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Bullying Prevention: Breaking the Cycle of School Avoidance

Mental Health Series



BULLYING

The connection between bullying and school avoidance:

In their shoes...Have you ever noticed that a child's backpack can carry much more than just books and school supplies? It can hold fears, and heartaches that are too heavy for kids' young shoulders. Some children are dealing with the dread of going to school because of bullying. Kids walking this path often share stories of anxiety, isolation, and a desperate yearning for a feeling of belonging and safety. Together, we can be the difference these children need.

What is Bullying? Bullying is an issue characterized by an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power within relationships. You can spot bullying because it happens more than once, or in other words, it is ongoing. This misuse of power manifests through repetitive instances of verbal, physical, and social behavior, all with the intention of causing physical, social, and psychological harm. Bullying can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or what is perceived as power, over one or more persons who feel powerless to stop it from happening.

What is School Avoidance?

School avoidance is a term used to describe the signs of anxiety a school-aged child has and his or her refusal to go to school. It is also called school refusal or school phobia. School avoidance is most often a symptom of an underlying issue.

When Bullying and School Avoidance Mix...

Adults need to watch out for instances when bullying and school avoidance intersect. This is a challenging situation for both adults and their children. Addressing bullying and school avoidance requires a collaborative effort involving parents, schools, and the community. By providing unwavering support, parents can help their children navigate through these challenging circumstances and regain their confidence in attending school.

Steps to Address the Complex Issue of School Avoidance and Bullying:

Recognize Signs: Identify signs of bullying and school avoidance in your child.

Open Communication: Encourage open communication with your child about their experiences.

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Document Incidents: Keep a record of bullying incidents, including dates and details.

Involve the School: Notify school authorities and collaborate on a plan to address bullying.

Seek Professional Help: Find a mental health professional to support your child.

Advocate: Be a strong advocate for your child within the school system.

Teach Resilience: Help your child develop coping strategies and self-confidence.

Monitor Progress: Regularly check in with your child about their experiences and well-being.

Stay Informed: Educate yourself about bullying prevention and school policies.



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Featured Articles

Situations at school may make child want to avoid:

- Being on the school bus
- Walking in the hallways
- Being on the playground
- Being in the lunchroom
- Sitting in the classroom
- Feeling fearful of not keeping up
- Tests
- Reading out loud to the class
- The distress of not being able to do school work because of a learning difference
- People at school, teachers, principals, or school staff
- Specific people that the child may feel uncomfortable around
- Other kids at school
- A general feeling of discomfort from being surrounded by a lot of kids all day
- Not wanting to be around particular kids or groups of kids, or feeling like they can't relate to these other kids or a majority of them
- Speaking or presenting in front of others



For helpful parenting resources visit: [ParentGuidance.org](https://www.parentguidance.org)

"Avoidance is the lifeblood of anxiety, so school refusal is the ultimate example of avoidant coping"

Dr. Jonathan Dalton
Center for Anxiety & Behavioral Change,
Rockville, MD



Helping Your Child When They're Bullied

Begin Course

Take a no-cost course from ParentGuidance.org

Dr. Melissa Lopez-Larson has seen bullying grow exponentially over the past several years. In this course, Dr. Lopez-Larson discusses how to identify bullying, treatment options, strategies for prevention, and more.

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Works Cited

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