

Emotionally Based School Non-attendance (EBSN): good practice guidance for schools



Child & Educational Psychology Service
& Education Access Team

Outcomes

- What is Emotionally Based School Non-attendance?
- What is school's role?
- What is my role?
- Knowledge of tools and strategies to help my child / young person to manage worry.



What is EBSN?

- EBSN is a term used to describe CYP who may have significant difficulty in attending school due to underlying emotional factors, often resulting in prolonged absences from school.
- CYP may be reluctant to leave home and can present high levels of distress in response to parents/carers attempts to get them to go to school.
- Complex and multifaceted, requiring a holistic approach to assessment and intervention.

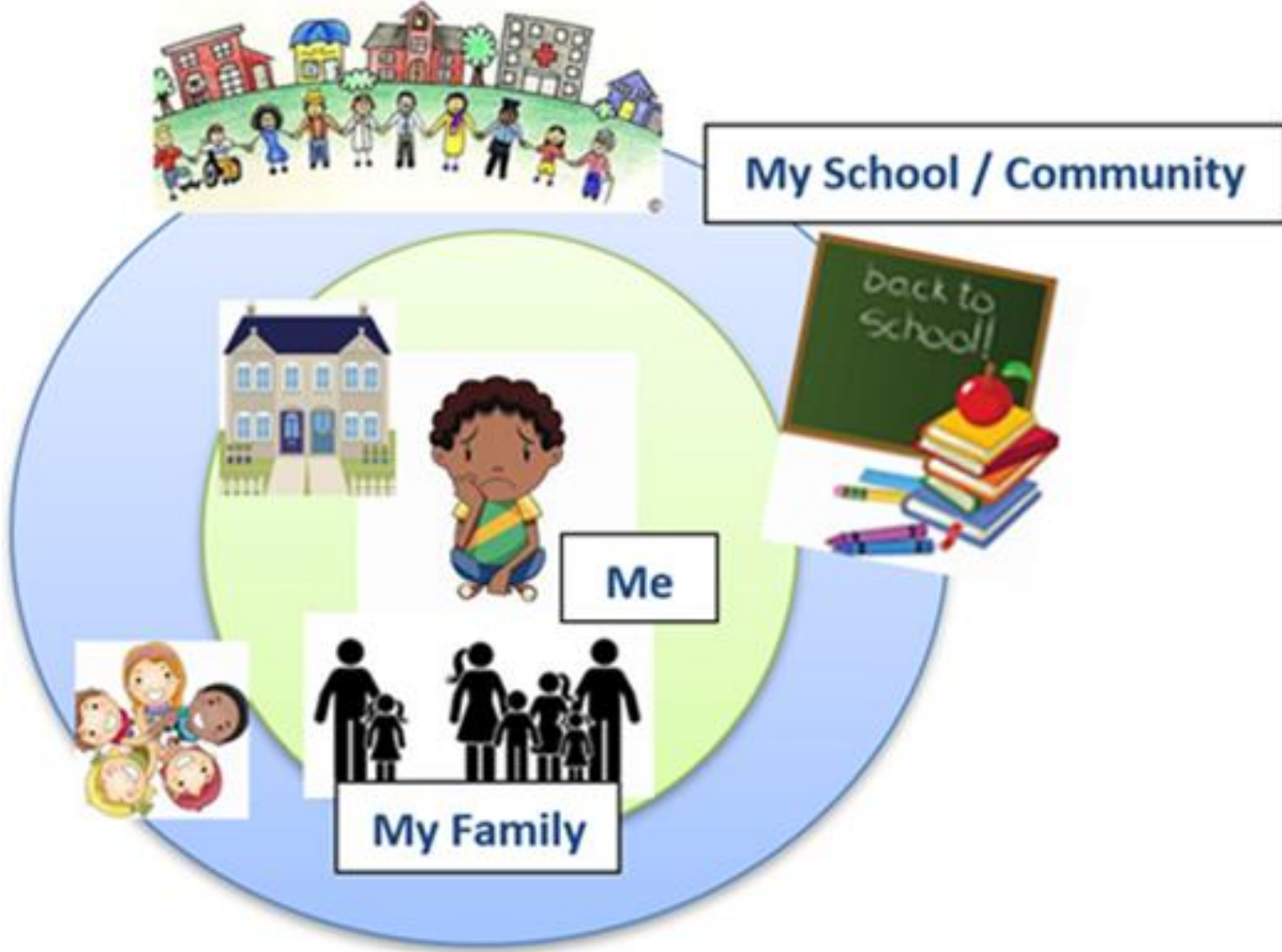
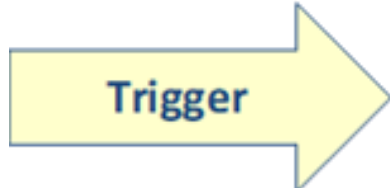


