

School Refusal or Truancy

School Refusal

- Emotional Distress about attending school
- Parents aware of absence from school
- Lack of antisocial behaviors
- Student remains at home during the school day
- Student will do school work at home

Truancy

- Lack of emotional stress about attending school
- Absence from school hidden from parents
- Higher incidence of antisocial behaviors
- Student seeks other peers who are not in school
- Student shows little interest in completing school work.

4 Types of School Refusal

Negative Reinforcement
(escape and avoid)

Positive Reinforcement
(rewards)

Individual (singular)

SPNA
Child escapes and avoids specific unpleasant things or people.

ASB
Child is positively reinforced for school avoidance.

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Social (plural)

EASE
Child escapes and avoids unpleasant social or evaluative situations.

TR
Child receives tangible reinforcement for school avoidance.

R- avoidance

Interior Stimuli

R+ reward

Exterior Stimuli

Individual (singular)

SPNA

Stimuli Provoking a Negative Affect
(bus, lunch, fire alarm, restrooms, teacher)

Symptoms: generalized anxiety, depression, phobias, sep anxiety.

Strategies

- Desensitization
- No “forced” attendance
- Gradual re-exposure
- Self-reinforcement
- Positive self-talk

ASB

Attention Seeking Behavior
(tantrums, somatic complaints, non-compliance)

Symptoms: separation anxiety, generalized anxiety, oppositional defiant.

Strategies

- Offer few choices
- Clear messages
- “Forced” attendance
- Parent training
- Routines and consequences

Social (plural)

EASE

Escape from Aversive Social/Evaluative Situations. (public speaking, halls, called on in class, tests)

Symptoms: generalized anxiety, social phobia, depression, avoidance.

Strategies

- Skill building
- Cognitive restructuring
- Role play
- Coping strategies
- Gradual re-exposure to social situations

TR

Tangible Reinforcers outside of school
(sleeping, TV, video games, friends, mall)

Symptoms: generalized anxiety, ODD, conduct disorder, depression.

Strategies:

- Contracts
- Curtail other activities
- Increase rewards for attending
- Decrease rewards for missing
- Family communication skills
- Alternative problem solving strategies