

Monmouthshire Educational Psychology Service

HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD WHEN THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT GOING TO SCHOOL

A Parent and Carer Guide

Any child can develop worries about school, which can be tricky to deal with, but we can help you to get things back on track. Some children will say if there is a problem, others need someone to notice.



THE PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS YOU MIGHT NOTICE

- On weekday mornings or Sunday evenings before school, do you see fearfulness, anxiety, tantrums or bad moods?
- Despite no physical illness, does your child have sleeping difficulties, tummy pain, headache, sore throat, shaking, sweating, difficulty breathing, butterflies in their tummy, feeling sick, or pins and needles?



WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Listen without judgement or criticism. Tell them that you want to understand their thoughts and feelings.
- It can help to chat whilst doing something else, like driving, walking the dog, or playing a game together.
- It might be easier for them to write or draw how they feel or text you.
- Empathise – their fears are real to them.
- Tell them that some anxiety is normal and that we can all learn ways to cope.
- Consider looking at some of the anxiety resources listed overleaf with your child.
- Help your child to understand that avoiding school will not help in the longer term.
- Avoiding fears can become a new normal; tackling them early is best.



WORK WITH YOUR SCHOOL

- Speak to your child's teacher or form tutor as soon as you have concerns.
- Ask the school to refer to Monmouthshire County Council's Emotionally Based School Avoidance Support Guidance for Educational Settings.
- Arrange a meeting to make a plan for your child where you can discuss any school-based needs, such as academic support, bullying or support with social relationships.
- Identify enjoyable lessons and good relationships that motivate your child to attend.
- Discuss how you and the school can ensure your child remains a member of the school community, even during extended periods of absence.
- Consider what support your child might need when they arrive at school.
- Work together to agree on a firm, consistent, united front between home and school.



TOP TIPS TO HELP YOU AND YOUR CHILD



- Exercise self-compassion. As a parent/carer, you are doing your best in a difficult situation.
- Notice what is going well with optimism.
- Support your child to have a healthy sleep and daily routine, including eating at regular times and daily exercise—go for a walk, a run or cycle every day.
- Find ways to bring positive emotion into the day. Please encourage your child to do things they enjoy and to keep learning.
- Maintain contact with friends and family, especially school friends.
- Identify the push and pull factors that make your child want to stay at home or avoid school.
- Set small goals to achieve each day and praise small steps of progress.
- Notice your mood—stress can be contagious. Your child needs you to be kind, calm, patient, wise and strong.
- Seek support from other family members and friends.

RESOURCES



YOUNG MINDS

Information for children, young people, family members and professionals.



MEIC

Information, advice and advocacy helpline for children and young people.



DNA-V

DNA-V is a model that helps people cope with challenges, stress, and change.



THE ANXIOUS CHILD

A booklet for parents and carers wanting to know more about anxiety in children and young people.



NOT FINE IN SCHOOL

A parent/carer organisation for families with children who are experiencing problems & barriers to school attendance.



KOOTH

Free, safe and anonymous support for young people.



MEDITATION & MINDFULNESS APPS

SMILING MIND



An Aussie App that equips young people with essential psychological skills.

HEADSPACE



Unlock self-care ideas that stick, even when you're busy.

SELF HEAL



IA catalogue of NHS self help leaflets and easy read guides.

MOODJUICE



Learn more about common mental health problems and skills to cope with them.

