

Working with Parents and Educators

Participants Guide

Objectives

This workshop will cover:

1. Understand **school avoidance behaviors**.
2. Identify **effective intervention strategies** for treating school avoidance.
3. Understand strategies for **partnering** with parents/guardians.



Definition of School Avoidance

- Child-motivated refusal to attend school and/or remain in class for the entire day due at least in part to anxiety or mood problems
- NOT the same thing as truancy



Interventions for school avoidance

- Behavioral and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)
 - Primarily **exposure-based** treatments
 - Children learn to confront their fears and modify negative thoughts
 - Includes parents and possibly educators reducing unhelpful accommodations for anxiety
- Medication management for contributing mental health disorders

Working with parents in school

- Parents do not cause anxiety disorders!
 - Parenting only accounts for 4% of the variance in childhood anxiety symptoms per recent [meta analysis](#)
 - Partner with parents to tackle school avoidance through an agreed upon behavior plan rather than blame
- Encourage parents to demonstrate compassion while **not accommodating** anxiety symptoms or being excessively harsh or critical
- Help them identify mental health services

Suggestions for Parents

- Believe your child can handle their anxiety and let them know that you believe in them
- Listen to your child and encourage them to talk about fears and worries
- Be understanding, use reflective listening, and don't use shame
- Do not reinforce the child's distress by rescuing them



Resources

- Kearney, C.A. (2008) School absenteeism and school refusal behavior in youth: A contemporary review. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 28, 451-471. doi: 10.1016/j.cpr.2007.07.012.
- Kearney, C. A., & Albano, A. M. (2007). *When Children Refuse School: A Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Approach – Therapist Guide*, 2nd Edition. New York, New York: Oxford University Press.
- McLeod, B. D., Wood, J. J., & Weisz, J. R. (2007). Examining the association between parenting and childhood anxiety: A meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 27, 155-172. doi: 10.1016/j.cpr.2006.09.002.

3-2-1 Reflection

3

Things I learned:

2 Strategies I will try:

1 Thing I want to learn more about: _____

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