



From:

FEAR OF SCHOOL

Show understanding, but send your child to school.

Many times the fear of going to school is really the fear of leaving the parent. If the parent is ill, the child may feel that staying home will prevent something bad from happening to mom or dad. Sometimes the fear of school is triggered by a parent saying, "I'll be so lonely without you here." The child feels that staying home will make the parent feel better. Sometimes the fear of school has to do with a specific teacher or an uncomfortable environment. If this is the case, listen to your child. Then explain that although you understand he/she must still go to school. Before bedtime, say, "In five minutes, it will be time to get ready for bed so you will be ready to go to school tomorrow." This helps the child realize that you expect him/her to go to school.

INVESTIGATE THE PROBLEM

If the problem at school can be identified, then it can be investigated. This may mean taking the child to school early or staying after school. It may mean spending some time alone with the child in the school environment. This can be a wise thing to do with children who are going to school for the first time or with children who have a history of school phobia. If the parent and child can make several visits to the school shortly before the school year starts, it helps the child to see school as a familiar place.

SPENDING TIME AT SCHOOL

A parent whose schedule includes some free time during school hours might check with his/her child's teacher to see if it permissible to sit in the classroom for part of a day. A parent who uses this technique should gradually spend less and less time in the classroom, until the child goes to school without fear. The parent might also sit in the car in a spot the child can see from the classroom window. The parent who uses this technique should gradually spend less and less time sitting outside school.

BE FIRM

If the preceding suggestions don't work, there is a more drastic approach which is almost always successful. Transport the child to school in a matter-of-fact way, deposit the child on the school premises, and drive away. Knowing that the child will be quite upset, make prior arrangements for one of his/her teachers to be available to comfort the child. This forges a bond between the child and the teacher which enables the child to feel comfortable at school.

The biggest problem parents face with this method is feeling that they are being cruel. Parents must realize that the child may not just stay home from school and that the parent cannot stay at school with the child for the next several years. Even though the child may be upset at first, the teacher will be there to provide comfort and, in a short time, the problem will be solved. In order for this technique to work effectively, parents must be able and willing to deal with their own fears and beliefs about their parenting skills.

REMEMBER...

- ✓ Be firm about the fact that the child *is* going to school.
- ✓ Visit the school before the school year or class begins to familiarize the child with the school environment.
- ✓ Treat this matter calmly. Do not show emotional distress for the child to play upon.