



School refusal: Tips for parents and other family members.

If you have a child who does not want to go back to school, the day before can be fraught with anxious moments, bad-temperedness and tears. It can feel overwhelming after the sanctuary of home during school holidays.

There are a few things family members can do to help an anxious child readjust to prepare them for school:

- Acknowledge that they feel bad. “Yes I can see you are feeling sad/frustrated/anxious” Don’t try to minimise it, just acknowledge it and give whatever nurture works best for your child
- If they are naturally an anxious child, or have additional needs, it can help to have a visual timetable up. Draw a grid and block out activities - add morning, after school and evening tasks and use it to help them feel prepared
- Don’t talk about how glad you’ll be to get them back to school / get your routine back / return to normality. These statements can make some children feel that their presence is an annoyance to you
- Tell them that you’ve enjoyed your time with them, that you too feel sad that this holidays is over and that you are excited for the next one.
- Let the school know. If the teachers are aware they can deal with emotional moments much better. Wishing you all an easy return to the new term
- Be ready. If you are stressing about it your child will feed from your vibe. If you’ve still got things to do - be calm and don’t voice your stress
- Plan other things to look forward to - it might be an activity at the weekend, or even just a favourite meal mid-week. Having something normal and family based to think and talk about will calm the mind
- Remember the ‘good’. What are the positive bits about school for them? Highlight those to help balance their thoughts