



School refusal



Getting up and ready for school can be a daily struggle sometimes, but there's help available if things get too much to handle.

'School sucks'

It's a term used by most teens, but a real dislike for school can be more than a sign of a bad day or week. School refusal can sometimes include feeling physically sick, or experiencing anxiousness or emotional distress at the thought of going to school.

It's important to remember that staying engaged in school has a whole lot of benefits for your child – they are with their peers and are learning skills, knowledge and critical thinking for future learning, training and/or career options.

The good news is this. There is help at your child's school, and the school can support you and your child to find a way to overcome negative experiences if you reach out to the school Principal or support staff.

You can help your child see things differently too, by talking about how much you value school, or asking them about the things you know they enjoy (lunch, certain subject, their friends). Keeping your own view of school positive can influence how your child sees and values their own education.

Learning matters

Learning can give all of us a sense of achievement and confidence, and build knowledge and skills to take on the modern world. Being a part of mainstream schooling also builds a sense of belonging, self-worth and social ties. If your child is struggling with mandatory subjects, try reminding them that by year 10 they are choosing their own subjects and education pathway options, meaning they can tailor their subject choices to their interests, and help bring that horizon a bit closer.

Stress and anxiety

A little bit of stress in school is normal, and in small doses is actually good for young people learning to cope with time management and even dealing psychologically with stress hormones. At times, stress can help with focus and performance, however high levels of stress and prolonged periods of high stress can be harmful.

Everyone has a different tolerance level for stress, which means it's important to know the warning signs. Recent studies suggest one in four young people in Queensland suffers or has suffered from a mental illness. Young people feeling anxious about school or overwhelmed with stress can seek help either at school or outside of school (speak to your GP or check out Headspace to find support outside of school).

Anger and aggression

Anger outbursts and aggressive behaviour can be scary to experience and difficult to know how to handle. Trust your own instincts and if you're worried, you can reach out to find some professional help and advice for youth, parents and carers.

And if your child still refuses to go to school?

If you and your child's school have tried everything and your child still refuses to go to school, it might be time to call a Regional Youth Engagement Service (RYES). The RYES works with disengaged young people using individualised support and plans to reconnect them with an education, training or employment pathway. This fact sheet provides contact details for each local RYES.

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