

# BE PRESENT, BE POWERFUL.



## Is your child missing school due to feelings of anxiety?

### **Definition of anxiety: feeling of fear and uneasiness about everyday situations.**

**If your child is suffering from feelings of anxiety, you are not alone.** The good news is that in most situations, anxiety is normal and temporary. Anxiety becomes a concern if it persists — it can affect relationships with family, peers and teachers, contribute to academic challenges, and lead to school avoidance/refusal. Addressing feelings of anxiety is important for a child's overall well-being, not just attendance.

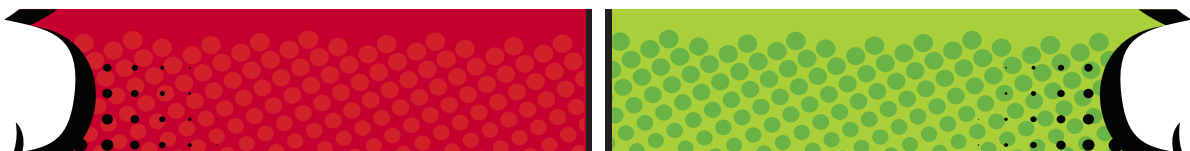
In addition, if your child starts to complain of symptoms like a headache or stomach ache, it is important to consider whether this is related to anxiety or a physical illness. If the challenge is anxiety, staying home may worsen the situation.

### **What are the symptoms related to feelings of anxiety?**

**Persistent anxiety can present in many ways, making it difficult to recognize.**

Symptoms may vary depending on the age of the child, and some children may keep worries to themselves or have difficulty explaining their feelings making it hard to identify symptoms. Symptoms related to feelings of anxiety can include, but aren't limited to, the following:

- Feeling tired, irritable or easily tearful
- Having trouble separating from parents
- Experiencing difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares
- Having trouble getting out of bed or dressed for school
- Lacking appetite
- Having trouble concentrating, which may lead to difficulty starting tasks, problems with homework and falling behind in school
- Experiencing physical symptoms, including stomachaches and headaches
- Avoiding activities they previously enjoyed
- Having negative or continuous thoughts that something bad is going to happen





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### What can families do?

Here are some tips that you can use to help your child get through these challenges:

- Avoid punishment for refusing to go to school, as this may worsen the situation.
- If possible, avoid letting your child stay home. Though staying home from school may provide short-term relief for your child, continued absence from school will lead to the feeling of being disconnected from classmates and teachers, may cause your child to fall behind academically and make it harder to return.
- Speak with your child. Listen to understand what's bothering them and why they are avoiding school. If you are feeling a similar anxiety, it may help to share this with your child and to explain what you are doing to get through it.
- Offer support and reassure them that you are here to help and that you believe they can face their fears and get through this problem.

### Take advantage of school resources.

Working through your child's feelings of anxiety can be difficult and scary, and you shouldn't have to do it alone. Take advantage of the resources at your child's school:

- Talk with the school social worker, counselor, nurse and/or psychologist to discuss concerns regarding your student's feelings of anxiety.
- Resources, support and accommodations are available to all students and families.
- In certain situations, a 504 plan or Individualized Education Program may be needed to ensure your child receives appropriate support and resources.

If symptoms persist or are very severe, you are encouraged to contact your child's medical provider for further evaluation.

Finally, remember to take care of your own physical and emotional well-being!

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