

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

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School refuser?

- This used to be how we thought of children who struggled to attend but it is not a choice that they are making (and refusal suggests a choice) they often want to attend but do not have the resources/support to help them.
- Therefore we now use EBSA

EBSA - a definition:

“...characterised by internalised problems such as fear and anxiety, misery, complaints of feeling ill without obvious cause, reluctance to leave home, or externalised problems including tantrums and oppositional behaviour”

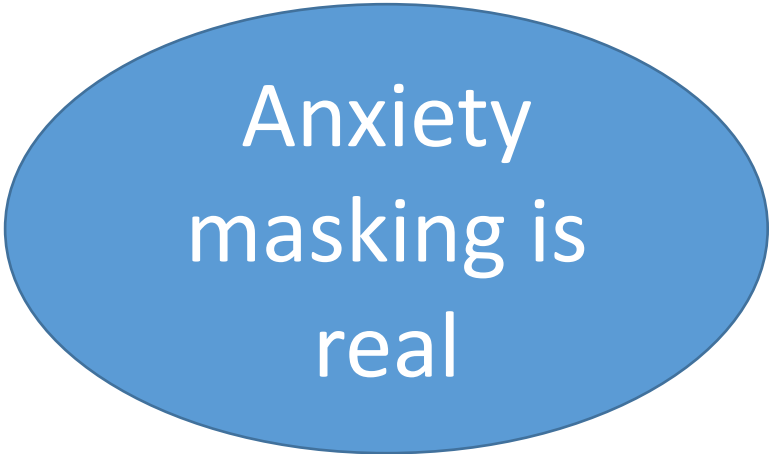
(West Sussex EPS, 2004: p.5).

“....occurs when stress exceeds support, when risks are greater than resilience and when ‘pull’ factors that promote school non-attendance overcome the ‘push’ factors that encourage attendance”

(Thambirajah et al, 2008: p.33).

Risk factors

- Separation anxiety
- history of trauma/loss/bereavement
- transition peaks - reception/year seven
- parental mental/physical health (especially where the CYP is a carer)
- history of EBSA in family
- learning needs/academic anxiety
- experienced bullying
- autism (especially in girls)

A blue oval containing the text "Anxiety masking is real" in white, sans-serif font.