***‘It was more like
“I can’t cope”...I
couldn’t cope with
big situations’***

Year 10 student in CW&C

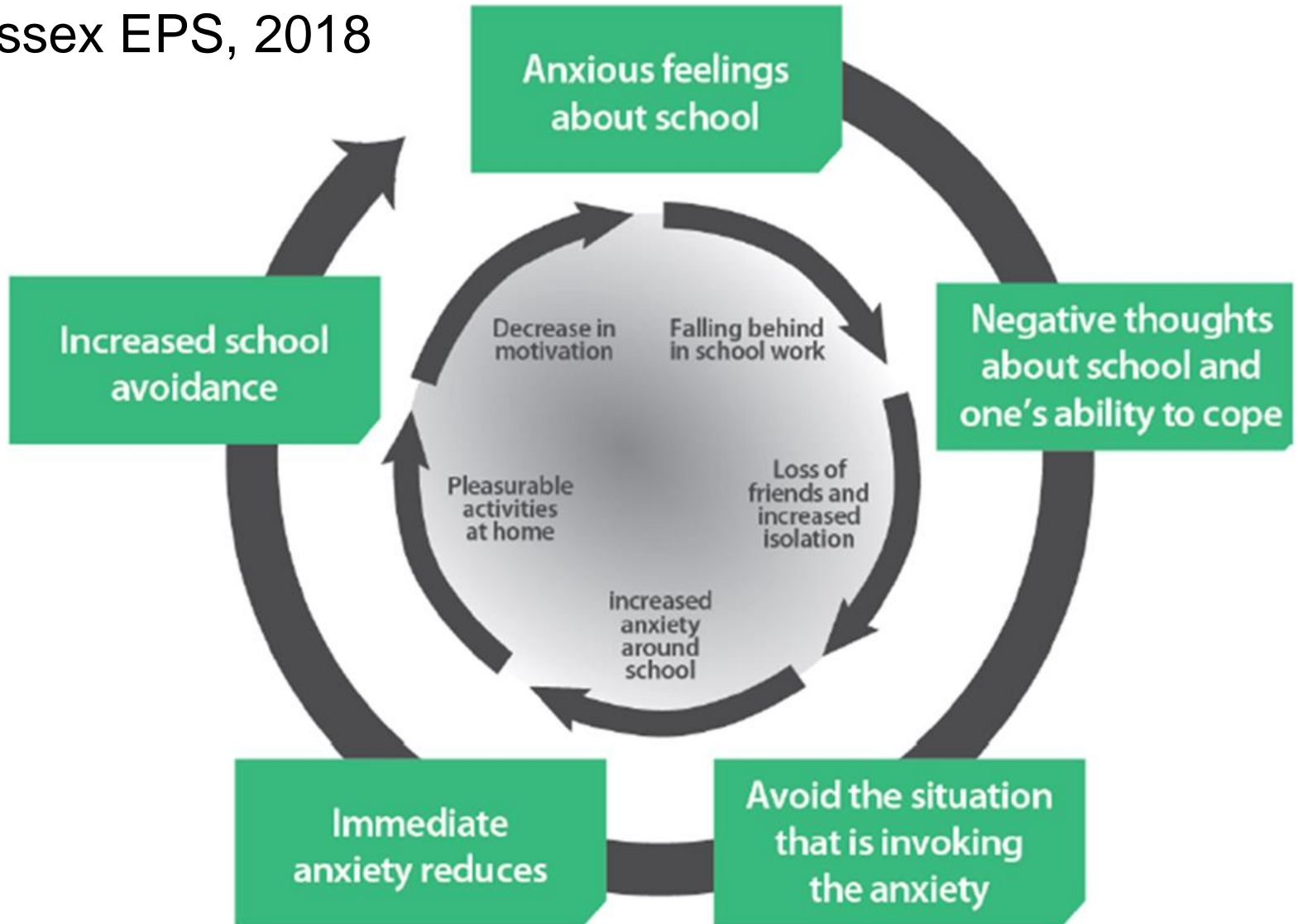


Contributing factors



The Vicious Cycle of Anxiety

West Sussex EPS, 2018



The longer the period of absence, the harder it can be for the child / young person to successfully return to school.

Early identification, assessment and intervention are imperative to improve the outcomes for CYP experiencing EBSN.

Our aim

Factors associated with positive outcomes (Baker & Bishop, 2015):

- early identification / intervention
- working in effective partnership with parents and school staff as well as the child / young person
- working in a flexible manner paying attention to the individual needs and function served by non-attendance
- emphasising the need for rapid return to school alongside good support and adaptations to the school environment.



CW&C response to supporting CYP who struggle to attend school

- Guidance informed by evidenced based practice and psychological theory.
- A phased, whole school approach.
- Holistic approach to assessment and intervention.
- Person centred.
- Practical tools, resources and signposting of information.
- Complements trauma informed practice.



