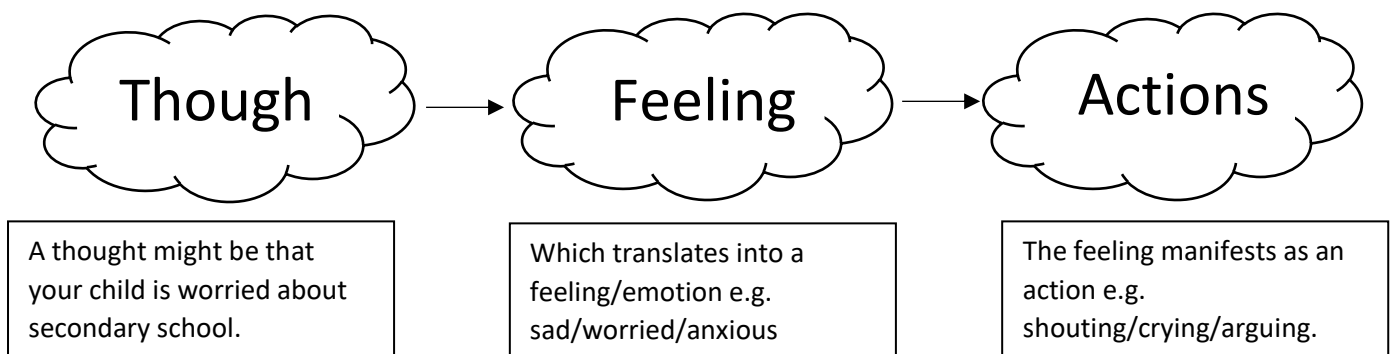
Stage three is about focussing on where we are going. Again, it is important that stages one and two are completed before we can allow ourselves to look forwards to where we are going. Talk about secondary school, talk about where they are going.

After you've worked through the three stages you're ready to some work with your child to get them ready for secondary school. Laura Earnshaw from MyHappyMind suggests allowing about half an hour a week to dedicate to working with your child and spending however long you think necessary on each step.

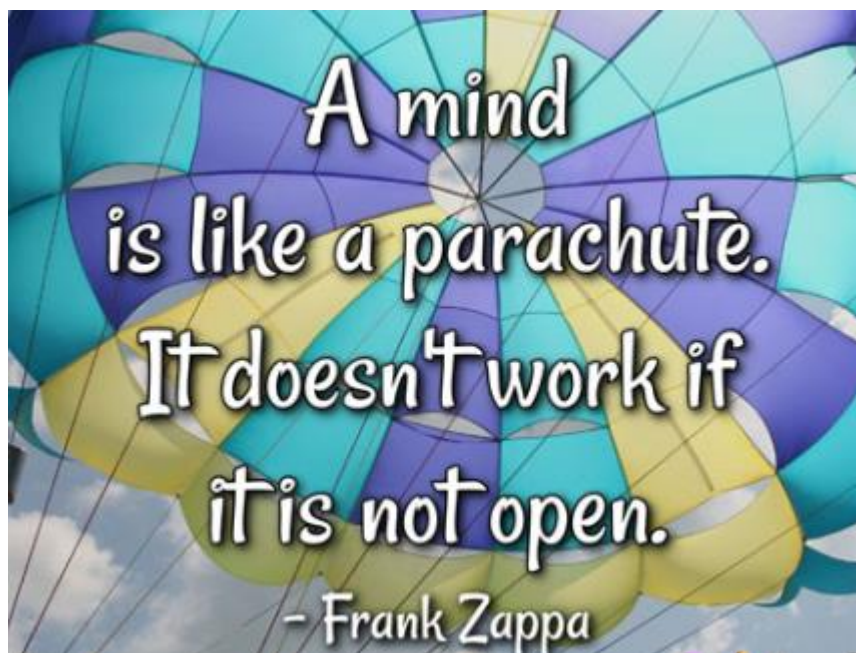
Step One: Understand how the brain works. Don't worry we don't expect you to become an expert psychologist!

This step is about recognising the importance of looking after your mind and how to manage your emotions as the more you do this, the more you will be able to recognise your feelings and know how to calm your mind when you're feeling stressed/anxious.

