

Produced by the Southampton Educational

Psychology Service



WHAT DO WE MEAN By Feeling Worried?

Feeling worried (or we might use the word 'anxious') is a normal emotion we can experience at different times.

When we feel worried, this can help us keep safe when if there is something around that could be harmful.

Sometimes though, we can experience feelings of worry that are excessive; they last a long time and stay with us instead of fading. If this happens, managing these feelings of worry becomes challenging and prevents us from doing what we would normally do in our daily lives.

FEELING WORRIED AND GOING TO SCHOOL?

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For many children and young people, they can experience feeling worried about something linked with school at different times. This is okay and a normal part of life that helps them learn to manage these feelings.

Sometimes though, a child or young person's feelings of worry about school can become excessive and may lead to them not wanting to go. This then becomes Emotionally Based School Absence (EBSA).

We know school is really important. Spotting the signs of EBSA early can help us to help the child or young person overcome their feelings of worry about going.

HOW CAN EBSA Develop?

When a child or young person starts to worry excessively about school, they build up a pattern (or cycle) of behaviours, thoughts and feelings.

Keeping a look out for this pattern (shown in the circles on the opposite page) can help us to spot that they are worrying a lot about school: The following are some of the key behaviours that a child or young person might show which could indicate an EBSA cycle is building:

PREFERRING TO STAY AT HOME WHEN ABSENT FROM SCHOOL

SAYING THEY ARE UNWELL (E.G. HEADACHE OR STOMACH ACHE FREQUENTLY NEGATIVE COMMENTS ABOUT HAVING TO GO TO

5. BECOMING UPSET About being Separated From the Family

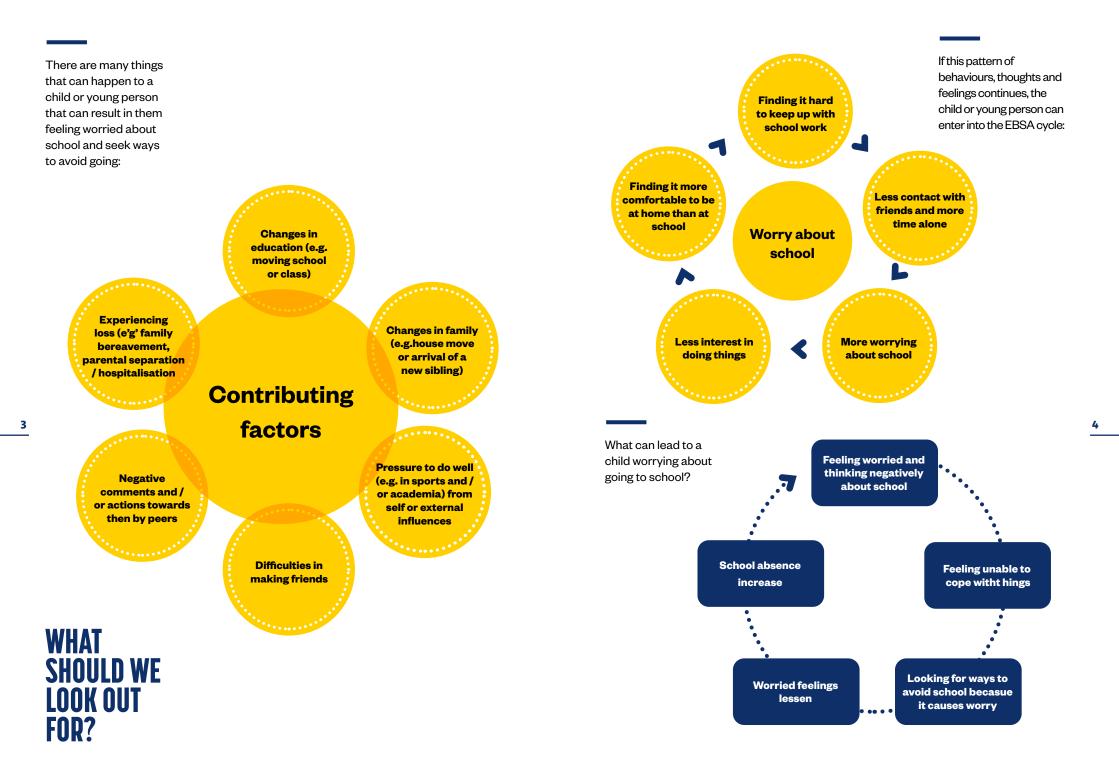
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6. HAVING 'TANTRUMS'

SCHOOL



HOW YOU Can Help

How we respond to a child / young person's worries about school is important to think about so here are a few ideas to consider:

- Let them know you're there to listen and they can open up to you
 - You could try asking questions such as "Can you tell me 3 things you like about school?" then "Can you tell me 3 things you are worried about / that have worried you recently?"
- Listen calmly and thank them for sharing with you
 - Give them options of how they share their thoughts and feelings – talking, drawing, writing, texting

• Let them know their thoughts and feelings are valid

- Remind them that going to school is important
- Let them know that you and the school will work together to help
- Try to be positive and take one day at a time

o If they don't manage school one day, try again the next day • Make sure you have someone you can talk with who can listen

You can also find further advice via the organisation *YoungMinds*. This charity promote the wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. They have a lot of helpful information on their website plus different ways parents can contact them to request advice:

- https://youngminds.org.uk/findhelp/for-parents/
- o Parent helpline 9:30am to 4:00pm weekdays (0808 802 5544)
- o Parent webchat
- o Parent e-mail service

YOUNGMINDS

Try to make contact with the school as soon as possible and request a meeting to discuss the situation and how to move forward. When you talk to the school:

- Emphasise that you want to work together with them to build a joint plan to help resolve the situation
- Request a specific adult to be named as the key staff member for contact about the plan by all parties
- Agree regular reviews as part of the plan
- Be firm and consistent when implementing the plan, even if the child / young person appears more unhappy to start with; this is the child / young person's way of telling us they are trying to adjust to the new way of being
- Be positive and only share concerns about the plan with the school
- Be prepared for there to be a few bumps along the road as you work towards changing the perception of child / young person towards school

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- Be prepared for it to be harder for the child / young person after weekends, time off for illness or holidays
- Stick with it; you may think about moving schools but research shows that even if a move happens, the difficulties are likely to continue / reemerge

The school can also seek advice from the Southampton Educational Psychology Service.