

School Avoidance & Motivation

Presented by: Natallia Piatrouskaya, MA, LPC
WWP/Rutgers UBHC

UBHC- School Based Counseling

- On-Site Crisis Intervention & Screening
- Access to Mental Health Services
- Collaboration with Mental Health Providers
- Mental Health Awareness & Education
- Consultation to Support Current Practices
- Referrals made through School Counselors

What is school refusal?

School refusal describes a regular refusal to attend school or routine problems staying at school. Children may avoid school to cope with stress or fear for a vast number of reasons.

Common worries about returning to school after the summer break:

Who will be my new teacher?

What if my new teacher is mean?

Will any of my friends be in my class?

What if I miss the bus?

Will I fit in?

Are my clothes OK?

Will I look stupid?

Who will I sit with at lunch?

School refusal during the Covid-19 pandemic

-Increased rates -Repeated patterns of school refusal-New onset of behaviors

Common worries about returning to school in person:

Contracting the virus, passing it onto loved ones or even dying

Worry around loss and bereavement

Health based concerns regarding socializing with others in person

Concerns about losing friendships with former friends due to isolation and fitting into new groups

A preference for the slower paced lockdown lifestyle

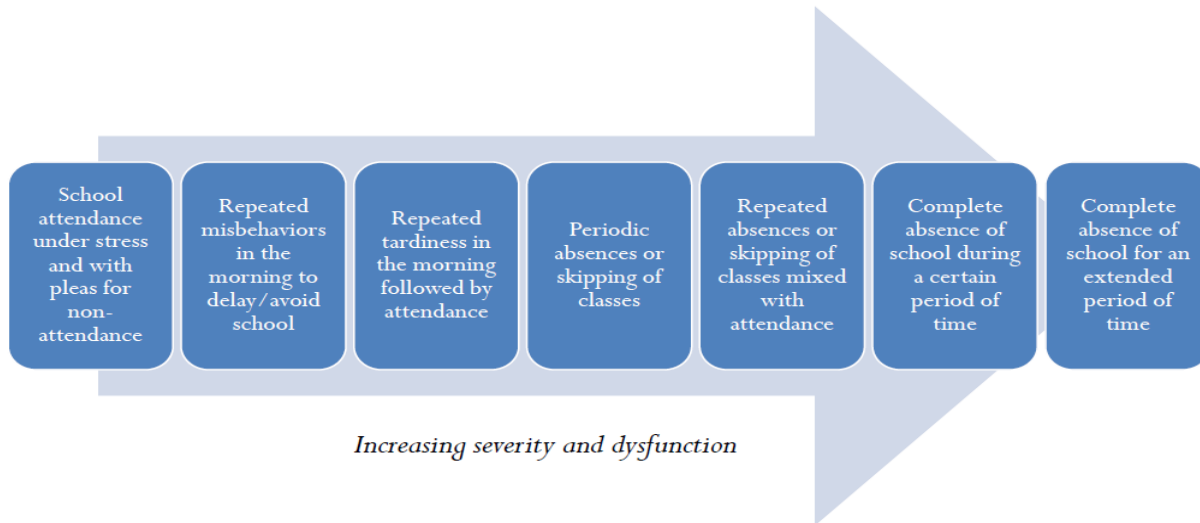
Fear of academic abilities/ or being behind peers

Decreased motivation and mood after reduced physical activity

Fear of being away from loved ones during the day

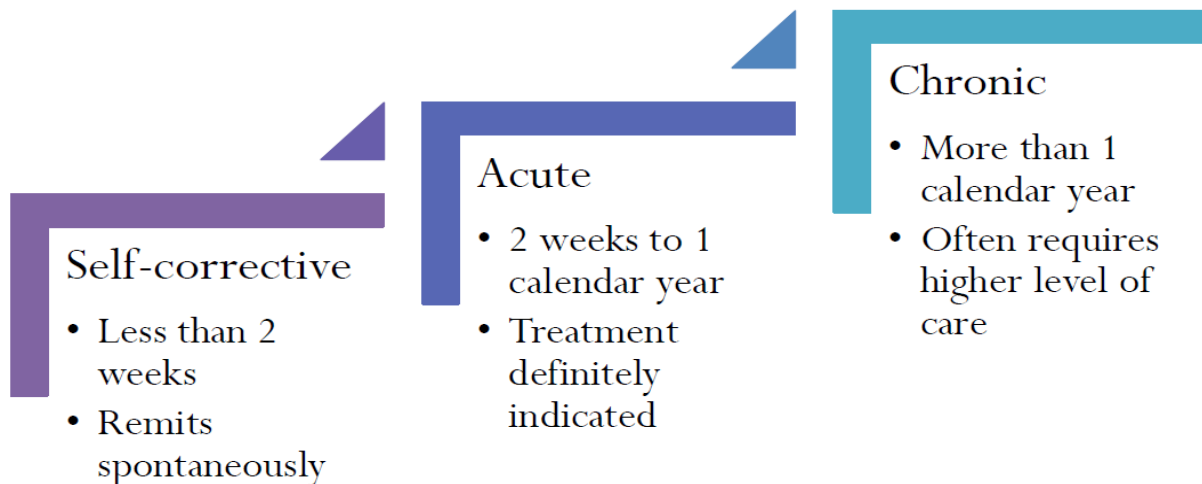
Worries and Anxiety relating to all of the above factors

