

Do you worry about going to school?

Information booklet for young people



Are you feeling anxious about school?

Feeling worried or anxious is normal. We all experience this from time to time. Feeling worried or anxious can help to keep us safe from harm and cope in difficult situations. Sometimes anxiety or excessive worrying can become a problem especially when it stops us doing what we want or need to do.

Many children and young people worry about school. This is normal. Anxieties are part of life and learning to deal with them is part of growing up. Sometimes our feelings can make us not want to go to school. If you are very anxious or worried about going to school what you might be experiencing is something called Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA).

When you think about school are you?

Worried	Scared	Bad tempered
Feeling ill or <u>pretending to feel ill</u>	?	Not sleeping at night
Feeling <u>unsure of yourself</u>	Feeling down or sad	Worrying <u>about friendships</u>

You are not on your own. We all feel like this from time to time because of things that happen in our life at home, at school or elsewhere.

There may be some things at school that can make you feel this way, such as:

Problems with friendships

Changing school

Bullying

Feeling too different to other people

Worried about how you look

Pressure to achieve your target grades

Not being able to do the work

Worried about getting changed for PE or games

Not getting on with some teachers

Anxious about exams and tests

Not being good at sports

There may also be some things outside of School that can make you feel this way, such as:

Someone who is important to you has died

Others in the family feel worried, down or sad

Someone new has joined your family

Your Mum and Dad are arguing or splitting up

Your pet is lost or has died

It is difficult to get yourself into school in the morning

Your Mum or Dad is ill

You have a new brother or sister

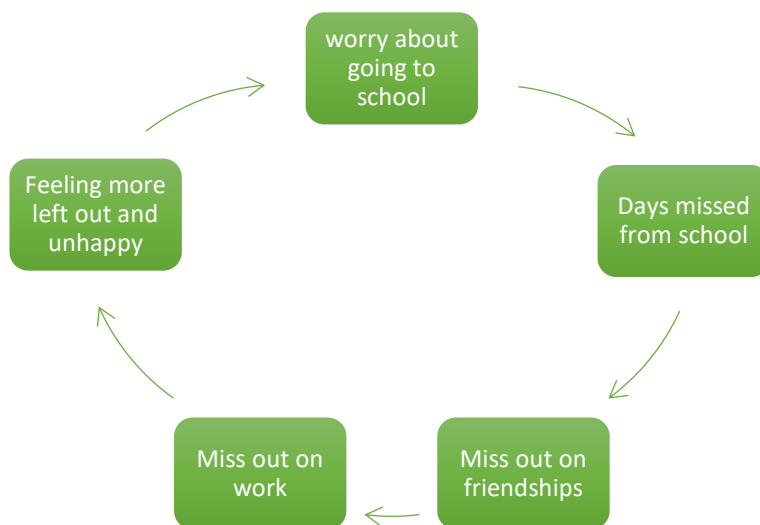
Mum and Dad not understanding your feelings

What Happens when you don't attend school?

Sometimes you may feel that staying at home is the best thing to do because it makes you feel better.

However, the longer you don't go to school, the more you miss out on lessons and as a result the learning gets more difficult. You will also miss out on seeing your friends and as a result keeping friendships becomes harder. This can be seen in the diagram below.

It is very important that you let an adult know if you are worried about anything to do with school or homes that you can get support rather than letting things get worse.



What can your school do to help you?

Talk to an adult in school that you can trust, they should listen to you. They can then work with you and your parents to help find out what is worrying you and what they can do to help. Things they can do to help could be:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| ✓ Key person to talk to | ✓ Have a safe space for you to go to |
| ✓ Support with school work and/or friendships | ✓ Change your timetable |

