Do you worry about going to or being at School?

Information booklet for Young People who may experience Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

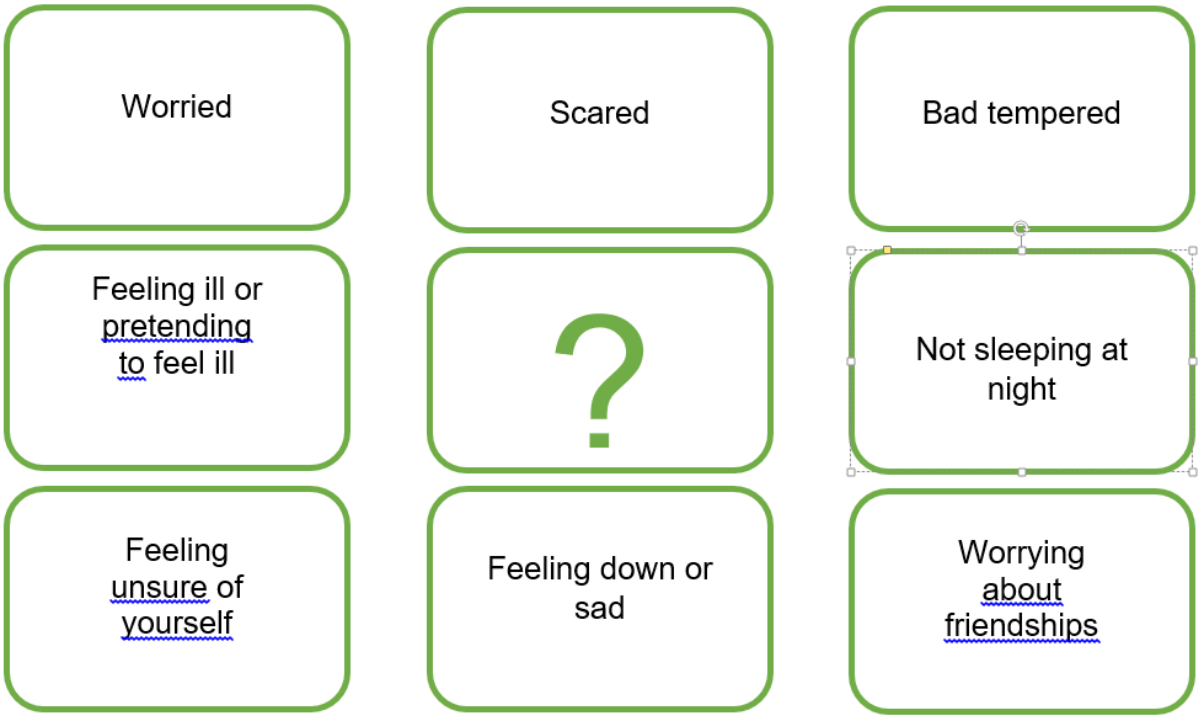
Wakefield Educational Psychology Service

Are you feeling anxious about school?

Feeling worried or anxious is normal. We all experience this from time to time. Feeling worried or anxious can help to keep us safe from harm and cope in difficult situations. Sometimes anxiety or excessive worrying can become a problem especially when it stops us doing what we want or need to do.

Many children and young people worry about school. This is normal. Anxieties are part of life and learning to deal with them is part of growing up. Sometimes our feelings can make us not want to go to school. If you are very anxious or worried about going to school what you might experiencing is something called Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA).

When you think about school are you?



You are not on your own. We all feel like this from time to time because of things that happen in our life at home, at school or elsewhere.

There may be some things at school that can make you feel this way, such as:

- Problems with friendships
- Changing school
- Bullying
- Feeling too different to other people
- Worried about how you look
- Pressure to achieve your target grades
- Not being able to do the work
- Worried about getting changed for PE or games
- Not getting on with some teachers
- Anxious about exams and tests
- Not being good at sports

There may also be some things outside of School that can make you feel this way, such as:

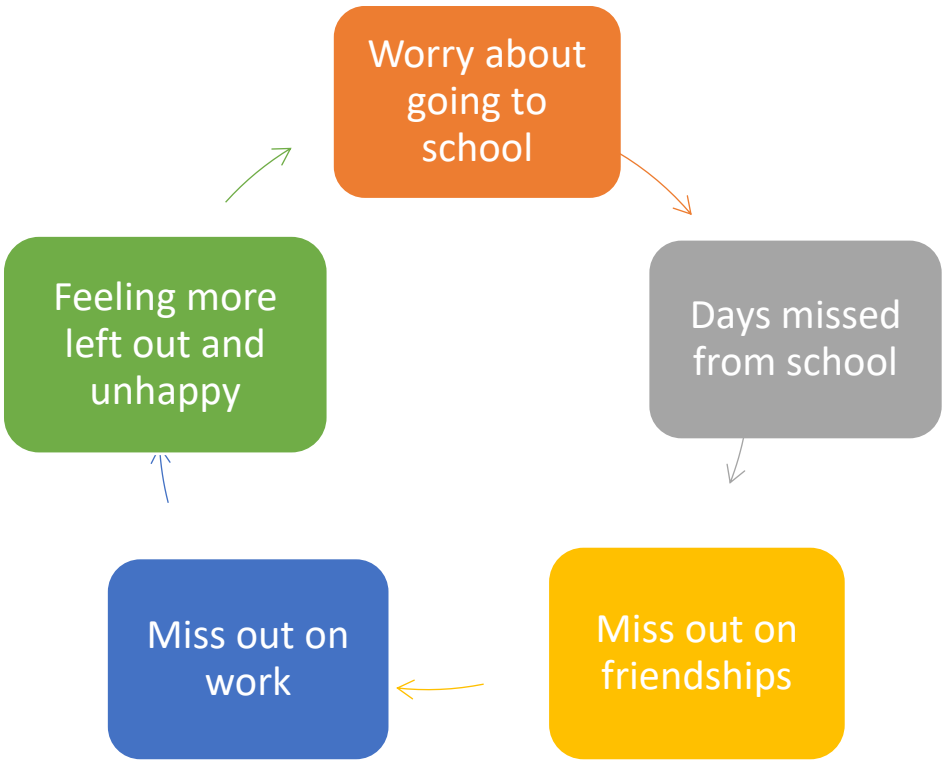
Someone who is important to you has died	Others in the family feel worried, down or sad	Someone new has joined your family
Your Mum and Dad are arguing or splitting up	Your pet is lost or has died	It is difficult to get yourself into school in the morning
Your Mum or Dad is ill	You have a new brother or sister	Mum and Dad not understanding your feelings

What Happens when you don't attend school?

Sometimes you may feel that staying at home is the best thing to do because it makes you feel better.

However, the longer you don't go to school, the more you miss out on lessons and as a result the learning gets more difficult. You will also miss out on seeing your friends and as a result keeping friendships becomes harder. This can be seen in the diagram below.

It is very important that you let an adult know if you are worried about anything to do with school or homes that you can get support rather than letting things get worse.



What can your school do to help you?

Talk to an adult in school that you can trust, they should listen to you. They can then work with you and your parents to help find out what is worrying you and what they can do to help. Things they can do to help could be:

identify a key person to talk to

Support with school work and/or friendships

Support with development of a support plan

Change your timetable

Have a safe space for you to go to

What can I do to get back to school?

It is important that you work with your school and parents to help you to attend school as soon as possible. These are things that could help you:

- ✓ Think about things that will help you to get back into school and include them on your plan.
- ✓ Keep in touch with your friends and what is happening in school.
- ✓ Catch up with some of the work you have missed before you go back.
- ✓ Take small steps to get back into the school routine – do not expect to do it all at once.
- ✓ Celebrate the small successes you have made.
- ✓ Be brave and take a chance – once you are in school it may not be as bad as you think.

