

Section 5: Information for Young People

What does EBSA mean for me?

Many young people and children worry about leaving their homes and going to educational settings. This is normal and it is ok to feel this way. Anxieties are part of life and as we are growing up, we start to learn how to deal with them. It is not expected that you will never feel anxiety but you have to manage your anxiety and make sure you are in charge of the anxiety and it is not in charge of you! You may be experiencing EBSA when you have overwhelming emotions and the fear associated with attending school.

What does it look like?

When you think about school are you?

- Worried
- Overwhelmed
- Anxious-sweating, vomiting, heart beating faster, muscles may become tense, dry mouth
- Experience feelings of sadness
- Reluctance to engage with school activities, outings and trips
- Agitated
- Feeling alienated and having a poor sense of school belonging
- Struggling to sleep
- Easily annoyed
- Bad tempered
- Feeling sick or pretending to be sick
- Lacking confidence in your own ability



We can all feel this way at different points in our life because of things that may be happening at home, at school or elsewhere and that's ok. You are not alone.

There may be things that can make you feel this way in school and outside of school.

In school

Struggling to cope with the workload
My teacher doesn't like me
My appearance. I look different to everyone
The loud noise and the crowds
My friends are not talking to me
I'm worried about changing in PE class
I am no good at sports or drama
Everyone laughs at me
I am anxious about the exams
I am being bullied
My favourite teacher has gone on leave
I need extra help with my learning
Difficulty with transitioning (moving to a new school, returning to school after a long absence due to illness or entering/exiting primary school)

Outside school

My parents are separating or getting a divorce
Someone close to me died
A new sibling
I am having problems getting to school
Illness within the family
Nobody understands how I am feeling
Experienced a traumatic event e.g., death, domestic abuse, illness

What happens if I don't attend school?

It is the law in Ireland that you must go to school from the age of six until you are sixteen years old. The only exception is if you are being educated at home. All schools keep an attendance strategy. If your school is concerned about your attendance, they will follow the steps laid out in this plan and will refer your non-attendance to Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) if necessary.

If you miss 20 or more days of school, the school must tell Tusla Education Support Service. If your absence cannot be explained, the service may make contact with your parent/guardian to work out how best to get you back into school and attending.

It is important for you to try to overcome the difficulties you are having as quickly as possible. Staying at home might feel like a good idea and make you feel better. However, the more time you miss from the school, the more lessons you miss and therefore the workload and the learning also become more difficult. Not seeing your friends may make maintaining those friendships difficult. If you are worried about anything at home or school, speaking to an adult you trust (parent, teacher, sister/brother coach etc.) and letting them know you are worried is the first step to getting the help and support you need to make it better. Not letting people know your feelings and your worries can make you feel like there is no way out and things may get worse rather than better.

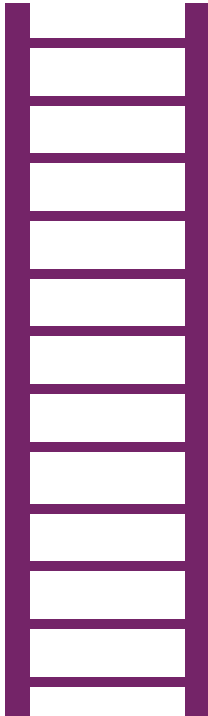
What do I do if I feel like this?

Talk to somebody you trust (parent, brother/sister, teacher) and let them know your worries.

At home:

Think about the things that are worrying you. Here are a few ideas of what you can do.

- Draw or write a list and order them from most worried about to least worried about.
- Use a journal. Journaling allows you write down your worries, fears and concerns and by tracking these each day, it allows you to see when these feelings occur and you can learn ways to better control them.



Most worried about
Not so worried about

- Express your feelings rather than bottling them up
- Keep a record of your own school attendance and reward your successes-see example below.

School + Attendance = Good School Results

Set your own targets

Week 1: I made it to school every day this week

1 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____	2 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____	3 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____	4 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____	5 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____
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Week 2: I made it to school on time for the whole week

6 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____	7 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____	8 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____	9 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____	10 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____
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Week 3: Attended full days for the whole week

11 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____	12 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____	13 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____	14 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____	15 Date: _____ Reason: _____ _____ _____
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Don't forget to ask for help!