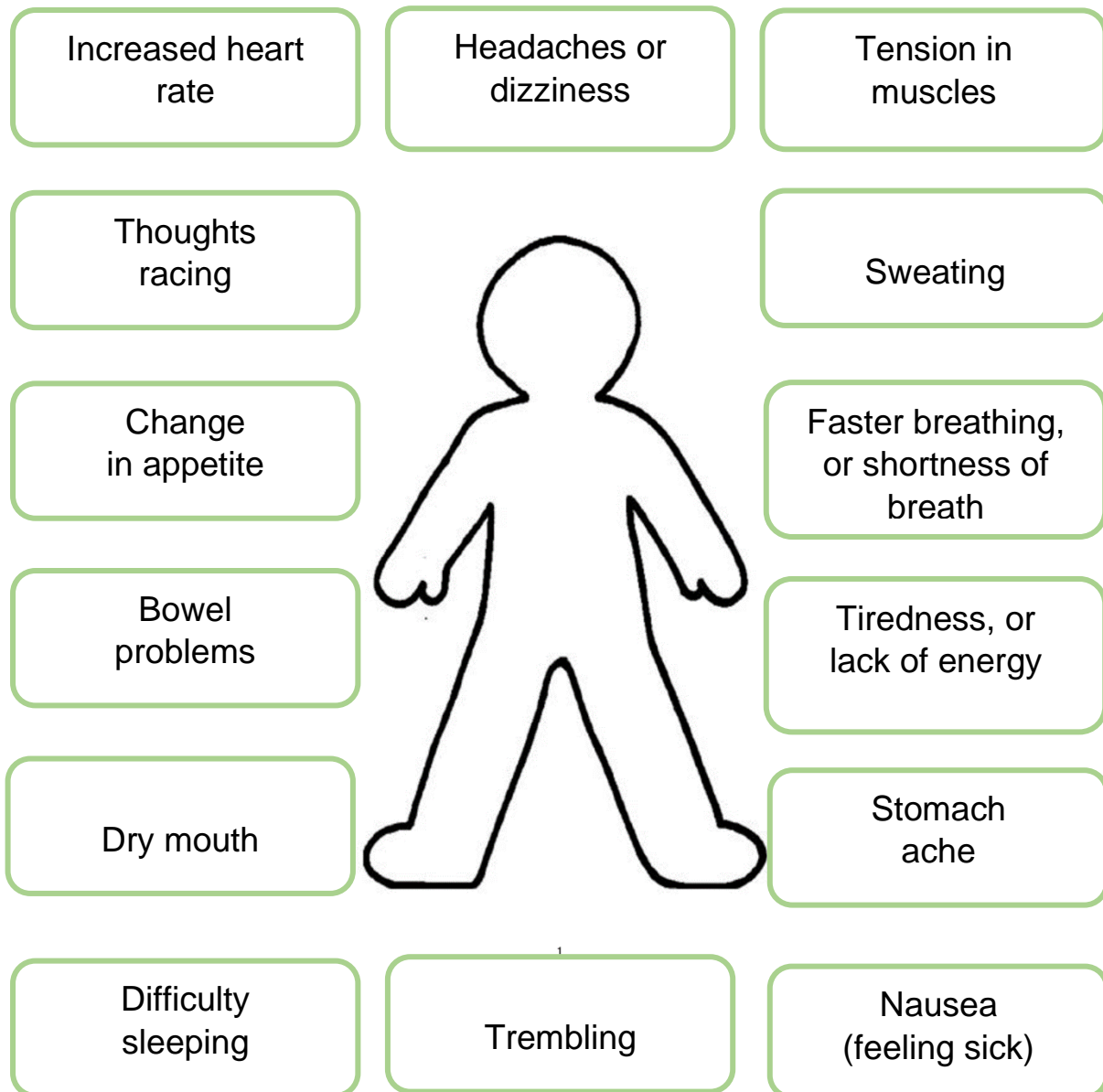
What can I do to get back to school?

It is important that you work with your school and parents to help you to attend school as soon as possible. These are things that could help you:

- ✓ Think about things that will help you to get back into school and include them on your plan.
- ✓ Keep in touch with your friends and what is happening in school.
- ✓ Catch up with some of the work you have missed before you go back.
- ✓ Take small steps to get back into the school routine – do not expect to do it all at once.
- ✓ Celebrate the small successes you have made.
- ✓ Be brave and take a chance – once you are in school it may not be as bad as you think.

Our Body's Response

When you are feeling worried, your body can react in different ways. You may experience some of the following:



It is important to try and identify some of these signs when you are feeling worried, so that you can use different strategies to support you.

There are a number of strategies you can use. Try to identify which ones help you the most. Here are some you could try:

Physical Exercise

Exercise increases your heart rate and releases endorphins, which make you feel good.

It is very good for your mind too.

Refocus your Attention

What can you see outside?
What can you hear?
What different shapes can you see?
What colours can you see?

Breathe

Take a big, deep breath in through your nose, hold for 2 seconds.

Breathe out through your mouth and repeat as needed.

Positive Self-talk

Replace negative thoughts with more positive ones.

"I can do this"
"I am almost there"
"I have done so well so far"

Take a Step Back

Try to take a step back from the situation.

It is important to give yourself time and space to think.

Relaxation

Do something you enjoy and find relaxing.

This may be listening to music, reading a book, drawing, or going for a walk.

Visualisation

Close your eyes and imagine you are in your favourite place.

What can you see?
What can you hear?
Who are you with?
How do you feel?

Take Control of your Body

Sit, or lay down in a quiet space. Tense each part of your body for 3 seconds and then relax it. Start with your toes and work all the way up your body, until your whole body is relaxed.