Spectrum of SR Behaviors



Adapted from Kearney, 2001.

Levels of School Refusal



Factors and Triggers

stressful life events
major transitions such as starting primary or secondary school
moving or other big change
fear of harm coming to a parent
illness in the family
separation and divorce
academic problems
overprotective parenting
friendship difficulties
separation anxiety

Functions of School Refusal



Signs of School Refusal

Complaining of not feeling well before it's time to leave for school
Separation anxiety
Lots of visits to the school nurse if at school
Easily upset and teary
Headaches, nausea, diarrhea
Withdrawal from class activities
Withdrawal from friends
Missing half of school or less over previous month
Difficulty concentrating

Suggestions for Parents

Discuss with your child their reluctance and anxiety about going to school
Support your child in facing and confronting the fears (where possible)

Be consistent and remain steadfast
Encourage your child keeping in touch with school friends outside of school clubs
Activity and exercise can be a great way for children to help to manage stress and anxiety
Preparation
Empathize and encourage
Don't avoid everything that causes anxiety
Be realistic with your expectations

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/School-Avoidance.aspx>

<https://childmind.org/article/back-school-anxiety/>

Suggestions for Parents continued

Don't ask leading questions
Calm parent, calm child
Try not to reinforce your child's fears
Reduce the amount of time your child has to anticipate the event
Encourage your child to become a thought detective
Maintain a good relationship with your child's school

Engagement and Motivation

Student engagement: student's active involvement and commitment to academic and social activities in the school
Emotional engagement
Thoughts and feelings about school, including teachers and classmates
Cognitive-behavioral
Desire and willingness to exert one's best effort toward learning
Student engagement is closely related to motivation, however motivation is necessary but not sufficient for engagement

National Association of School Psychologists: Engagement and Motivation: Helping Handout for Home. <https://www.nasponline.org/>

Recommendations

Define your concerns and clarify your expectations
Talk to your child's teacher
School transitions (elementary middle high school)
Consider social factors
Skills deficit
Being bored/Not being stimulated enough in school setting

Learning disorders, symptoms of ADHD, Depression, Anxiety, and other conditions

Child Mind Institute: Does Your Child Lack Motivation?/ <https://childmind.org/article/does-your-child-lack-motivation/>

Strategies to Help Your Child Get Motivated in School

Get involved

Use reinforcement

Reward effort rather than outcome

Help them see the big picture

Let them make mistakes

Get outside help

Make the teacher your ally

Get support for yourself

Child Mind Institute: How to Help Your Child Get Motivated in School/<https://childmind.org/article/how-to-help-your-child-get-motivated-in-school/>

School Refusal Resources for Parents

Rogers Behavioral Health/<https://rogersbh.org/school-refusal>

School Avoidance: Tips for Concerned

Parents/[healthychildren.org/https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/School-Avoidance.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/emotional-problems/Pages/School-Avoidance.aspx)

When Kids Refuse to Go to School/Child Mind Institute/ <https://childmind.org/article/when-kids-refuse-to-go-to-school/>

School refusal: When a child won't go to school/Harvard Health

Publishing/<https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/school-refusal-when-a-child-wont-go-to-school-2018091814756>

Mental Health Hotline Resources

Performcare 24/7 877-652-7624

2nd Floor Youth Helpline of New Jersey: Call or Text 888-222-2228

New Jersey Hopeline: 1-855-654-6735

Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor; chat feature also available through facebook messenger

Rutgers UBHC Acute Psychiatric Services: 855-515-5700

Princeton Medical Center ER: 609-853-7730

**During the COVID-19 Pandemic
your mental health is vital.**

**For Free Emotional Support
from Trained Staff**

Call 866-202-HELP (4357)

(Multilingual Service Available)

OR Text NJHOPE to 51684

7 Days/Week, 8 a.m. — 8 p.m.



This program is brought to you through NJ Hope and Healing Crisis Counseling Program (CCP), The Mental Health Association of New Jersey in collaboration with the New Jersey Department of Human Services' Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services, offering this CCP through a 211/4357 program.