



Managing Change: **A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO STARTING COLLEGE**



Coping With Anxiety

WHEN STARTING COLLEGE

Starting college is a big life change, and feeling anxious is completely normal. You are entering a new environment, meeting new people, and adjusting to different expectations. The aim is not to get rid of anxiety completely, but to learn how to manage it so it doesn't stop you from enjoying your college experience.

First Things First: Anxiety is Normal

You might experience:

- ↳ Butterflies in your stomach
- ↳ Worrying about making friends
- ↳ Feeling nervous in lessons
- ↳ Overthinking about what others think of you
- ↳ Feeling lost or unsure about college routines

Most new students experience at least some of these feelings during their first few weeks.

Take Things One Day at a Time

When you're anxious, it's easy to think too far ahead.

Instead of worrying about your whole course, exams next year or making friends for life, focus on:

- ↳ Getting through today
- ↳ Attending your lessons
- ↳ Speaking to one new person
- ↳ Completing one task at a time

Small steps often lead to big achievements.



Arrive Early

Feeling rushed can make anxiety worse.

Try to:

- ↳ Set alarms the night before
- ↳ Prepare your bag and equipment
- ↳ Leave enough time for travel
- ↳ Arrive a little early if possible

Being prepared can help you feel more in control.

Challenge Anxious Thoughts

Anxiety often tells us things that aren't true.

For example:

Anxious Thought

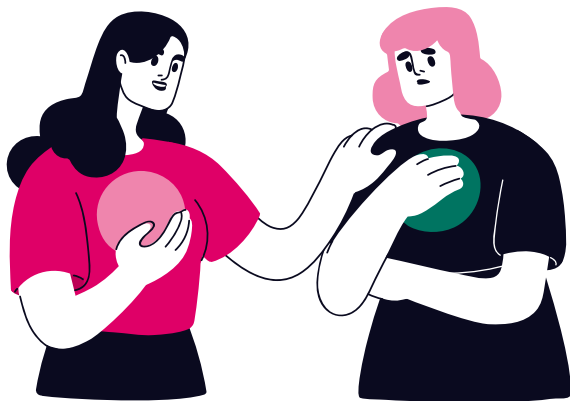
"Everyone is looking at me."
"I won't make any friends."
"I'm the only one feeling nervous."
"I must get everything right."

A More Balanced Thought

"Most people are focused on themselves."
"Friendships take time to develop."
"Lots of students feel nervous when they start."
"It's okay to learn as I go."

Ask yourself:

"Is this a fact, or is this anxiety talking?"



Talk to Someone

Sharing worries often makes them feel lighter.

You could speak to:

- ↳ A friend
- ↳ A family member
- ↳ Your Personal Tutor
- ↳ Attendance and Pastoral Support Officers
- ↳ Student Support Mentors
- ↳ Student Wellbeing practitioner

Middlesbrough College has dedicated welfare, safeguarding and counselling support available to students, recognising that health and wellbeing are a priority for successful learning. And self-development strategies on our wellbeing SharePoint.

Try the 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Technique

If anxiety starts to feel overwhelming, pause and notice:

- ↳ 5 things you can see
- ↳ 4 things you can feel
- ↳ 3 things you can hear
- ↳ 2 things you can smell
- ↳ 1 thing you can taste

This helps bring your attention back to the present moment.

Don't Isolate Yourself

When people feel anxious, they sometimes avoid others.

Try not to:

- ↳ Skip lessons
- ↳ Sit alone all the time
- ↳ Avoid college activities
- ↳ Spend every break on your phone

Even small interactions can help build confidence.

Look After Your Body

Your physical health affects your mental wellbeing.

Try to:

- ↳ Get enough sleep
- ↳ Eat breakfast
- ↳ Stay hydrated
- ↳ Exercise regularly
- ↳ Limit caffeine and energy drinks if they make you feel more anxious
- ↳ Seek support if you're struggling with your mental health

Looking after yourself gives your brain the best chance to cope with stress and change.

Use College Support Early

You do not have to wait until things become a crisis.

Middlesbrough College's Student Services team includes Safeguarding and Welfare Officers, counselling support and other services designed to help students thrive, settle into college life and overcome challenges.

The earlier you ask for support, the easier it is to manage difficulties.

What to Remember on Difficult Days

When anxiety is high, remind yourself:

- ♥ I am safe
- ♥ I do not need to be perfect
- ♥ It is okay to ask for help
- ♥ Feeling nervous is normal
- ♥ I am still learning
- ♥ Things will get easier with time

A Final Message

If you're feeling anxious about starting at Middlesbrough College, you're not alone. Many students arrive feeling worried, uncertain, or overwhelmed. Within a few weeks, most begin to find their routine, make connections, and feel more confident.

