

Coping with anxiety during unsettling times: *Advice from a Clinical Psychologist*



Advice from Dr Helen Care



Leaving school without exams and proper goodbyes



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We spoke with Clinical Psychologist Dr Helen Care who shares some advice for GCSE and A Level Students.

For students who left school last month for the last time, endings like that are going to be at the front of your mind. Transitions from one stage of life, from one school to another (or even on to university), are a big deal. We plan for them and we usually take a lot of time to think about and prepare for them. We feel a whole range of emotions when endings happen, from sadness to joy. We have happy memories, nostalgia and relief that things are over. Right now, there are an awful lot of students like you who haven't had a chance to do any of that.

Be gentle with yourselves and each other. A whole range of emotions is quite normal right now. You might be feeling things that almost resemble grief. That familiar mix of emotions: regret, confusion, anger and sadness. Although these emotions may not be so serious or lasting for you, just like grief these feelings are going to take some time to process.



If you feel that you or someone you know (be they a parent, child, teacher or young person) are at risk of causing harm to themselves or others, then it is important to seek immediate professional help.

Seek an emergency GP appointment or call 999 if you or someone you know is at immediate risk.



Some other great sources of information and guidance on **worry, anxiety** and **youth mental health** are:

- [British Psychological Society](#)
- [NSPCC](#)
- [Anna Freud Centre](#)



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And just like grief, people are going to cope with it in different ways and at different speeds. Not everyone will be as upset by it. But if you are upset, just remind yourself that it is OK to feel what you are feeling.

There is no need to rush, but it might be worth beginning to think about how you might respond to what you are feeling. Think about ways to hold on to your memories, celebrate the good things, and stay connected until you are ready to move onto the next phase of your life.



Here are some ideas to try out:

- 1 **Create memory books and boxes** where you write down memories from school, stick in mementos or photos...
- 2 **'Virtual' year books**, where people (paying respect to confidentiality when sharing pictures) could contribute photos, ideas and memories to a group or to someone who is able to 'curate' them into a book for sharing.
- 3 **Social media 'proms'** (e.g. on Facebook live), where everyone can join in if they want to from the safety of their own homes.
- 4 Using social media platforms to **keep in touch** with your family and friends on a regular basis.
- 5 **Talk about your next steps and keeping on preparing and researching**. This may be a sad ending, but it is also the beginning of a new phase of your life and you can start looking forward to that too.

The activities and suggestions are those of Dr Helen Care, not of Pearson Education or Pearson Clinical.