



CST CHATTERBOX

Disability Spotlight: School Phobia/Refusal

In recent years, psychologists and researchers have been speaking out about a surprisingly large number of teens who suffer from a legitimate psychiatric fear of going to school.

When students suffer from school phobia, they are not simply avoiding going to class because of normal stress or incomplete homework. For those young adults, the thought of going to school causes an involuntary reaction of overwhelming fear and anxiety. If left untreated, school phobia can seriously damage students' performance in school, or even their ability to graduate and learn necessary social skills.

The most important thing to remember about school phobia is that it is not a rational fear. Like any other phobia, school phobia causes an extreme fearful reaction in the person who suffers from it that is completely uncontrollable. A person cannot be cured of their phobia through scolding, punishment, or positive reinforcement, as those incentives do not address the issues that are causing the irrational fear.

School phobia can be fear of attending school in general, or fear of a specific class or subject that a student is frightened of having to attend or complete work for. School phobia can manifest in several ways, including:

- A student claiming they are afraid of going to school.
- A student having an extreme negative emotional reaction when the time for school arrives.
- Withdrawal, anxiety, anger, or sadness at school, or when the topic of school or a specific subject is brought up.

It bears repeating that school phobia goes beyond normal child anxieties and fears associated with attending class. School phobia is a fear of school so intense that a student can no longer function normally when attending school, or which has seriously damaged his or her academic standing.

The primary method of treating school phobia is to address the underlying fears or issues that have made the phobia manifest. It is important to remember, however, that the causes of school phobia may not be what seem like the most obvious answers. Many adults and teachers automatically assume that children's fear of the classroom is caused by their inability to learn the material. In reality, a teen's fear of school may be the manifestation of other issues, such as bullying at school, social anxiety, mental health issues, learning disorders, or other problems that a student is failing to cope with, which then lead to an irrational fear of schooling.

The first step in addressing the underlying issues that have resulted in school phobia is to find out what those issues are. Parents should speak with teachers and school administrators to see if they have noticed anything that might point to a deeper issue, as well as encourage them to find ways to accommodate the students so that they are more comfortable at school. While parents might also be able to find out this information from their son or daughter (or their friends), it is important to remember not to press the issue too hard or to challenge the fear. Instead, try asking simple questions that could lead them to reveal pertinent information about the matter.

Most importantly, teens suffering from school phobia need professional treatment to help them learn to manage their fear, and to help treat the underlying issues. School counselors, psychologists, and other experts in behavioral therapy can help with this.

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RETURNING TO SCHOOL DURING THE PANDEMIC

Students returning to school during the pandemic... Support emotional regulation...

Even if your child is excited about returning to school and other activities, the significant change may make it difficult for them to control their feelings and behavior, requiring some support from you to help them manage.

The return to long, structured school days can cause those dreaded 'meltdowns' that may have gone away while at home. To manage these:

- Let your child unwind after school before asking too many questions.
- Have a decent afternoon tea ready for when they're home, or move dinner earlier while they're still transitioning back into the school routine.
- If your child is quite active, get them out and about to blow off some steam at the end of the day.
- If they respond well to quiet time, ensure they have a secluded, comfortable place in the house where they can retreat at the end of the day to manage their thoughts and emotions.
- Spend time re-connecting with them at the end of the day, where they have your undivided attention.

If your child is particularly sensitive or has sensory needs, you could create a box of their favorite activities or calming items that they can access when they feel overwhelmed. It could also be a good idea to have a couple of small items for them to take to school, in case they need some time out.

Parents also need to make time to regulate emotions - take time out for yourself, allow moments to sit and breathe, and make sure you get some exercise. You may like to incorporate family relaxation sessions into your weekly schedule, e.g., Yoga, meditation or a walk outside. It's the simple things that can often make the biggest difference, particularly if you take the time to enjoy them regularly.

Bears & Blocks of Learning: Outdoor Education Days at Morris Hills High School

The Child Development classes and Ed. 101 at Morris Hills High School are hosting outdoor education days for preschool aged children (2.5-5 years old) and their families.

The first outdoor education days are October 21st and 22nd. The hours are 8:30-10:45 am with hopefully more dates to follow.

Siblings are welcome, parents/guardians must stay for the duration of the event. Masks are mandatory.

You can sign up for one or both dates. The event is free and full of fun, learning, crafts, and games.



Please contact Mrs. Godleski, Exploring Childhood Teacher, by email (dgodleski@mhrd.org) for more information about this event or future events.

Our Future in Mind Two Day Virtual Summit, Nov. 5&6, 5 PM

You have the power to build a better world for mental health. Find your place and discover your voice.

Streaming live on YouTube, this free two-day summit gives you front-row access to the most innovative mental health organizations and campaigns in the world. You'll

gain insight into how they got started, and you'll learn (and unlearn) from young mental health experts to help you find your unique pathway into activism.

Your voice matters. Your mind matters. It's time to take action. Register :

<https://idontmind.com/ourfutureinmind-register>

IDONTMIND is a mental health awareness campaign and lifestyle brand working to defeat the stigma around mental illness. Our goal is to get people talking about their minds and to generate positive messaging about mental health.

Email: info@idontmind.com.

Halloween-themed BOOKs for the younger reader!



BOOKs on being brave.



Shared Services Child Study Team

Wharton Borough Schools
973-361-3010

Mine Hill Township School (CAS)
973-366-0590

Rockaway Borough Schools
973-625-8601



The Shared Services Child Study Team has made it a goal to increase communication and Special Education knowledge with parents as well as teachers and administration within the three school districts. As part of this goal, you will now be receiving newsletters from the team three times a year filled with information on special education practices/law, community resources, special needs tips, etc. We hope you find this helpful!

Leslie Mozulay, LDT-C

Stephanie Dzikowski, LDT-C

Stacy McCoy, School Psychologist

Brooke Hanenberg, School Psychologist

Armi Clancy, School Social Worker

Get to Know Your CST

So what do I bring to my position as a Learning Disabilities Teacher-Consultant (LDT-C) with the Morris Hills Regional District serving the districts of Wharton, Mine Hill and Rockaway Borough?

I was taught at an early age that you never know unless you try. And that you can learn to do just about anything. My journey in education started as a teen being a dance teacher, then completing a BA in Speech and Theater, and teaching at local universities. My husband and I were blessed with two daughters in the 80s. As a stay at home Mom I taught myself to use a computer for word processing and bookkeeping purposes with church work, as a Girl Scout trainer and leader, and with a family hardware business. As my girls started



Leslie Mozulay, LDT-C

Enjoying a family adventure as GG and Mom!!

school I went to work with them as a Phys Ed, dance, and computer teacher. Things kept evolving and I moved on, becoming a 4th/5th grade teacher which inspired me to obtain certification as a Learning Disabilities Teacher-Consultant to support my students and instill within them the love of learning. Having taken on numerous leadership roles as a teacher, I completed an Educational Leadership degree and became a principal and an adjunct professor at a State college. Next, I ventured into working with Child Study Teams as a Learning Disabilities Teacher-Consultant. Certainly what I've learned in this multifaceted position opens up lots of doors for more opportunities!

So at this point in my adventurous career I look forward to what's next— hmm — do you wanna take a guess?