

# What to do when your child refuses to go to school...



▶ Going to school for the first time can be scary for a child, and for the parent! But when your child cries regularly at drop off and often refuses to go in, what should you do? Here are a few tips to help you help your child!

## Step 1

**Do NOT let your child stay home!** Staying home is avoiding. While avoiding provides immediate relief, it is also becoming powerfully reinforced. This means that the desire to stay home will get stronger and stronger!

## Step 2

Be as **firm and as unemotional** as possible. Be prepared for the tears; try to keep the morning as chaos free as possible. Preparing in advance to make the morning feel less rushed can be helpful.

## Step 3

Try to **remove any loopholes**. Kids are great at finding these, and any option to not go to school or to come home will prolong their anxiety.

## Step 4

**Monitor your own reactions** to your child's distress. Children are incredibly perceptive, and if your child senses that you are concerned, this may fuel his/her anxiety and his/her desire to be close to you. Give your child a quick hug and be on your way.

## Step 5

Find ways to help your child **feel connected to his/her school**. Attend school-sponsored activities. Plan weekend play dates with peers from your child's class so that he/she develops friendships and looks forward to seeing other children at school.

### **Did You Know...**

that you shouldn't try to avoid bouts of separation anxiety by sneaking away when your child isn't looking? This may be tempting, given her reaction to separation from you, but **experts agree** that this practice is likely to produce even more anxiety. Instead, say a loving but quick good-bye, even if your child cries and screams. Her crying will usually subside within a few minutes. By establishing a **consistent pattern** of attentive good-byes and happy reunions, you can build your child's confidence in you and your relationship.



***Talk to your child's teacher or even the school social worker! Working together with school staff is important to create a positive school experience for your child!***

### A few more tips:

- Make sure your child is getting adequate sleep each night. Poor sleep can lead to behavior challenges, mood swing, and even academic struggles. School-aged children require 10-11 hours of sleep each night, according to the National Sleep Foundation.
- Keep a consistent bedtime routine for your child. Make sure that you are giving your child some time to wind down before going to sleep each night.
- Create a morning routine that allows your child enough time to get ready for school in a relaxed fashion and enjoy a healthy breakfast.
- Make the trip to school fun. Play your child's favorite songs or create a fun morning routine that he/she will look forward to.