- Draw up checklists. These may be useful to putting a routine in place. Did you know that morning routines and school attendance patterns are set in September?. That means that you can set yourself up for success by getting off to a smooth and drama-free September.

NIGHTIME CHECKLIST
Choose & layout clothing and shoes <input type="checkbox"/>
Put any items that you need for school in your school bag (e.g. permission slips, books, journal, homework) <input type="checkbox"/>
Make your lunch <input type="checkbox"/>
Set your alarm! <input type="checkbox"/>

MORNING CHECKLIST
Get out of bed when your alarm goes off <input type="checkbox"/>
Have a good breakfast <input type="checkbox"/>
Leave yourself plenty of time to get to school <input type="checkbox"/>
Walk or cycle to school if you can <input type="checkbox"/>

Suggestions if you are feeling anxious about attending school.

Watch these useful YouTube clips;

👉 Are you anxious to go to school? Advice from a therapist

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K3nCwYcwuHM>

👉 Dealing with school phobias and Anxiety. Hear a young person's experience

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqs1BuNyVY4>

In school

Identify an adult in school you like and get on well with. Talk to them about how you are feeling. They can work with you and your parents to figure out what things are worrying you and what your parents, school and you need to do to help. Some things could include;

- A key adult in school to check in with
- A safe space to go to when you are becoming overwhelmed
- Buddy system
- Help with school work
- Altering your timetable
- Checklist of what do and where to go if you start to become overwhelmed

<p>If I don't know where my classroom is...</p> <p>I will get my plan from my student planner and see if I can work it out</p> <p>I will try and ask someone in my class</p> <p>I will ask my teacher</p>	<p>If someone calls me unkind names...</p> <p>I will try and walk away and not swear or shout</p> <p>I will tell a teacher why I feel upset</p> <p>My teacher will deal with it and talk to that person</p>	<p>What if I have nothing to do at breaktime...</p> <p>I could go to the library</p> <p>I could buy a snack and eat it in the dining hall</p> <p>I could find my buddy</p>
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Source: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/media/930428/lancashire-eb-sa-guidance-strategy-toolkit.pdf>

Tips to getting you back to school

You may not be attending school because your worries are so great, it is important you try to work with your parents and school to get you back attending. These tips may help;

- Remember a time when you did cope. What did you do then?
- Try to notice when you become worried and try out some strategies that will help you relax
- Keep in contact with your friends and find out what is happening e.g., a school trip, a match, a musical.
- Start catching up on some of the work that you have missed.
- Take small steps to getting back into routine. Remember things may not get back to normal immediately and that's ok.
- Reward yourself for small successes.

Tips to getting you ready for life

As you can see, there are many things that can help you to start feeling better within yourself and while dealing with the world. Some more ideas include;

- Having a good diet. Swap sugary and fatty foods for fruit and vegetables.
- Exercising-Take a walk, join a sports team, swim.
- Laughing-Go to the cinema, watch a funny movie.
- Getting outdoors. Take in the fresh air and the sunshine.
- Meditate-take time for yourself. This helps to promote relaxation and calm.
- Practice deep breathing. This helps to reduce stress and anxiety.
- Do something you enjoy e.g., listen to music, read a book etc.
- Talk with someone who listens and understands you.
- Take a moment at the end of each day to reflect on what you have accomplished and not on what you didn't get done.
- Set small achievable goals in order achieve your main goal.

Notice the signs of Stress and Anxiety – get to know your stress signs and manage them!

When you start to worry or become overwhelmed. Start to notice what is happening within your own body.

Figure No. 6 What you might feel in your body when you are worried

When you experience this, take note and practice some of the following exercises that will help to reduce stress and anxiety. Not all of them will work for you but try them out and see which one you prefer and works for you.



Search Relaxation Techniques NEPS for some examples. "Breathe", a relaxation resource can be found at [Health and Wellbeing | PDST](#)

“ *School isn't forever; it is only a stepping stone to the next stage in your life and you will get through it. Seek help, talk to someone you can trust but ensure 'not to bottle it up.' Keep going you will get there.* ”

(Young person who returned to education, 17 years old)