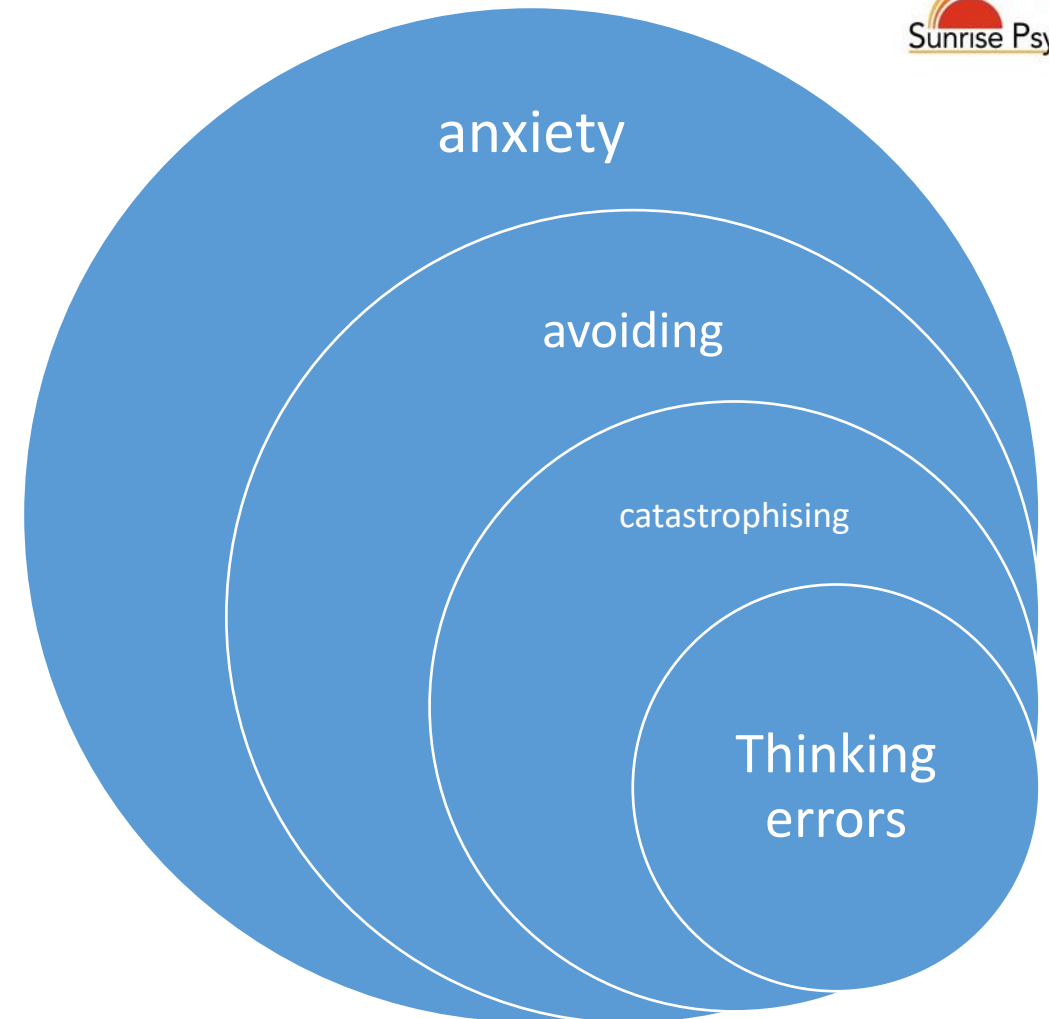
Anxiety
masking is
real

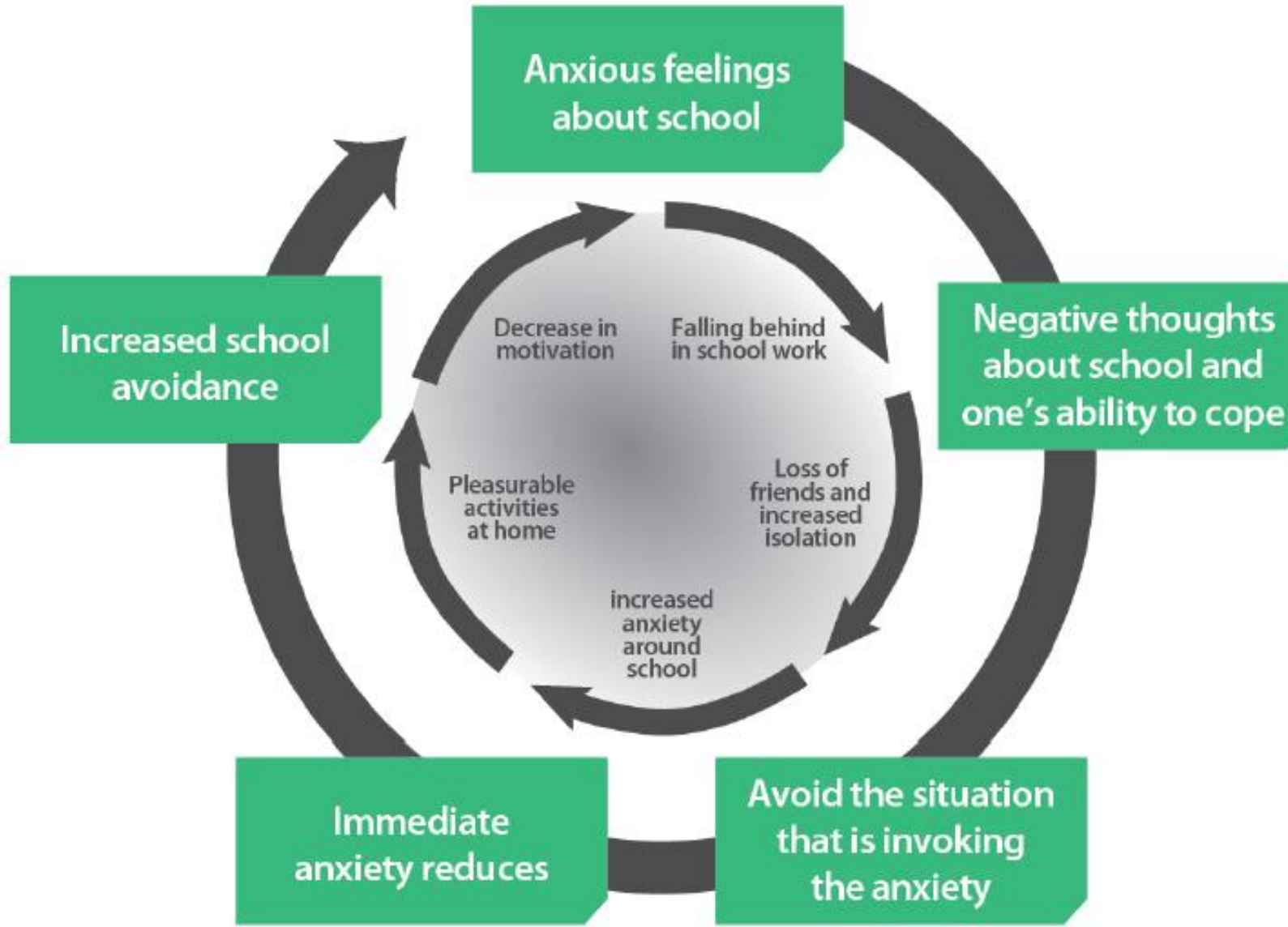
Maintaining factors

- Impact of anxiety
- Parents feel powerless to access help

Secondary factors

- feeling disconnected
- missed events/schooling
- friendships change
- increase time caregivers/pleasant activities





Push(avoid) and/or Pull(seek positive)?