Children who struggle to separate from their carers

A child must develop an adequate sense of safety, trust in an identified 'Key Adult' at school and trust in their parent's return.

- Consistent routines, good organisation and preparation for school / separation – involve child as much as possible.
- Practice short separations at home, as appropriate.
- Establish a positive, fun and consistent 'good bye' ritual.
- Keep calm, smile and show confidence.
- Use of transitional object and 'keeping in mind' strategies.
- Plan something positive to look forward to, after school eg. visit to the park, choice of dessert for tea.
- Encourage positive social interaction with other children eg. social activity groups, clubs, play dates etc.



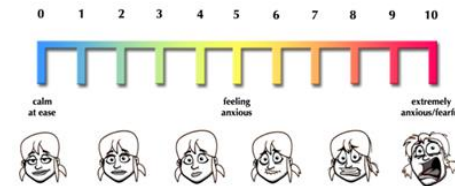
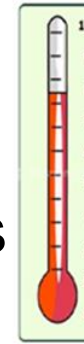


The Invisible String by Patrice Karst

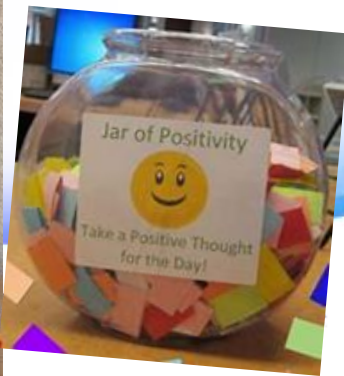
Strategies / tools to manage Worry

- Talking and listening: help your child to express their thoughts and feelings –talk alongside a shared activity; draw / write down; visual tools etc.

My Fear Thermometer



- Focus on positives: experiences in school; help them to see more of what is good about school; be solution-focussed – what helps?

