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# School Refusal In Children: Evidence-Based Causes & Interventions

## *Top 6 Common Causes of School Refusal*

### **Anxiety Disorders**

Fear of harm or embarrassment leads to avoidance. Most common in both younger and older children.

### **Generalized Anxiety**

Persistent worry about academics, safety, or making mistakes—common in high-achieving or perfectionistic children.

### **Depression & Dysregulation**

Low mood, irritability, fatigue, or emotional overwhelm interfere with motivation to attend school.

### **Learning Differences**

Avoidance arises from frustration, shame, or overstimulation within the school environment.

### **Family Accommodation**

Parents unintentionally reinforce avoidance by allowing the child to stay home to reduce distress.

### **School-Related Stressors**

Negative peer or adult interactions or excessive academic demands increase school-related anxiety.

## *Top 6 Evidence-Based Interventions for School Refusal*

### **Graded Exposure**

Gradually increase school attendance and exposure to feared situations. Core CBT technique to reduce avoidance.

### **Parent Training**

Train parents to reduce accommodation and reinforce approach behaviors using PMT or Collaborative Problem Solving.

### **School-Home Collaboration**

Coordinate consistent communication and gradual reentry with a designated school contact person.

### **Cognitive Restructuring**

Help children identify anxious thoughts and replace them with coping statements that increase self-efficacy.

### **Emotion Regulation Skills**

Teach distress tolerance, deep breathing, and mindfulness to manage physiological arousal.

### **Morning Routine Reset**

Establish consistent bedtime, morning routines, and limit screen use to reduce morning stress.



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If a child's anxiety is interfering with daily life—or if parents feel stuck—call my practice.



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