



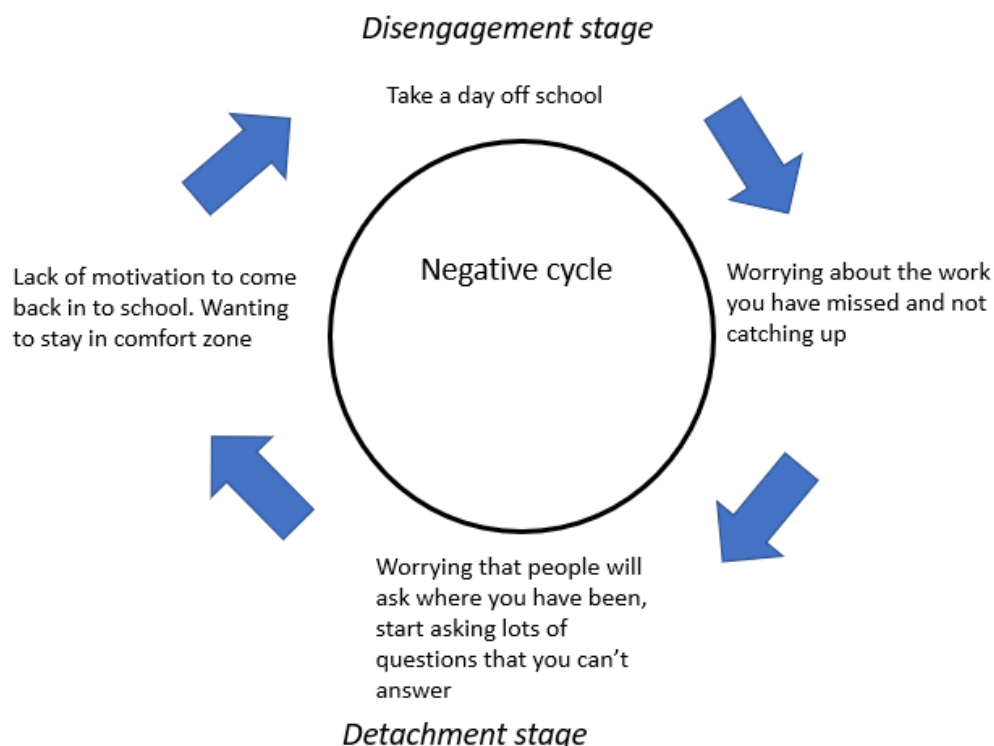
ELSA Parent/Carer Guide

Returning to school following periods of absence

Returning to school after an absence can be difficult for young people and can sometimes become difficult for parents to manage.

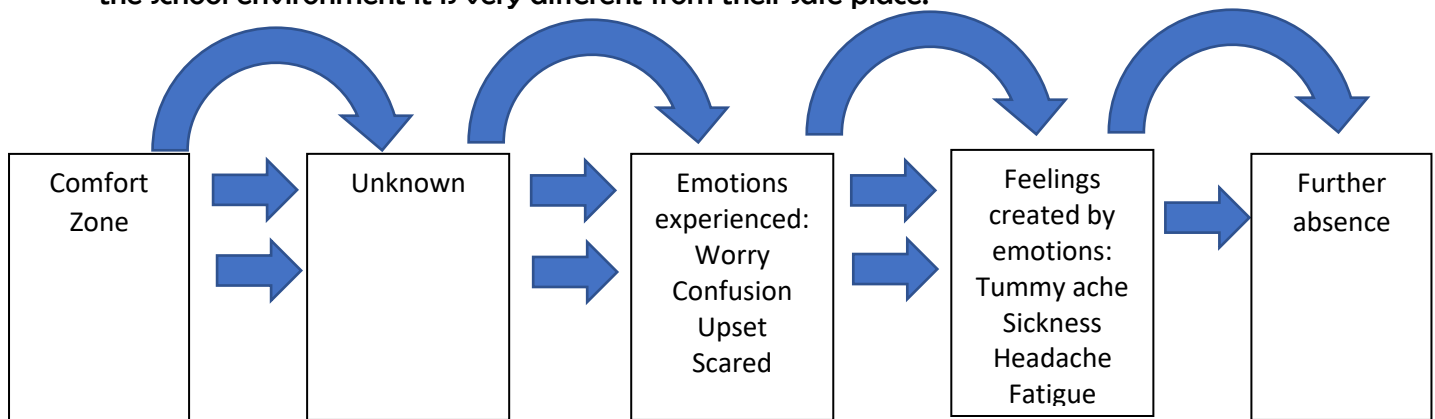
When young people have been away from the learning environment for a length of time they begin to disengage with school, this can then lead to them detaching themselves from school completely. Once a young person detaches themselves from school it can become increasingly difficult to reach the engagement stage again without support.

The school is aware that there are many reasons for absence and some may be out of anyone's control however it must be recognised that during any period of absence it is important for both parents and the school to support the young person in order to ensure that they do not reach the detachment part of the cycle.



Most young people consider their homes to be their safe place which brings them comfort when they are either physically or emotionally unwell. This is positive as it enables the young person to recover however when they are asked to leave this comfort zone the young person may begin to experience negative feelings or may begin to have negative thoughts.

This is because they are being asked to enter the unknown, even if they are familiar with the school environment it is very different from their safe place.



It should also be recognised that young people may experience these feelings if they are currently dealing with a lot of change in their personal lives.

It is important that young people are supported through this cycle as they may not always understand or be able to recognise the negative feelings they are experiencing and may not be aware of the physical symptoms that can be connected to these emotions.

It can be useful to practise some emotional coaching techniques with young people to support them with this. This involves using phrases such as; “I wonder if you are feeling like this because you are worried about returning to school” or “I can see you’re upset about returning to school, can you tell me why?” By doing this it triggers the young person to really focus on their emotions rather than focussing on their physical symptoms.

Remember; by supporting young people through this we are also teaching them lifelong skills that can be used throughout adulthood. By using these consistent methods it will make our young people more resilient to the things they find difficult.

Preparing for the return to school

It is important that our students return to school with a positive attitude and are ready to learn as soon as they return, here are some tips that may help:

- Get their uniform out the night before the return to school to make sure they are ready for the morning, rushing in the mornings can cause stress and upset.
- Encourage the young person to pack their bag the night before the return to school so they are organised for the first morning.
- Start getting back into the school routine a few days before the return to school so that their body clock can re-set. Encourage them to go to bed at a reasonable

time and set an alarm to wake them up at the time they would normally get up for school.

- Cut down on using electronics as this will help the young person's brain get back into learning mode.
- If possible, encourage the young person to keep up-to-date with their homework during their absence. However, it is recognised that this may not be possible due to illness and in this case it may be useful to email the tutor in order to alleviate any worries your child may have.
- Remind the young person of their school routine; encourage them to contact friends to arrange meeting places to walk to school or meeting places in the playground.
- Some young people may find it difficult to sleep, have a headache or feel sick before their return, these are usually signs of worry. Ensure them that they are not poorly and encourage them to talk to you about any worries they may have, if they find this difficult it can be useful for them to write down their worries or draw a picture. It is important that we normalise worries and not dismiss them, what seems like a small worry to us may be a big worry for them so help them come up with a plan to support their worries.
- Encourage the young person to think of the positives of returning to school such as; seeing friends, getting back into a school routine, going to the lessons they enjoy, seeing the teachers that support them.

The most important thing is to encourage the young person to talk about their feelings. If you are ever concerned about them please use this link for useful contact numbers and information: <https://www.broadwater.surrey.sch.uk/page/?title=Well+Being&pid=12>