

Do you worry about going to school?

Information booklet for young people.

Worry or anxiety is a normal feeling that we all experience from time to time. It can even keep us safe from harm or help us perform in difficult situations. However, 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. However sometimes our feelings can make us not want to attend school. If you have high levels of anxiety and worry about attending school you may be experiencing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA).

When you think about school are you?

(insert image here)

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:

(these should all be distinct as in pdf)

- Problems with friendships
- Changing school
- Bullying
- Feeling too different to other people
- Worried about your appearance
- Pressure to achieve your target grades
- Don't like the noise in school
- Not understanding or coping with school work

Not being good
at sports
Worried about
getting changed
for PE or games
Not getting on
with some teachers
Anxious about
exams and tests

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

(as above: should all have their own arrow)

Death of somebody

important to you

Parents arguing
or splitting up

A parent who is ill

Members of
your family feeling
worried

depressed or sad

Death or loss
of a pet

Birth of a new
brother or sister

New people
moving into
your home

Difficulties in
getting to school

Parents not
understanding
your feelings

What happens when you don't attend school?

It is very important to try to overcome
these difficulties as soon as possible.

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

However, the more time you spend

out of school the more you miss out on lessons and the learning gets harder. You also miss out on seeing friends which means keeping friendships becomes more difficult. This can be seen in the diagram.

(Chulainn, in the diagram below, can we redo and collapse miss out on friendships and miss out on work into one circle, saying miss out on friendships and work. This will make more sense)



It is important to let an adult know if you are worried about anything at school or home. In this way, you can get help to make things better rather than getting worse or feeling stuck.

What do I do if I feel like this?

Most importantly, talk to somebody. This could be your parents, an adult at school, other family members or a friend. Think about the things that are worrying you. Write a list or draw your worries then order them from most worried about to least worried about.

What can your school do to help you?

Find an adult at school you trust and talk to them. They will work with you and your parents/carers to help explore your worries and figure out what can be done to help you. Things they could do include:

These actions could be written up into a support plan so that you, your parents and school know what actions have been agreed to help support you. Actions in your support plan could include:

- Key person to talk to
- Help with school work or friendships
- Find a safe space for you to go to
- Alter your timetable

What can I do to get back to school?

If your worries are so great that you are not attending school it is important that you work with your school and your parents to help you get back to attending school as soon as possible. Things you can do to help include:

- Take part in the planning of how you will go back to school. Work with your parents and teachers to think of things that will help you.
- Think about a time that you did cope with a worry. What did you do then?
 - Keep in contact with your friends and what is happening at school.
 - Catch up on some of the work that you may have missed before you go back. You may feel overwhelmed by the amount of work you need to do, but your teachers will make sure you find this manageable. If you need support with any of the work, let your teachers know and they will give you the help you need.
- Take little steps to get back into the routine – don't expect that everything will get back to normal or will be okay immediately.
- You may well discover that once you are back at school, it won't seem as bad as you feared.
- Recognise even the small steps you have taken and celebrate your successes!

When you are feeling worried...

Your whole body reacts when you are anxious. You may feel some or many of the following:

(insert image)

Try to notice when you start to feel any of the signs above and stop and take a moment. There are many different strategies to help you feel relaxed and calm when you are feeling stressed or anxious and you will need to find the ones that work for you. To get you started, try some of these techniques. It is a good idea to practice these daily, for example at bedtime, so that they become automatic and you can call on these skills when you are feeling anxious.

(add in images as in pdf)

Try relaxing your body

1. Sit or lie somewhere quiet and comfortable
2. Stretch out your arms and make a fist, then relax
3. Push your legs out, wiggle your toes, and then relax
4. Shut your eyes tight and pull a scrunched-up face, and then relax

Try calm breathing

1. Take a slow breath in through your nose for about 4 seconds
2. Hold it for 1 or 2 seconds
3. Slowly let it out through your mouth for about 4 seconds
4. Wait 5- 7 seconds before taking another breath
5. Repeat 5- 10 times

Try visualisation

1. Close your eyes
2. Take slow deep breaths in and out
3. Think of your favourite place, maybe somewhere that you go on holiday
4. Focus on the place and picture yourself there
5. What can you see? What can you smell? What can you feel?

Think balanced thoughts

If you find yourself thinking a negative thought or worry a lot of the time e.g. 'I will fail all my exams because I am stupid'. Try thinking of a more balanced or positive thought instead e.g. 'If I work hard, I'll do ok in my exam'. Every time you notice your self thinking the negative thought – stop and tell yourself the positive thought.

Places to get further help and advice

Reach

Reach.Scot can help you understand your rights and to be included, listened to and involved in decisions about your support for learning. Find out about the different ways you can get support with your learning. Hear from other young people about what has helped them.

Young Minds

Lots of information in the form of advice, blogs and real-life stories regarding issues such as anxiety, low mood, self-isolation, social distancing, eating disorders and grief. It also includes links to helplines and advice services.

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/>

Anna Freud Centre

On my Mind aims to empower young people to make informed choices about their mental health and wellbeing. Resources include a powerpoint with 89 self-care strategies developed by young people.

<https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/resources/>

Childline

Childline is a free, private and confidential service where you can talk about anything at all that is on your mind. Childline counsellors are there for you online or on the phone anytime at all.

www.childline.org.uk

The Mix

Advice and help for under 25s. You can call the free helpline on 0808 808 4994, 4pm – 11pm seven days a week. Text the Crisis messenger text service (24 hours) - text THEMIX to 85258. Use one-to-one webchat 4-11pm seven days or request telephone/online counselling (on application).

<https://themix.org.uk>

You may also find that there are local services available, and your guidance teacher will be able to tell you about these.

If you are interested in finding out a bit more about how anxiety works and how you can learn to manage it, you might find the 'how to manage anxiety' self-help guide useful.

This leaflet was produced by Argyll and Bute Educational Psychology Service.