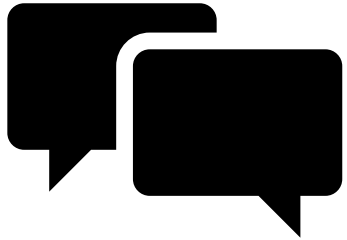


Understanding Emotion Based School Avoidance (EBSA)



Workshop for Parents



Stevenage Mental Health Support Team

Mental Health Support Teams Hertfordshire & West Essex

What we will cover today

What is EBSA?

What parents tell us...

Risk factors that can lead to EBSA

To consider things that protect from EBSA

Supporting children with EBSA

Teamwork with the school

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Confidentiality and house rules

Respecting others' views, thoughts, opinions and individual situations

Participate if you feel comfortable

Keep information shared within the group

“Safe space” and supportive space to share

No question is a silly question

Please let a facilitator know if you need to leave the session early or require further support during or after this session

Please make note of any questions that arise for you during the training to explore at the end of the session

What is EBSA?

Severe difficulty attending school due to emotional factors

Signs include anxiety, tantrums, complains of headaches, stomach aches etc.

These individuals are not truanting but are absent from school due to the emotional distress that they experience around attending school

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What about the impact on you as parents/carers?

What is your experience of supporting your child with EBSA?

What are some of the challenges?

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“School Refuser”

- Term that people often use for this group
- However, it is problematic as it implies that the young person has control over the school non-attendance
- Locates the ‘problem’ with the young person



Key Facts

22.5% of the UK school population

More common amongst secondary school students

Equally common in males and females

It can start suddenly or gradually but usually around transitions

It looks different for everyone, some distress is more obvious

Those who have difficulty expressing emotions can be harder to identify

What ESBA can look like...

EBSA also doesn't just mean not attending school entirely. Staff may also observe pupils:

not going to their classroom

not staying in class

not attending some lessons

avoiding some physical spaces or people

The Potential Impact on Young People

Poor academic attainment

Reduced social opportunities

Limited employment opportunities

Increased Isolation

Poor adult mental health

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Parents View of ESBA Triggers:

Sensory Overload

Struggling with multiple teachers

Friendship Issues

Discrimination

Expectations

Unpredictable environments

Unmet Needs

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Risk Factors

SCHOOL	FAMILY	CHILD
Relationships	Divorce	Anxious
Bullying	Parent health	Low self esteem
Learning	Experienced loss	Learning difficulties
Academic pressure	Young carer	Illness
Transitions	Adversity	Trauma
Transport or journey to school	Family stress	Fear of separation

