



Community Corner

I don't want to go to school!!!

I'm sure at some point every parent has heard their child say this. Unfortunately, for some, this strong feeling of reluctance to go to school develops into a pattern of poor attendance leading to what is termed, school refusal.

What is school refusal?

School refusal occurs when a student's poor attendance is related to some anxiety or worry that the child or adolescent has about going to school often leaving parents uncertain of how to respond.

What are the signs of school refusal?

If your child has missed more than 2 or 3 times over a two week period, especially if related to some of the behaviors described below, your child may be exhibiting the signs of school refusal:

- Difficulty attending school after weekends, holidays, school camps or sports days.
- Long periods or frequent visits to the health room.
- Tantrums, clinginess, avoidance, or running away before school or during drop off.
- Tearfulness before school or repeated pleas to stay at home causing frequent lateness or absences.
- Frequent complaints of illness before or during school such as stomach aches, headaches, dizziness, or fatigue.

What are the consequences of school refusal?

Elementary children who refuse to go to school today often times develop long-term patterns of resistance to school attendance in later years which have long-term consequences for the entire family. Missing one day of school each week equates to 2 months of learning over the school year. Chronic absenteeism can lead to potential difficulties with social relationships, a decrease in academic growth, and even more so can affect household income as caregivers have to forgo work to stay at home with the child.

How can you help at home?

- Listen to your child's concerns and fears about going to school in order to help the problem-solving process.
- Talking with your child's teacher is a great place to start.
- Develop a bed time routine.
- Be firm and kind in getting your child to school regularly and on time will help.
- Reassure your child that you will be home later to discuss their day and spend time together.
- Decrease the reward for staying home (i.e. no video games or TV, outings).
- Seek support through your family doctor, the school counselor or social worker, family & friends, etc.

If you want more insights, information and practical tools and tips for school attendance, feel free to contact me. You can reach me by phone at (402) 715-8774 or e-mail me anytime at rlmcintosh@mpsomaha.org.

Respectfully,

*Rye McIntosh, LCSW
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