Our brain works in a cycle:



Most of the time, as adults, we deal with the action. Sometimes we dig deeper and look at what is causing the action and address the feelings, but we rarely look at the cause which are the thoughts. Thoughts cause feelings: feelings lead to actions. When we understand this, we can help to build resilience in our children.

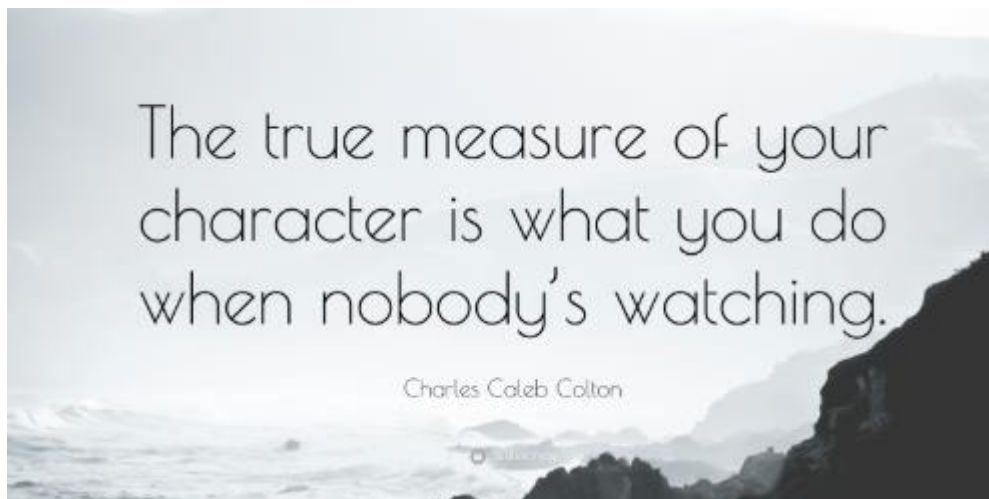


Step two: Identifying and celebrating character strengths.

This is all about building your child's self-esteem. Self-esteem is built by feeling good about WHO you are as a person and your character. It is NOT about what you are capable of or your ability.

Character is about YOU – are you kind, funny, helpful, determined, hardworking, patient, nurturing, playful? It's what makes you, you! You might be good at maths/English or a talented footballer but why? You're probably good at things because of your hardwork and determination – celebrate those and not just the skill.

Our self-esteem and confidence is increased by knowing that you are a good person based on character and not ability. We, as a society, need to be mindful that we are praising children based on their character and not just achievement. If a child is only praised on achievement/skill/ability then their self-esteem becomes fragile and can be shattered very easily by a small setback. Children feeling good about WHO they are is key. If they do not feel good about that, then they may seek external factors to make them feel good/fit in e.g. fall in with the “wrong crowd” or seek attention for negative things.



Step Three: Gratitude. Gratitude is about feeling grateful for what you have and you may have seen lots of quotes about gratitude recently. Some people say that gratitude is attitude. But gratitude in this sense is about being grateful and appreciating experiences/feelings/sense of self and not things. When children can reflect on what they are grateful for it gives them a hormone called dopamine which combats the stress hormone of serotonin and helps to calm them down.

Step Four: Building relationship super powers! Relationships are key to human happiness! It is hardwired into us as humans to be social and build relationships with each other. When we have strong relationships, it helps us feel happy and secure. However, with the rise in uses of technology, some children struggle to build and maintain strong relationships. It is important that we have strong relationships around us in order to feel secure and happy. Having these strong relationships at home/within the family/with friends will help your child to feel more secure within themselves during periods of transition.



## Step 5: Teaching children to dream and aspire.

Most goals come from other people or what other people expect of us! But when a child sets a goal/aspiration personal to them, they are more likely to succeed. The key to well-being and happiness is rooted in achieving goals that we set for ourselves. A child who has an interest in football is much more likely to stick to a goal to be able to do 50 keepy uppies in a row that they have set themselves, than to be able to multiply fractions. Allowing children to set a goal for themselves will show them that they CAN achieve so that when they have a more challenging problem/target set by other people, they can access the feelings of achievement from past goals that they have reached to help them achieve a new goal that they may not be that keen on (such as maths/English/science/geography based goals).