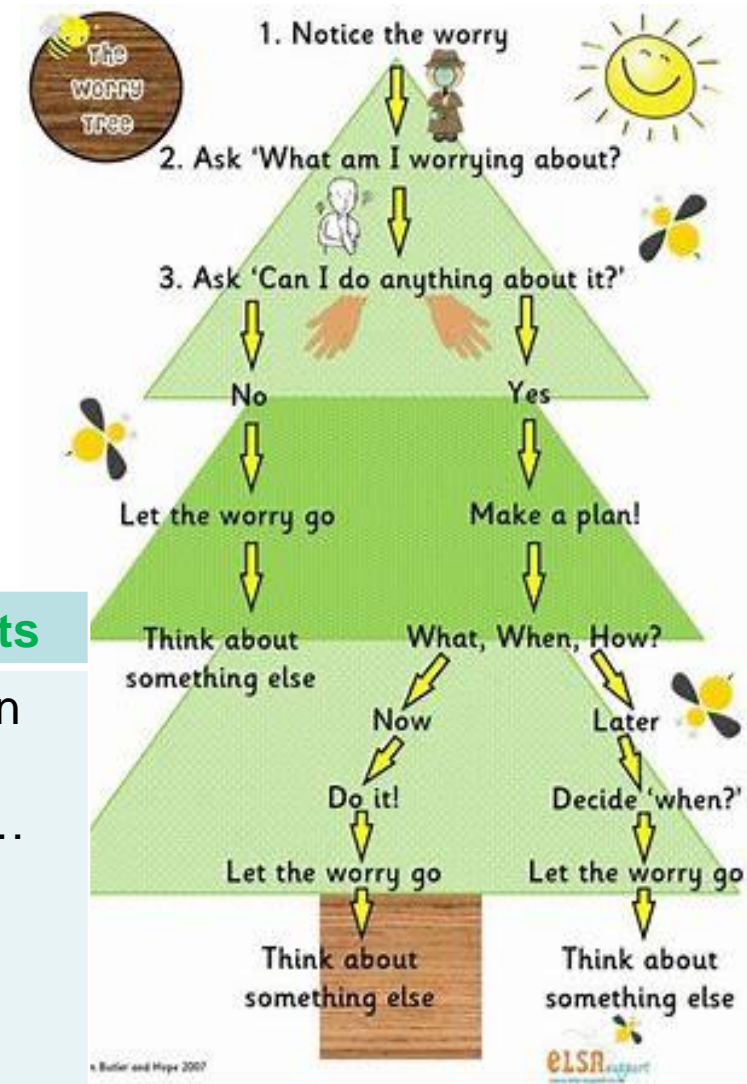




Create a specific 'Worry Time'
 - help to problem-solve or 'let the worry go'!



Help reframe negative thoughts into more helpful, balanced thoughts...



Negative thoughts	Helpful, balanced thoughts
I can't do my work...	There are some things I can do and some things I am finding hard in my lessons... It is okay if I don't know something. My teacher will help me if I can't do my work.

- Use positive distraction techniques:
 - thinking games on the way to school;
 - listen and sing along to a favourite song;
 - talk about something fun / positive you will do together after school;
 - grounding: 5,4,3,2,1...



GROUNDING WITH YOUR FIVE SENSES

5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE		SUN PICTURE ON THE WALL PEOPLE WALKING
4 THINGS YOU CAN FEEL		WIND BLOWING FEET ON THE FLOOR PENCIL IN HAND
3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR		BIRDS CHIRPING CLOCK TICKING CAR HORNS
2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL		FOOD FROM THE CAFETERIA LAUNDRY DETERGENT ON CLOTHES FRESH CUT GRASS
1 THING YOU CAN TASTE		MINT Breakfast TOOTHPASTE

- Breathing techniques help to calm and relax the body.

Have you tried...breathing techniques?

TRACE ALL 5 FINGERS



START HERE

EXHALE

INHALE

1. Take the forefinger of your right hand
2. Trace slowly around the edges of your left hand.
3. When your finger moves to the tip of a finger, breathe in.
4. When your finger moves towards the palm, breathe out.



Count 1 to 7

First, count from one to seven on each "in" breath ...



Count 1 to 11

... then, counting at the same rate, count from one to eleven on each "out" breath



- Clear and consistent messages about school attendance:
 - “I’ve asked you already. It’s time to get up for school.”
 - “I know this is hard, but it has to happen. You have to go to school.”
 - “Today after school, we can... (something they like, e.g. go to the park, go to the shops and get your favourite dessert, play with....).”
 - “You have five minutes to get dressed for school.”
 - “I can see that you feel upset about going to school... Tell me what you are worried about, so we can talk about it.”





Questions and Reflections?



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