

# SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD WITH EBSA

## EMOTIONALLY BASED SCHOOL ABSENCE GUIDANCE FOR PARENTS

### WHAT IS EBSA?

#### Emotionally Based School

Absence/Avoidance/Anxiety (EBSA) is a broad term that is used to describe children and young people who have difficulty attending school and may have long periods of absence caused by emotional distress.

EBSA is commonly associated with emotional and physical distress and an inability to attend school, which can then lead to further anxiety about school. It is not the same as truancy which is not usually linked to an emotional cause like anxiety.

EBSA isn't a new problem, but young people feeling anxious about going to school regularly, has increased significantly since the pandemic and lockdown.

### PUSH AND PULL FACTORS

There are a range of factors that feed into EBSA. These factors can either increase a child's ability to attend school or reduce it, which means they will be more likely to stay at home.

These factors are referred to as PUSH and PULL factors.

Push and pull factors can affect both children and parents. They are broken down into different overall areas: environmental, school and person-centred.

EBSA is usually the result of a combination of these factors. Some examples of PUSH and PULL factors for both children and parents are below:

	<b>PUSH</b> (Increases attendance)	<b>PULL</b> (Reduces attendance)
<b>ENVIRONMENTAL</b>	Encouragement from adults at home to go to school	Games/activities at home. Liking the safety/flexibility of home routines
<b>CHILD-CENTRED</b>	Good awareness of feelings and triggers Motivated to attend to achieve goals	Negative thought cycles. Under-developed self-regulation and awareness
<b>SCHOOL</b>	Positive transition to school	Friendship difficulties

### SIGNS OF EBSA

Your young person might complain of anxiety symptoms, butterflies in the tummy, pins and needles or nausea.

They might complain that they have abdominal pain, a headache or a sore throat often, with no physical signs of illness.

You may notice that these symptoms are better at weekends and holidays, but worse on Sunday evenings and weekday mornings.

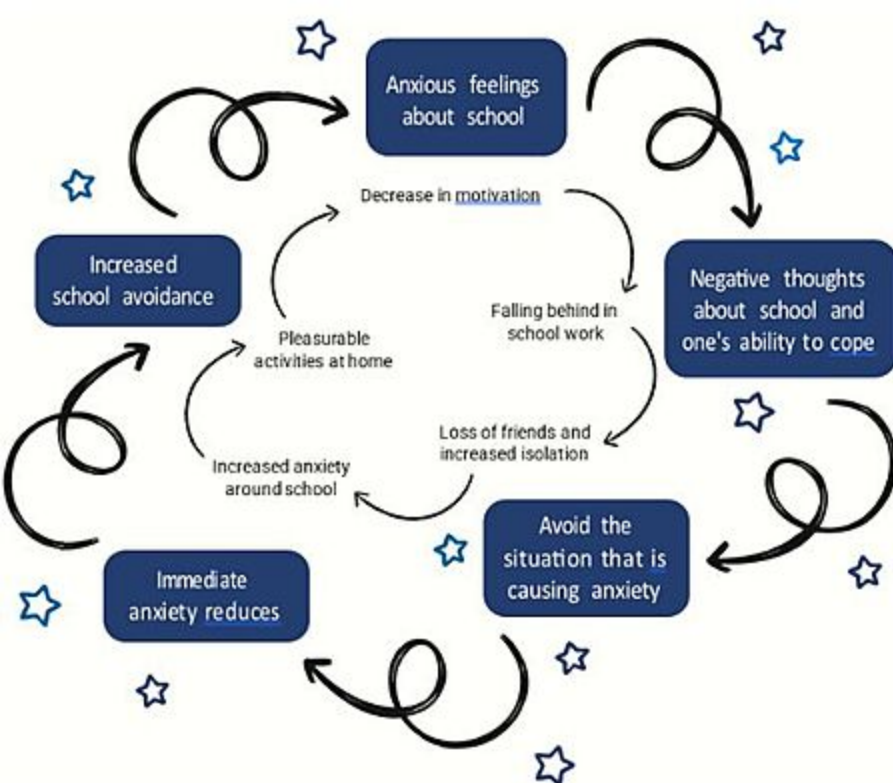
**REMEMBER!** Anxiety is a NORMAL human feeling. It doesn't feel very nice, but avoiding it makes it worse, not better.

The most common way to manage anxiety is avoidance as this gives immediate relief. As parents, we might think it's 'kinder' to let them avoid the situation. Unfortunately, it also increases anxiety the next time they are faced with a similar situation.

### ANXIETY

dizzy, lightheaded, mind racing, disorientated, strange/blurry vision, restless, jelly-like legs, wanting to run, breathing fast or shallow, feeling breathless, nausea/lack of appetite, heart racing/palpitations, difficulty in swallowing, possible sleep disturbance, shivering, sweating, trembling.

### WHAT MAKES IT WORSE?



### WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

Communicate with the school as soon as possible. Your child's school should work in partnership with you to address the issue and make a plan to support your child to attend school.

The approach you take needs to be something that all adults agree to and stick with, taking into account the child's specific needs. The approach will need to be both firm and consistent. All parties need to maintain consistency and be a positive, united front for your child.

One of the key ways you can support your young person is by calmly listening to them and acknowledging their fears because those fears are real to them. It is also important to reassure them that you and the school will work with them to make school a happier place for them.

Helping your child to understand that some anxiety is normal, how to recognise anxiety, how to cope with the uncomfortable feelings without avoiding them and teaching them by modelling this yourself, is how you can support them best.

It can be really hard to see your child unhappy. It's important that you have someone you can talk to about this - it could be a friend, family member or professional.