

Thrive 365

Dragonfly: Impact Education



Did you know?

What used to be known as 'school refusal' refers to when a child's anxiety reaches a level where they can't go to school.

It's now called Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) because 'school refusal' makes it sound like the child's choice not to attend. This is 'within child deficit' - which means assuming it is the child/young person who needs to change or be 'fixed' rather than their environment.

<https://www.supportservicesforeducation.co.uk/Page/20029>

1 Exploring reasons

There are lots of possible reasons for a child's level of anxiety to build to the point that they don't feel able to go to school. These might be to do with the school environment - perhaps it's related to SEND, or social problems in school. Or, it might be because of family breakdown, or bereavement.

Sometimes the child can't express why they are anxious. Rather than ask 'what's wrong?', Young Minds recommend drawing an 'anxiety iceberg' with them. Here's a video explaining how: <https://youtu.be/s5l-qvDmJ9I>

2 Tailored plan

A meeting between a member of staff from the school, the child and a parent can help to begin form a plan of what can be adapted to reduce some of the anxiety.

The stress hormone cortisol is often higher in the morning (to help get us out of bed!), however this can make feelings of anxiety worse in the mornings. It can therefore be helpful to focus on morning routines to start with - maybe arriving 10 minutes early to do a 'job' or chat with a mentor. This also provides them with a 'safe space' in the school.

3 Build on strengths

It can be helpful to normalise anxiety and let children (and parents) know that school is a demanding place, so lots of people feel anxious from time to time.

Work with the young person's strengths and areas of interest and resilience - point out past successes and positive relationships. Then build these things into a support plan. For example, if a young person has had past success in maths, part of the plan might be the initially coming in for these lessons and building from there.

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Islands in the Stream:
Senior Mental Health Leads
in Schools
by Claire Pass & Rachael Bushby

