TIPS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND TEENS STRUGGLING TO GO TO SCHOOL EVERY DAY.

We understand how challenging it can be for families when a child is having a hard time attending school. That's why we checked in with our child and youth mental health experts for their top tips to help families whose children and youth are refusing to go or avoiding school.

TIP #1

Focus on your relationship with your child.

It's really important for children to have at least one adult who they trust and can communicate openly with. When you have open communication with your child that means you are open to hear things that you might not agree with or like. It can be helpful to prioritize your relationship with your child over any specific action, including going to school.

TIP #2

Take time to understand the issue.

Try to find out what's causing your child's fears and worries about school. The more information parents and caregivers have on why your child does not want to go to school, the easier it will be to offer support. Try to think of any possible situation or circumstance that might have led to your child not wanting to be in school.

TIP #3

Be committed to the idea that staying home is not an option.

It can be really important to make it clear to your child that not going to school is not an option. For most kids, the more absences they have, the harder it is to get them back into class. Getting them to school is one of the most important strategies, even if they do not stay for the entire day.

TIP #4

Try a scaffolding approach to get your child back to school.

If your child/teen has already missed many days, it might be unrealistic to expect them to go back to attending full-time all at once. Instead, try a scaffolding approach and slowly work your child up to going back to school for the full day. For example, the first step might be to start driving by the school with your child. Then, have them agree to attend their most favorite two classes.

TIP #5

Connect with the school.

It can be very helpful to share with school officials that your child has a mental health challenge. That way, teachers and administration will better understand the need for some of the accommodations your child might need to reengage with the school routine.

PCMH PARENT TIP:

Success in school is not getting straight A's, it is a period in your child's life that we hope can be meaningful for them, but we know can be a challenge. The goal is to attend school with consistency, navigating the social environments without feeling overwhelmed with anxiety. School is not everyone's favourite place. We hope it can be a safe place, a space where they have a positive experience and a starting point for kids/youth to venture into adulthood with the skills to set their own path.

For more back-to-school resources and tips, visit family.cmho.org.

CMHO

www.cmho.org/findhelp

Find Help

Children's Mental Health Ontario has 4,000 child and youth mental healthcare workers across Ontario ready to help parents and their children. Depending on your needs, we can connect you to child mental health professionals that will most help you and your family, including psychiatrists, therapists, and psychologists.