



TIPS AND TRICKS FOR UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH SCHOOL REFUSAL

What Is School Refusal?

- Most children enjoy school and when school attendance becomes an issue it is most likely a result of a more serious problem, such as depression or anxiety.
- Children with school refusal may complain of physical symptoms shortly before it is time to leave for school or repeatedly ask to visit the school nurse.
- If the child is allowed to stay home, the symptoms quickly disappear, only to reappear the next morning. In some cases, a child may refuse to leave the house.
- The onset of school refusal symptoms is usually gradual.
- School refusal commonly takes place between the ages of 5 and 6 and between the ages of 10 and 11, and at times of transition, such as entering middle or high school.
- Symptoms may begin after a holiday break or illness or when faced with returning to school after weekends or vacations.
- Stressful events at home or school or with peers may cause school refusal.
- Chronic school refusal or avoidance may result in academic failure, interpersonal difficulties with peers, and school or legal problems (e.g., truancy).

Symptoms Of School Refusal:

- Physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, nausea, or diarrhea.
- Temper tantrums, inflexibility, separation anxiety, avoidance, or defiance.
- Severe emotional distress about attending school.
- Parents are aware of their child's absences.
- The child typically tries to persuade his or her parents to let him or her stay home.
- No significant antisocial behavior history has been noted.
- The child usually stays home during school hours.
- The child is willing to do schoolwork at home.

Coping Strategies For Dealing With School Refusal:

- Expose children to school in small degrees, increasing exposure slowly over time. Eventually this will help them realize there is nothing to fear and that nothing bad will happen.
- Talk with your child about feelings and fears, which helps reduce them.
- Emphasize the positive aspects of going to school, such as being with friends, learning a favorite subject, and playing at recess.
- Encourage hobbies and interests. These can be relaxing and build self-confidence.
- Have your child perform various relaxation techniques.
- Parents, school personnel, and mental health professionals should collaborate on getting the child back to school as soon as possible.
- It is imperative to keep your child in school. Missing school reinforces anxiety rather than alleviating it.