Be patient with yourself. Take each day as it comes. Use the support around you, and remember that resilience is not about never feeling anxious. It's about showing up, asking for help when needed, and keeping going even when things feel challenging. You've already taken the first step by starting your college journey.

Building Resilience in Your First 6 Weeks at Middlesbrough College

A FRIENDLY GUIDE FOR NEW STUDENTS

Starting college is exciting, but it can also feel a bit scary. You're leaving school behind, meeting new people, learning new routines, and taking more responsibility for yourself. The good news is that nobody expects you to get everything right straight away.

Resilience is the ability to bounce back when things are difficult, stressful, or unexpected. It doesn't mean never struggling. It means learning how to manage challenges and keep moving forward.

This guide will help you build resilience during your first six weeks at Middlesbrough College and show you where to get support when you need it.

Week 1: Focus on Settling In

During your first week, don't put pressure on yourself to know everything.

Concentrate on the following things:

- ↳ Learn your timetable and classroom locations
- ↳ Arrive on time each day
- ↳ Introduce yourself to classmates
- ↳ Talk to your Personal Tutor
- ↳ Ask questions if you are unsure about anything

Remember: everyone feels nervous at the start. Even students who look confident are usually adjusting too.

Resilience tip: don't judge your college experience based on the first few days. Give yourself time to settle into the new environment.



Week 2: Build Your Support Network

One of the biggest protective factors for resilience is having people you can talk to.

Your support team may include:

- ↳ Friends and classmates
- ↳ Parents, carers, or family members
- ↳ Personal Tutors & Lecturers
- ↳ Enrichment staff
- ↳ Safeguarding and Welfare Officers
- ↳ Department Wellbeing Staff

Remember: Middlesbrough College places a strong focus on student wellbeing, safeguarding, and welfare. Students can access support from dedicated Safeguarding and Welfare Officers, counsellors, careers advisers, and Additional Learning Support teams.

Resilience tip: asking for help is a strength, not a weakness.

Week 3: Get Comfortable with Challenges

College work can be more independent than school. You may find some assignments difficult or feel overwhelmed by deadlines.

When this happens:

Don't:

- ↳ Give up straight away
- ↳ Avoid classes
- ↳ Keep worries to yourself

Do:

- ↳ Break tasks into smaller steps
- ↳ Ask tutors for clarification
- ↳ Use support services
- ↳ Celebrate small achievements

Remember: mistakes are a normal part of learning.

Resilience tip: instead of saying "I can't do this", try saying "I can't do this yet."



Week 4: Look After Your Wellbeing

Looking after your mental and physical health helps you cope better with pressure.

Simple wellbeing habits:

- ↳ Get enough sleep
- ↳ Eat regularly
- ↳ Stay hydrated
- ↳ Exercise or stay active
- ↳ Take breaks from social media
- ↳ Spend time doing things you enjoy

Remember: If you are struggling emotionally, Middlesbrough College offers confidential wellbeing and counselling support. The college's welfare and safeguarding teams are available to support students with concerns affecting their wellbeing or ability to learn, and we also have a dedicated wellbeing SharePoint where you can access self help resources.

Resilience tip: Looking after yourself is not selfish. It's essential.



Week 5: Learn from Setbacks

Everyone has difficult days.

You might:

- ↳ Miss a deadline
- ↳ Receive feedback you don't like
- ↳ Have friendship issues
- ↳ Feel homesick or lonely
- ↳ Lose motivation
- ↳ The resilient response is to learn rather than quit.

Ask yourself:

- ↳ What happened?
- ↳ What can I do differently next time?
- ↳ Who can help me?

Remember: Every challenge teaches you something valuable.

Resilience tip: A setback is an event. It is not your identity.



Week 6: Reflect on Your Progress

Take a moment to think about how far you've come.

Ask yourself:

- ↳ What have I achieved?
- ↳ What am I proud of?
- ↳ What challenges have I overcome?
- ↳ What support has helped me?

You have already developed resilience simply by starting college and adapting to a new environment.



Top 10 Resilience Rules for New College Students

1. Be patient with yourself
2. Attend every lesson you can
3. Ask for help early
4. Stay connected to positive people
5. Take care of your wellbeing
6. Learn from mistakes
7. Focus on progress, not perfection
8. Keep a routine
9. Celebrate small wins

Remember that challenges do not last forever.

