

## **Early Signs of School Avoidance/Refusal**

Many young people experience some worries and difficulties during their education, particularly around transition times; beginning of the school year, after holidays or before major assessment tasks. The onset of behavioral signs of school avoidance can be gradual or may appear suddenly. Anxiety is a normal response but becomes problematic when it becomes so intense it impacts on daily functioning and school attendance.

It is common for symptoms to escalate in the morning before school or even before bed at night. Symptoms often reduce when school is finished or when the young person is certain they don't have to attend school.

### **Recurring behaviours may include:**

#### **At home:**

- On school days; struggling to get out of bed, leave the house or get out of the car
- Disrupted sleep cycle; oversleeping or not getting enough sleep
- Feeling sick before school e.g. waking up with a headache, stomach ache or sore throat
- Tearfulness, clinginess and dawdling before school
- Complaints about attending school and reluctant to talk about school
- Difficulty attending school after weekends and holidays
- Difficulty separating from caregivers
  
- Panic symptoms, threats of self-harm
- Isolating behaviours at home
- Excessive screen time e.g. gaming, YouTube and social media
- Extreme distress or aggressive behaviour that sometimes results in conflict within the family unit

#### **At school:**

- Unexplained absences or often running late to school
- Absences on significant days such as tests, speeches, PE classes
- Learning difficulties
- Decreased participation in class
- Frequent visits to the sick bay or the wellbeing office
- Frequent requests to go home early
- Excessive worry about a parent when at school
- Social isolation or withdrawal
- Peer relational problems