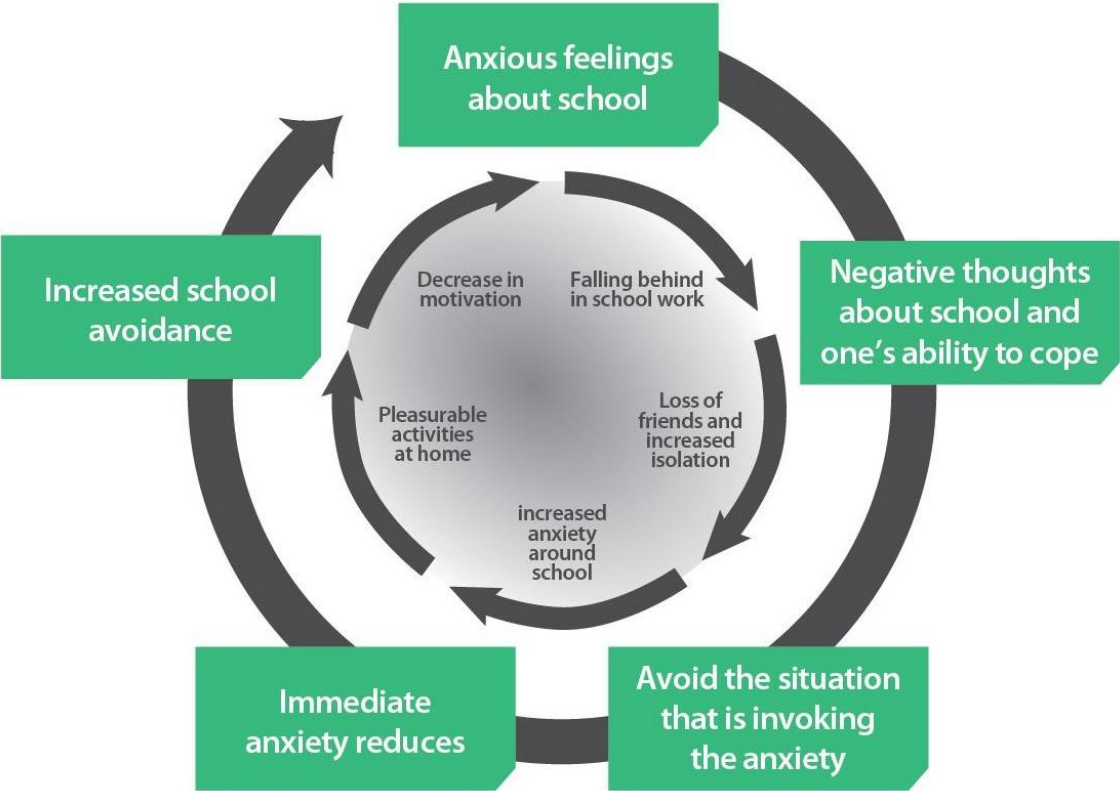


EBSA and Sensory Processing Difficulties

- The school setting provides a highly loaded sensory environment which the brain tries to make sense of
- It can be overwhelming and lead to avoidance

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EBSA and the Vicious Cycle of Anxiety



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Building Resilience

- Developing feelings of safety, security and a sense of belonging
- Developing ambition, aspiration and motivation
- Increasing confidence, self-esteem
- Having positive experiences where they can succeed
- Holding positive relationships with peers or staff
- Feeling listened to and understood
- Understanding the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- A partnership between school, family and external professionals
- Parental understanding and support



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How to Support



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Interventions: The 4 Functions of EBSA

To avoid negative feelings (e.g. anxiety, low mood) brought on by attending school

To avoid unpleasant situations at school (e.g. peer relationships, academic demands)

To reduce separation anxiety or to gain attention from significant others (e.g. parent, family member)

To receive tangible rewards outside of school (e.g. shopping or playing computer games during school time)

