



# SCHOOL REFUSAL



# WHAT IS SCHOOL REFUSAL?

The frequent and outright refusal to attend school over a prolonged period of time for various reasons. This is different from truancy, where one skips school without their parent's knowledge to engage in delinquent behaviours.



## SIGNS OF SCHOOL REFUSAL

- Distress about attending school
- Complaints of sickness
  - Headaches, nausea, vomiting, stomachaches, fainting
- Difficulty/struggle getting out of bed
- Avoiding school activities and talking about school
- Threatening self-harm

## PSYCHOSOMATIC SYMPTOMS

Psychosomatic symptoms are physical illnesses that are caused or worsened by **psychological issues** such as anxiety and depression. Someone experiencing these symptoms **genuinely feels sick** and does not know that psychological issues are the cause.



### Social Problems

- Bullying
- Poor relationships with teachers
- Rejection by peers
- Conflicts with friends
- Lack of supportive friendships
  - feeling alone at school

## CAUSES

### Anxiety

- Excessive worries about social situations
  - embarrassment
  - fear of being judged by others
- Anxiety about performance e.g. tests, presentations, sports
- Specific fears

### Other Causes

- Depression
  - loss of energy and motivation to attend school
- Academic issues
  - not understanding or failing a subject
- Family problems



# "SHOULD I GO TO SCHOOL WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION?"

Although having low mood or anxiety might make attending school difficult, continuing school can be helpful for recovery too! Some benefits of going to school are:

- Keeping active improves mood
- Emotional support from friends
- Facing anxieties instead of avoiding them
- Feeling productive



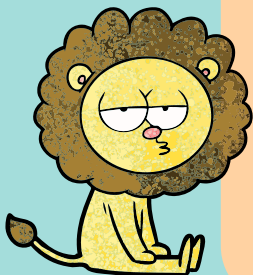
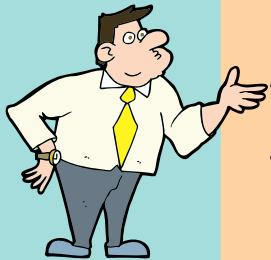
## MORE INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

As a parent, you may feel pressure to get your child back in school as quickly as possible to make sure that they keep up academically. However, it is important to understand the issues behind your child's school refusal too.



If not addressed, the problems causing school refusal are likely to grow.

- **Identify issues**
  - gently ask questions like "What is making school feel hard?"
  - listen to your child's concerns without judgement
- **Collaborate with the school**
  - develop a back-to-school plan
- **Structure a routine**
  - preparations before bedtime  
e.g. pack schoolbag
  - morning routines  
e.g. fixed waking time
  - instructions for routine should be short, clear, and consistent
- **Make staying home boring**
  - study hours
  - limit internet access
- **Be patient**
  - recovery takes time



# IPMDA

**Integrated Programme for Management of Depression in Adolescent**

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