

# Do you worry about going to school?

Information for Young People



**Cardiff Educational Psychology Service**

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This document is also available in Welsh.

*Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg.*

## Are you feeling anxious about school? 😞

Worrying or feeling anxious about school is a normal feeling that we all experience. Sometimes, however, anxiety or excessive worrying can become a problem, especially if it stops you doing what you want or need to do.

If you have high levels of anxiety and worry about school and have difficulty attending school, you may be experiencing something called Anxiety Based School Avoidance (ABSA). It is important to check-in and find someone or something that can help.

### What is this leaflet?

The information in this leaflet may help you if you are having difficulty going to school. It includes some information about how you might be feeling and some things that might help you.

### When you think about school are you?

Worried	Scared	Struggling to sleep
Feeling ill or pretending to feel ill	Feeling low	Bad tempered
Worrying about friendships	Feeling unsure of yourself	

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

## **Some things at school that can make you feel this way might be:**

- Problems with friendships
- Bullying
- Changing school
- Feeling different to other people
- Worrying about school work
- Worrying about your appearance
- Not getting on with some teachers
- Feeling anxious about exams and tests
- Feeling pressure to achieve certain grades
- Feeling like you are not good at some subjects
- Worrying about getting changed for PE or games
- Worrying about the noisy school environment

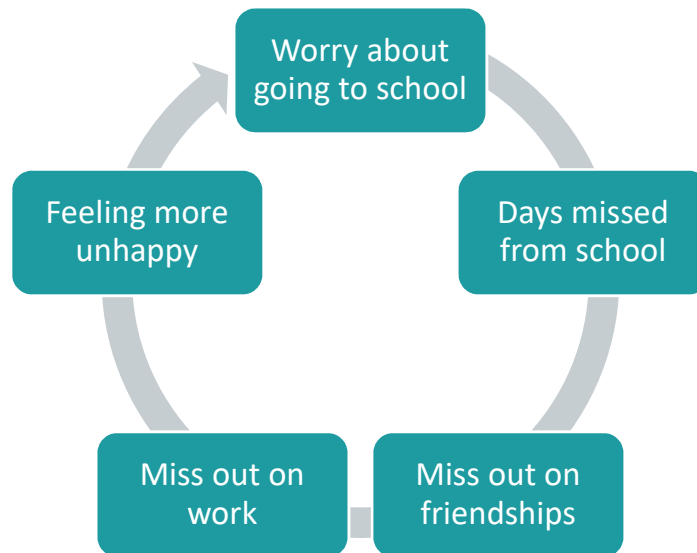
## **Some things outside of school that can make you feel this way might be:**

- Parents/carers arguing or splitting up
- The death of someone important to you
- A parent/carer who is ill
- The birth of a new brother or sister
- Difficulties getting to school
- Members of your family feeling sad or depressed
- New people moving into your home
- Parents/carers not understanding your feelings



## What happens when you don't attend school?

Sometimes you might feel that staying at home is the best thing to do as it makes you feel better. However, the more time you spend out of school the more lessons and learning you will miss. You will also miss out on seeing your friends which can mean keeping friendships is more difficult. This can be seen in the diagram below.



## What could you do if you feel like this?

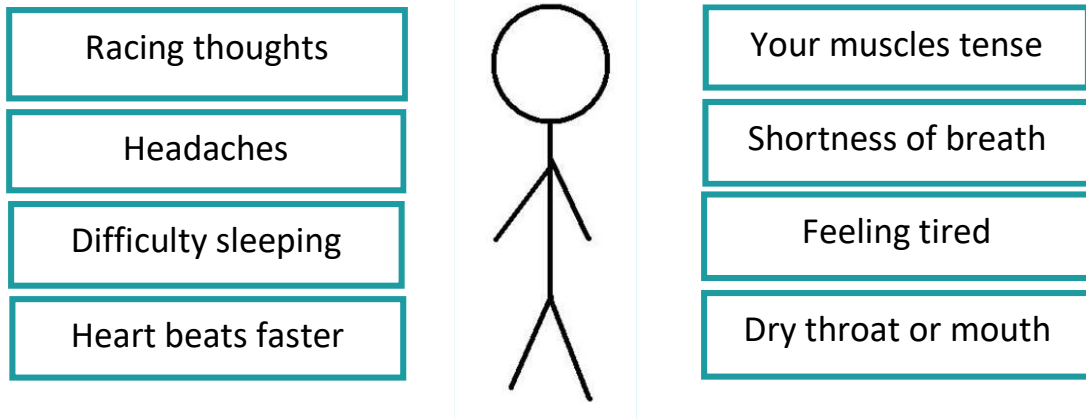
It is so important you talk to someone who can help you and make you feel happy again in school. This could be your parents/carers, other family members, an adult in school or your friends. Think about the things that are worrying you, write a list or draw them in order from most worried to least worried.

Most worried

Least worried

A vertical list of four empty rectangular boxes for writing worries. A blue arrow points downwards from the top box to the bottom box. A yellow pencil icon is positioned in the top right corner of the first box.

## When you are feeling anxious or worried, your whole body reacts:



There are many strategies that can help you feel relaxed and calm. You could try some of these:

### Relaxing your body



1. Sit or lie somewhere comfortable
2. Stretch out your arms and make a fist, then relax
3. Push your legs out, then relax
4. Shut your eyes tight, scrunch up your face, and then relax

### Try calm breathing



1. Take a slow breath in through your nose for about 4 seconds
2. Hold it for 2 seconds
3. Slowly let it out through your mouth for about 4 seconds
4. Repeat 5-10 times

### Try visualisation



1. Close your eyes and take deep breaths
2. Think of your favourite place
3. Focus on that place and picture yourself there
4. What can you see? What can you smell? What can you feel?

### Try physical exercise



Exercise increases your heart rate and releases endorphins which make you feel good. Choose an exercise that you love and build your exercise routine around that.

### Think balanced thoughts



If you find yourself thinking a negative thought (e.g. I will fail my exam), try thinking of a more balanced or positive thought instead (e.g. If I work hard, I'll do ok in my exam). Try and do this every time you notice yourself thinking a negative thought.

## What can your school do to help you?

It is important to find an adult at school that you trust and talk to them. They can work with you and your parents/carers to find out what is worrying you and what they can do to help you. They could do things like:

- Help with your school work
- Help with your friendships
- Find a safe space for you to go to
- Alter your timetable

These could be written up in a plan so that you, your parents/carers and school know what has been agreed to help support you.

## What can you do to get back to school?

It is important that you work with your school and your parents/carers to help you get back to attending school as soon as possible. Things that you can do to help are:

- Think of things that will help you go back to school and plan this with your teachers and parents/carers.
- Keep in contact with your friends at school.
- Catch up on some of the work that you may have missed before you go back.
- Take little steps to get back into a routine.