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Interventions

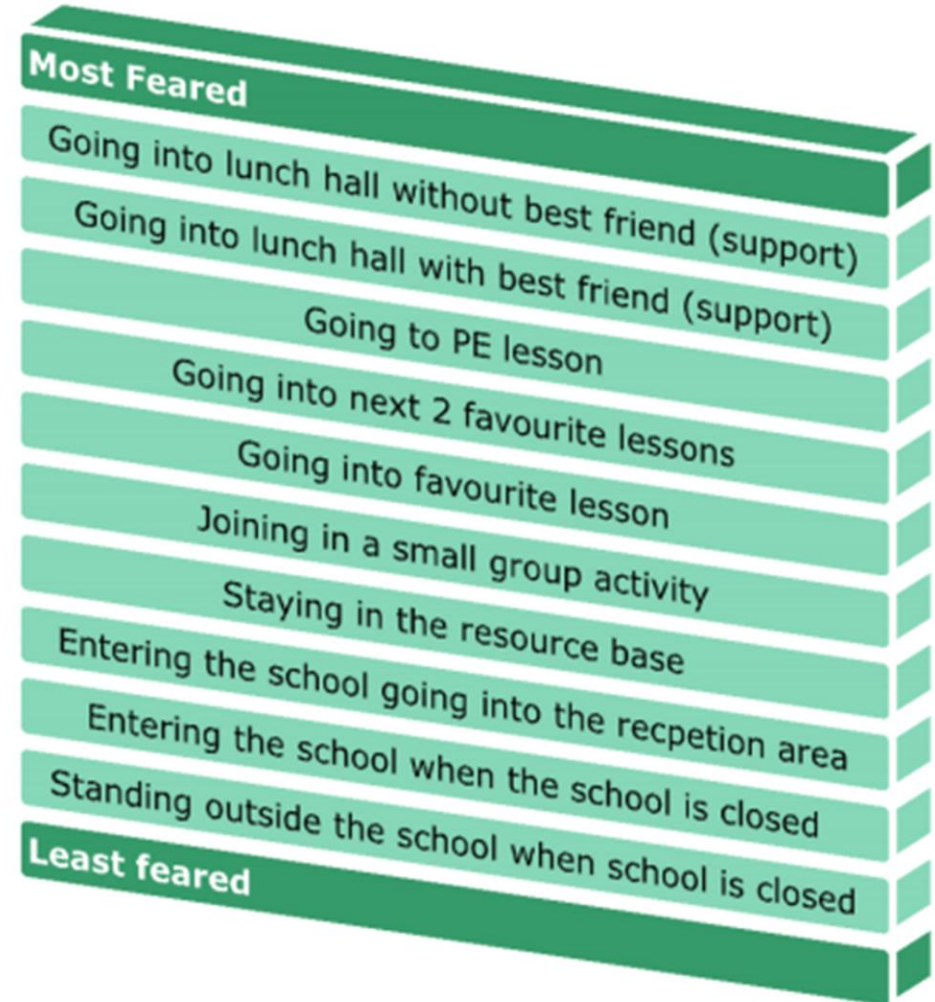
1. Avoiding negative feelings brought on by school

- Interventions need to focus on reducing anxious feelings about school
- Exposure to situations where they feel anxious, starting small and building up to most challenging

Also helpful...

- Safe adults and safe spaces in school
- Grounding techniques e.g. 54321, colours

Anxiety / avoidance hierarchy



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Interventions

2. Avoiding unpleasant situations related to school

- Interventions should focus on building their confidence and ability to cope, including worry management skills.
- Step by Step plan can still apply.

Ideas of what to ask school about:



- Whether they have social skills interventions; e.g. thinking about responses to friends, after coming back to school/
- Exploring ways to catch up on missed work
- Thinking about whether any adaptations to school environment are needed, particularly for sensory overload

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Interventions

3. Reducing separation anxiety or gaining attention at home

- Parents can learn and develop skills and techniques to:
- Reduce reassurance, use curious questioning instead
- Establish morning/travel routines
- Use problem solving – think of solutions & test them out.
- Establish positive 1:1 time to spend with the child outside of school
- Limit the attention the child receives when they do not attend school
- Establish rewards for when they attend and where appropriate consequences when they do not



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Interventions

4. To receive tangible rewards outside of school

Getting them to school

- Encourage them and motivate them with rewards for attending
- Problem solve: think of all possible ideas that may help and look at the pros and cons for each solution
- Make leaving them at school uneventful, say goodbye, well done and leave, no need to hang around!
- Support travel

If they are at home during school time

- Make life boring at home...
- Keep the routine
- Keep to a school timetable
- Encourage them to be working from home
- Reduce rewards for non-attendance
- Make school as interesting as possible

Working with the School

- Research shows that changing schools is not always helpful as difficulties often re-emerge so it is important to work with the school to resolve current issues
- It can be helpful for your child to have a consistent key worker at school who regularly contacts the young person and family
- It is helpful to have an individualised programme, including:
 - Agreed times for attendance, who to meet, where
 - An activity or responsibility to get them through the gate
 - Agreed friend to spend time with
 - Agreed plan of safety
- Thinking with the school about any outside agencies that could help
- Reviewing the plan and celebrating progress
- Helpful for all staff to know about the difficulties



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Parental Self-Care



Seek Support

- Family/friends/community
 - School
 - GP

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Key Takeaways

- What ideas will you take forward from today?
- What additional resources or support is needed?
- What self-care activity will you commit to today?



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Thank you for listening!

Any Questions?