Thrive

At Middlesbrough College, the aim is to help students develop the skills, knowledge, confidence, and behaviours needed to thrive both in education and life. The college's strategic priorities emphasise helping people thrive, supporting confidence, wellbeing, and personal development.

Support available includes:

- ↳ Safeguarding and Welfare Officers
- ↳ Student counselling services
- ↳ Additional Learning Support (ALS)
- ↳ Careers advice and guidance
- ↳ Financial support and bursaries
- ↳ Student enrichment activities
- ↳ Sports academies and wellbeing opportunities
- ↳ Personal Tutor support throughout your course
- ↳ Attendance and pastoral officers
- ↳ Student support mentors



Understanding College Expectations

Middlesbrough College expects students to:

- ↳ Attend regularly
- ↳ Engage positively in learning
- ↳ Treat others with respect
- ↳ Follow behaviour expectations
- ↳ Speak up if they are worried about themselves or others

These expectations support a safe and positive learning environment for everyone and are reflected in the college's safeguarding, welfare, behaviour, and health and safety policies.

Final Message

The first six weeks of college are all about learning, growing, and finding your place. You do not need to have everything figured out. Resilience is built one step at a time, and Middlesbrough College has a range of services and people ready to support you whenever you need it.

You belong here, you can succeed here, and you don't have to do it alone.



Making Friends at College

A RESILIENCE SUPERPOWER

One of the biggest worries students have when starting college is:

"What if I don't make any friends?"

The truth is that most new students are thinking exactly the same thing, especially if they have come to a different college or course than school friends, or have previously struggled in school. College brings together people from different schools, backgrounds, and areas, so everyone is starting fresh.

Having positive friendships can improve your confidence, reduce stress, and help you feel more connected to college life.



Top Tips for Making Friends

1. Say "Hi" First

It sounds simple, but a smile and a friendly "Hi, how are you finding college?" can start a conversation.

Most people are just as nervous as you are.

2. Sit with Different People

Avoid hiding at the back of the room or spending every break on your phone. Sitting next to different people gives you more opportunities to make connections.

3. Ask Questions

People generally enjoy talking about themselves.

Try asking:

- ↳ What course are you studying?
- ↳ Which school did you come from?
- ↳ How are you finding college so far?
- ↳ What are your plans after college?

4. Join Activities and Enrichment

Middlesbrough College offers enrichment activities, sports academies and opportunities outside the classroom which can help students meet people with similar interests.

Friendships often develop naturally when you're doing something you enjoy together.

Visit the enrichment page on the college website to see what you can get involved with.

5. Be Yourself

You don't need to change who you are to fit in. Good friendships are built on being genuine, respectful and kind.

6. Don't Worry About Finding Your Best Friends Immediately

Some friendships happen in the first week. Others take months to develop.

Focus on making small connections rather than trying to find your friendship group straight away.

7. Include Others

If you notice someone sitting alone, invite them to join you at break or during lunch.

You may be helping someone who is feeling exactly how you felt on your first day.

8. Use Your Personal Tutor

If you're finding it difficult to settle in socially, speak to your Personal Tutor. Middlesbrough College's Student Services, Safeguarding and Welfare teams are there to help students feel safe, included, and supported during their college journey.

Friendship Challenges are Normal

Not every friendship will last.

You might:

- ↳ Drift apart from school friends
- ↳ Fall out with someone
- ↳ Feel left out occasionally
- ↳ Join a group that isn't right for you

This is all part of growing up. Resilient people recognise when a friendship is helping them thrive and when it may be time to move on.

Ask yourself:

- ↳ Do I feel respected?
- ↳ Can I be myself around these people?
- ↳ Do they encourage me to do well?
- ↳ Do they help me feel happy and safe?

If the answer is no, speak to a trusted adult or member of the Support Team.

Remember...

Friends can make college better, but your value does not depend on how many friends you have.

Be kind, be yourself, take opportunities to talk to people, and give relationships time to grow.

Many students arrive at Middlesbrough College knowing nobody. By the end of their first term, they have built friendships, support networks and confidence they never thought possible.

Friendship Resilience Challenge

During your first six weeks, try to:

- ↳ Introduce yourself to one new person each week
- ↳ Learn three classmates' names
- ↳ Join one enrichment, sport or college activity
- ↳ Sit with someone new at least once
- ↳ Offer help or encouragement to another student

Small actions lead to strong friendships, and strong friendships help build resilience.





Middlesbrough College
Dock Street
Middlesbrough
TS2 1AD

01642 333 333

studentservices@mbro.ac.uk



To find out more,
visit our support,
welfare and
safeguarding page