

SCHOOL REFUSAL

Students experiencing school refusal need extensive support from school staff in making school a positive experience. Parents play a major role in getting these students back on track and attending school on a regular basis. School counselors need to take a primary role in educating parents and staff regarding interventions that increases the student's attendance and having positive school experiences.

Symptoms

1. Refusal to attend school because of desire to stay at home
2. Emotional distress when anticipating going to school or after arrival at school
3. Somatic complaints associated with attending school or anticipation of school
4. Excessive clinging to parents
5. Repeated questioning of the necessity of school.
6. Fear if he/she attends school that she/he or parents will be lost, killed or have accident

Possible Causes

1. Enmeshed or overly protective parents
2. Traumatic event
3. Neglectful or inconsistent environment
4. Lax discipline

Goals

1. Attend school on consistent basis
2. Parents establish and maintain appropriate boundaries, setting firm, consistent limits
3. Eliminate anxiety prior to leaving home and after arriving at school
4. Eliminate somatic complaints
5. Resolve the core conflicts contributing to the emergence of the school refusal
6. Increase frequency of independent behaviors

How to Help

1. Parents agree that student the must go to school everyday
2. Apply tough love principles. The student can talk all day about wanting to go to class, but he/she will often not go until they are forced to go.
3. Parents acknowledge that when they let their child stay home, it will be much more difficult tomorrow to get the student to come to school.

4. Allow child time to cry in class. Most students will stop after a few minutes.
5. Speak with child later in the day. Compliment them on doing a great job staying in class. Let them express their fears and embarrassments. Set a plan for how things can go smoother tomorrow.
6. Have a class buddy (buddies) make a plan with the student on where they will meet in the bus, breakfast room or hallway.
7. Assist teacher in setting special projects/activities that the student will enjoy.