

School Refusal due to anxiety

Besides seeking professional help, other helpful strategies to consider:

- Acknowledge your student's anxiety about school. When rapport is established, find out from the student what about school that is making him/her anxious and if possible, address these concerns accordingly. For example, the student may be afraid of bullies in school or does not understand what is being taught in class. If the student is doing badly in class assignments and exams, consider consulting the school's Educational Psychologist regarding possible learning disorders.
- Teach your student specific relaxation or cognitive strategies that can help him/her manage his/her anxiety better. (For specific relaxation and cognitive strategies to manage anxiety, please refer to 'F' and 'U' in the section on 'Tips to help your student cope with his/her anxiety')
- Arrange positive social experiences for the student in school. For example, help the student make friends and participate in peer activities during recess.
- If the student refuses and struggles with parents to come to school, arrange with the parents to "take over" the student at the school gate, particularly on the first week of the semester. Communicate closely with the parents as the student may be late.
- While reassuring the student and if necessary the parents, remain calm and firm when "taking over" the student.
- Consider allowing the student to call his/her parents during recess. Nonetheless, set rules on when and how long the student can do so.
- Unless the student is very sick, suggest to the parents not to bring the student home before school ends as this may reinforce his/her behavior to report sick whenever he/she feels anxious about school. The student may rest at the sick bay or General Office until he/she feels better to rejoin the class.
- Consider implementing a reward chart ('Brave Chart') together with the parents for the student's school attendance for the first month. Involve your student by getting him/her to paste the stars, record the points or in deciding rewards.
- Whenever appropriate, praise your student's efforts at overcoming his/her anxiety.