

School Refusal due to anxiety

Besides seeking professional help, other helpful strategies to consider:

- If your child is entering primary school, you can prepare your child for the start of school in several ways.
- If your child has an older sibling in the same school, start a family conversation about what is fun/not fun about school. Get your older child to talk about his/her own experiences of school, particularly experiences of success /mastery over school situations.
- Read children's stories about school.
- Bring your child to visit the school compounds. You may walk your child through various parts of the school and talk briefly about some activities he/she might do in school. Make it a casual visit rather than a serious briefing.
- Make the journey to school more enjoyable so that the child is less anxious on the way to school. Play music he/she likes on the car or point out interesting things on the way to school.
- Consider approaching the school counselor or the child's form teacher to inform them that your child may have difficulty separating from you so that arrangements can be made for the teacher/counselor to "take over" the child when he/she steps into school on the first day.
- Say goodbye to your child at the school gate or wherever parents are required to leave their children and tell them specifically where and what time you will be picking them up. Be punctual to pick your child up.
- Pack a snack or allow your child to bring a toy for recess so that he/she has something fun to look forward to during recess. You may also encourage your child to share his/her snacks/toy.
- If your child is allowed to call you during recess, be prepared to take the call. Have a short conversation and assure your child he/she will see you at the waiting area at the specified time.
- Do not allow your child to come home unless he/she is very sick as this may reinforce his/her behavior to report sick whenever he/she feels anxious about school. Your child may rest at the sick bay or General Office until he/she feels better to rejoin the class.
- Consider instituting a reward chart ('Brave Chart') together with the counselor/teacher for the student's school attendance for the first month. Involve your child by getting him/her to paste the stars, record the points or in deciding rewards.



- Have your child tell you what helped him/her in overcoming anxiety. Acknowledge his/her anxious feelings (ignoring these feelings don't make them go away) but praise your child's efforts at overcoming his/her anxiety.