Our Body's Response

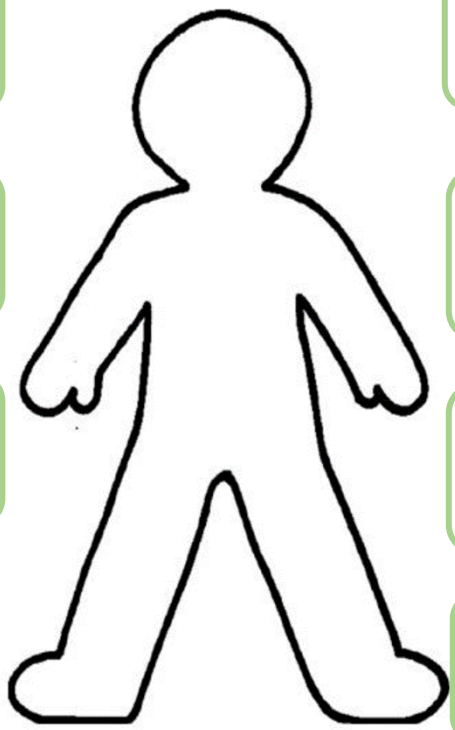
When you are feeling worried, your body can react in different ways. You may experience some of the following:

Increased heart rate

Headaches or dizziness

Tension in muscles

Thoughts racing



Sweating

Change in appetite

Faster breathing, or shortness of breath

Bowel problems

Tiredness, or lack of energy

Dry mouth

Stomach ache

Difficulty sleeping

Trembling

Nausea (feeling sick)

It is important to try and identify some of these signs when you are feeling worried, so that you can use different strategies to support you.

There are a number of strategies you can use. Try to identify which ones help you the most. Here are some you could try:

Physical Exercise

Exercise increases your heart rate and releases endorphins, which make you feel good.

It is very good for your mind too.

Refocus your Attention

What can you see outside?
What can you hear?
What different shapes can you see?
What colours can you see?

Breathe

Take a big, deep breath in through your nose, hold for 2 seconds.

Breathe out through your mouth and repeat as needed.

Positive Self-talk

Replace negative thoughts with more positive ones.

"I can do this"
"I am almost there"
"I have done so well so far"

Take a Step Back

Try to take a step back from the situation.

It is important to give yourself time and space to think.

Relaxation

Do something you enjoy and find relaxing.

This may be listening to music, reading a book, drawing, or going for a walk.

Visualisation

Close your eyes and imagine you are in your favourite place.
What can you see?
What can you hear?
Who are you with?
How do you feel?

Take Control of your Body

Sit, or lay down in a quiet space.
Tense each part of your body for 3 seconds and then relax it.
Start with your toes and work all the way up your body, until your whole body is relaxed.

Further sources of support

Information, advice and publications on mental health with detailed sections on anxiety for young people, parents/carers and professionals. Includes a parent survival guide and monthly live parents lounge sessions with mental health professionals.

Calls are free Mon-Fri 9.30am – 4pm

0808 802 5544

Website:

www.youngminds.org.uk

Wakefield Early Support Advice Information and Liaison (WESAIL)

Wakefield Early Support, Advice,Information and Liaison (WESAIL) provides a free, confidential and impartial service offering information covering a range of matters relating to Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND).The aim of the WESAIL service is to support children, young people, their parents, carers and families by providing information to navigate systems and processes so that they can play an active role in decision making about matters relating to their or their children's health, education, social care to support and empower them in meeting their child's needs and promoting self-advocacy.

WESAIL can be contacted Monday to Friday 9 – 5 pm.

- **Telephone:** 07961 897036
- **Email:** WESAIL@barnardos.org.uk
- **Website:** https://barnardossendiass.org.uk/wakefield-sendiass/
- **Like our Facebook page:** Wesail Wakefield
- **Address:** Barnardo's Wakefield Services, Room 249, Castleford Civic Centre, Ferrybridge Road, Castleford, WF10 4JH

Anxiety UK

Information and resources for parents of children who are experiencing anxiety.
www.anxietyuk.org.uk

WeHeartCBT

A collection of resources aimed at helping CYP who are struggling with anxiety and/or low mood. Resources are based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and aimed at mental health professionals, schools and families.
www.weheartcbt.com/anxiety

Not Fine in School

A parent-led organisation supporting families experiencing school refusal and attendance difficulties along with raising awareness of related issues. Lots of videos and support as well as guides for schools and families.
https://notfineinschool.org.uk/

MindEd

Some free online courses on how to support young people with mental health difficulties.
https://www.minded.org.uk/

MindEd for Families

Online advice and information to help you to understand and identify early signs and best support your child.
https://mindedforfamilies.org.uk/

Contributors:
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