

PSYCHOEDUCATION

Emotionally Based School Avoidance



Alliance

Children, Young People & Families


What is Emotionally Based School Avoidance?

Emotionally Based School Avoidance occurs when children or young people experience long-term anxiety or stress related to school. This can stem from various factors, such as difficulty making friends, confusing schoolwork, pressure to conform, or challenging relationships with teachers.

For some, the school environment may not suit their needs, particularly if they have mental health issues or neurodiverse conditions like autism, ADHD, dyslexia, or dyspraxia. In such cases, the stress of trying to fit in can be overwhelming, especially if their needs are unmet or undiagnosed.

Key Features:

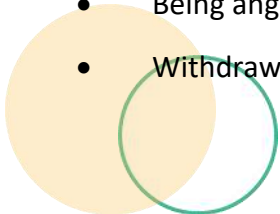
What does it look like?



School attendance with anxiety	Behaviour in the mornings to avoid attending school	Repeated lateness, followed by school attendance	Periodic absences, missing classes, not staying in class	Repeated absences, missing /leaving classes	Complete absence from school for a period of time	Complete school absence for an extended period of time
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Young people might show they're feeling anxious about school by:

- Not wanting to get up and get ready
- Saying they can't go
- Worrying a lot about small issues, such as having the right equipment for a lesson
- Feeling sick, or having stomach aches or headaches
- Not sleeping well
- Not doing schoolwork, or their grades dropping
- Being angry or upset, or acting out – at school or at home
- Withdrawing – seeming quiet or low in mood



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Create a morning routine or timetable

Establishing a routine for getting up, dressing, having breakfast, and leaving the house can reduce stress and create security. Prepare the night before by checking the timetable, packing bags, and laying out clothes. In the morning, focus on one task at a time instead of the overall goal of getting to school.

Encourage relaxation

Having time to calm down and relax after school can be important. This could be spending time with friends and family, listening to their favourite music, doing exercise, playing a sport, cooking, drawing or watching a film.



Think together about how your child can manage their anxiety

Younger children might like to take an object from home, like a favourite teddy, into school – or try a worry box at home to help contain their anxieties. Teenagers might like to fill a box with things that help them feel calm.

Keep a gratitude journal and recognise small achievements

This is a special book. In this book you should write or draw each day about something good that happened to you or something in your life that makes you happy.

Ways parents and carers can help:

- Request extra support from the school for your child's educational difficulties—speak to the mental health lead or SEN coordinator. You could see a GP too.
- Provide examples of the specific challenges they're facing.
- Ask for access to missed schoolwork, notes, and handouts.
- Inquire about changing the classroom seating if needed to avoid unkind peers.
- Support them during presentations and avoid putting them on the spot.
- Help them during tests and provide a 'time out' pass for anxiety.
- Ensure they have access to a trusted person for support.

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Useful websites:

For Parents and Young People:

[Not Fine in School - School Refusal, School Attendance](#)

[School attendance and mental wellbeing | Anna Freud](#)

[Emotionally Based School Avoidance - stem4](#)

[School Anxiety and Refusal | Parent Guide to Support | YoungMinds](#)

For Teaching Staff:

[EBSA toolkit \(southglos.gov.uk\)](#)

[emotionally-based-school-avoidance.pdf \(leedsbeckett.ac.uk\)](#)

[Emotionally Based School Avoidance \(EBSA\) | Support Services for Education](#)

Apps:

Clear Fear—Clear Fear provides you with a range of ways to manage anxiety.

Virtual Hope Box— The Virtual Hope Box (VHB) is a app that contains simple tools to help with coping, relaxation, distraction, and positive thinking.

Tellmi—A safe, inclusive digital community where young people can help themselves and each other

WorryTree —take control of your worries, transform your thoughts and feel better, using proven CBT techniques and sensory practices.

Smiling Mind—A meditation program developed by psychologists and educators to help bring mindfulness into your life