PUSH: To avoid uncomfortable feelings brought on by attending school, such as feelings of anxiety or low mood.

PUSH: To avoid situations that might be stressful, such as academic demands, social pressures and/or aspects of the school environment.

Push (avoid) and/or Pull (seek positive)?

PULL: To reduce separation anxiety or to gain attention from significant others, such as parents or other family members.

PULL: To pursue tangible reinforcers outside of school, such as going shopping or playing computer games during school time.

School	Home
<p><i>Push (towards attending school)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academically bright - Beginning to form a friendship 	<p><i>Pull (away from school, home factors)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Change in family dynamics, - Mum diagnosed with cancer - Difficulties sleeping, night mares about mum dying - Separation anxiety from parent
<p><i>Pull (away from school, school factors)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prolonged period of absence from school - Isolated, not leaving the house - Difficult transition to secondary school - Academic demands - Social difficulties, possible bullying - Separation Anxiety 	<p><i>Push (towards staying at home)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduce anxiety around separating from mum - Reduce anxieties around attending school - Not having to complete school work

Numbers

Nationally:

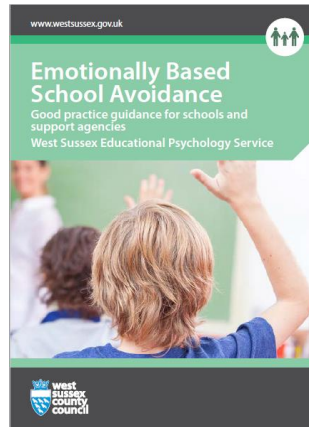
UK estimates suggest that between 1-2% of all children and young people experience EBSA needs.

- How many pupils affected in your school?

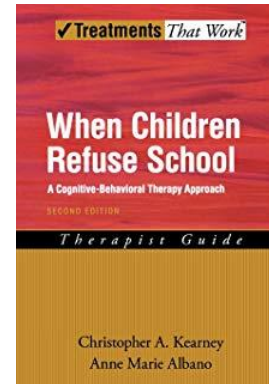
Ways forward can include

- Be aware of risk and maintenance factors and address these
- seek early opportunities for pupil to return (even in the smallest way with high levels of support)
- create a shared narrative between the young person/school/parents around what the drivers are and what the behaviours are (beware of a narrative that it is the parents fault)
- pace the reintegration
- access to key adult to act as a mentor
- psychoeducation (for young person and parents)
- emotional literacy support for the pupil including increasing self-awareness and self-regulation

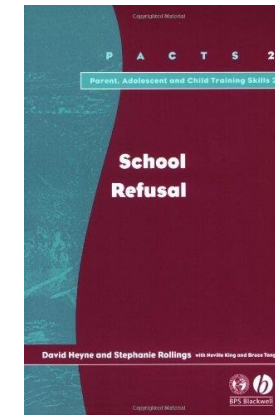
Resources



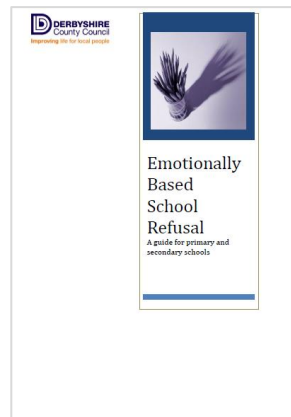
Emotionally Based School Avoidance. Good practice guidance for schools and support agencies. West Sussex EPS.



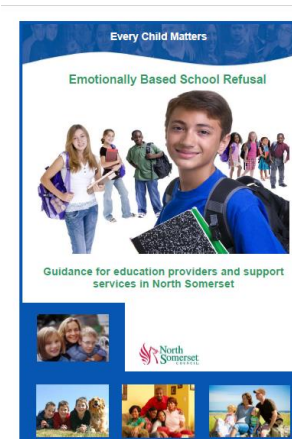
When Children Refuse School. Kearney & Albano.



School Refusal. Heyne & Rollings.



Emotionally Based School Refusal. A guide for primary and secondary schools. Derbyshire County Council.



Emotionally Based School Refusal. Guidance for education providers and support services in North Somerset. North Somerset Council.



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Thank-you!

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