

Approaches

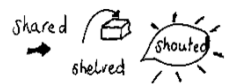
- Supporting the child to **learn about anxiety and ways to manage** their own worries and anxieties. This may involve approaches underpinned by CBT principles (See [Appendix 12a](#)) as well as exploring a range of anxiety management tools (See [Appendix 13](#)). Involvement of parent carers and school staff in this learning has been found to boost the effectiveness of an intervention (Heyne et al, 2002).
- Regular contact and **communication between the child, family and school**, including the use of virtual, online check-ins
- Identification of a **key adult/s** who can be available and accessible. There is a wealth of evidence demonstrating the benefits of an emotionally supportive Teacher-child relationship. As Bomber (2007) summarises 'In schools, we can best ...enable children to engage in education, by valuing the importance of relationship in all the work we do with them.'
- Ensuring a **sense of normality** and consistency when the CYP is in school and avoid asking where the child has been.
- Working with the child and family to create a **Monday morning plan** which provides the best possible transition into school. If the child is able to attend school on a Monday, they are more likely to be successful at attending school later in the week so it's vital to consider the extra steps that could be taken by the student, the family and the school to enable the child to attend. Many families start the plan on a Sunday evening to support the child in getting a good night's sleep.
- Identification of a **safe space** (for some children, rooms such as the school library or a pastoral area can be less stigmatising than a learning support base).
- Tailoring the **support and guidance offered to parent carers** to the individual needs of the family. Some parents may welcome training in implementing strategies to prevent the reinforcement of avoidance behaviours; others may be keen to learn more about relaxation techniques or establishing positive sleep and morning routines. Parents of younger children may benefit from the Timid to Tiger programme led by MAST and supported by CAMHS for parents of children aged 3 to 11, who present with anxiety. The WeHeartCBT website offers resources for parents including a three session guide to help managing your child's worries. Visit <https://weheartcbt.com/for-parents>
- A warm, **friendly** and well planned arrival and **welcome to school**. For the anxious child, first contact is very important. Support the child so that they experience a sense of welcome and belonging whenever they attend. Consider what the child may have already experienced that morning before reaching the school entrance. Front line staff such as the reception team may be the first faces the child sees so ensure these staff are involved in the support plan and understand the importance of their role. Work with the child and family to ensure there is a plan in place for dropping off and arrival in to school considering who will meet the child, what activities they will engage in and how the transition to school can be eased. Involve the child, talk to them about how the start of the school day could be changed for them to support their worries and anxieties.
- A **signal** for when the child feels overwhelmed. Work with the child to help them to recognise what happens in their body before they feel overwhelmed and together agree a signal or a response, such as showing a card which let the adults know how the child is feeling.



- Regular opportunities for the child to **reset**. Build in moments through a child's day when they can emotionally regulate and restore a sense of control and calm. Resetting activities could include a walk outside, mindfulness, colouring or listening to a song.
- **Home Visits**. Frequent home visits can be used to build positive relationships, teach anxiety management techniques or deliver an intervention matched to the CYP's needs. Where home visits cannot take place regularly, links can still be maintained through telephone conversations or video calls.
- Supporting the child and family to learn about **healthy lifestyle behaviours**, such as diet, exercise, sleep routine and environment and how these can contribute to emotional well-being.
- Ensuring **homework** is shared, marked and that feedback is provided is also important in supporting the CYP to know that they still belong and are part of the school community.
- Enable **readiness for learning**. A child who is experiencing EBSA may arrive in a heightened state of anxiety and could benefit from support to help them move to a state more conducive to learning. Some tips for how to manage anxiety on arrival are shared in the Anxiety Management tools in Appendix 17.



Knightsmith (n.d.) suggests that this anxiety can be either 'shared, shelved or shouted'. In sharing their anxiety, the CYP may talk to an adult or write/draw in a journal or diary. 'Shelving' the anxiety involves making an appointment to worry later. In this case, the adult verbally recognises that the CYP has worries and agrees that they will talk about them later in the day, as the current focus is getting ready for class. 'Shouting' the anxiety is a way of releasing the increased energy generated through heightened feelings of anxiety. This could include stamping, jumping or screaming into a cushion.



- **Personalised timetable** including possible staggered start and end times to avoid potentially anxiety-provoking situations. For some children who find attending school during the busy school day overwhelming, it may be helpful to offer them opportunities to come into school at a quieter time, either before other pupils arrive or after home time. These sessions can support the child to feel more comfortable in the school environment and can also be used so staff can share if any adaptations to the school environment have been made based on the CYP's views. Once the child feels more comfortable in the school building, gradual steps can be taken with the CYP to build up their time in school.
- A focus on building the CYP's **confidence, self-esteem and value**, for example through giving roles of responsibility.
- Ensuring that the CYP feels that their feelings around the difficulties in getting to school are **believed** by the adults around them.
- A **solution-focused approach which focuses on the future and the CYP's aspirations**: There are many ways to do this including the Miracle Question activity. See [Appendix 14](#) for information about using Miracle Question with a CYP to both ascertain a young person's view and to help them to find solutions to their problems.
- **A clear, predictable and consistent environment**. Creating a sense of safety is important for all students and staff but is especially important for children experiencing anxiety. Ensure the child knows what to expect and when throughout the day; a visual timetable or a first / then board can be useful to support this. Social stories are another way of providing a child with structure. For students with autism predictability can be especially pertinent and consideration should be made as to whether a sensory audit should be carried out and whether suitable adaptations to their environment are necessary.

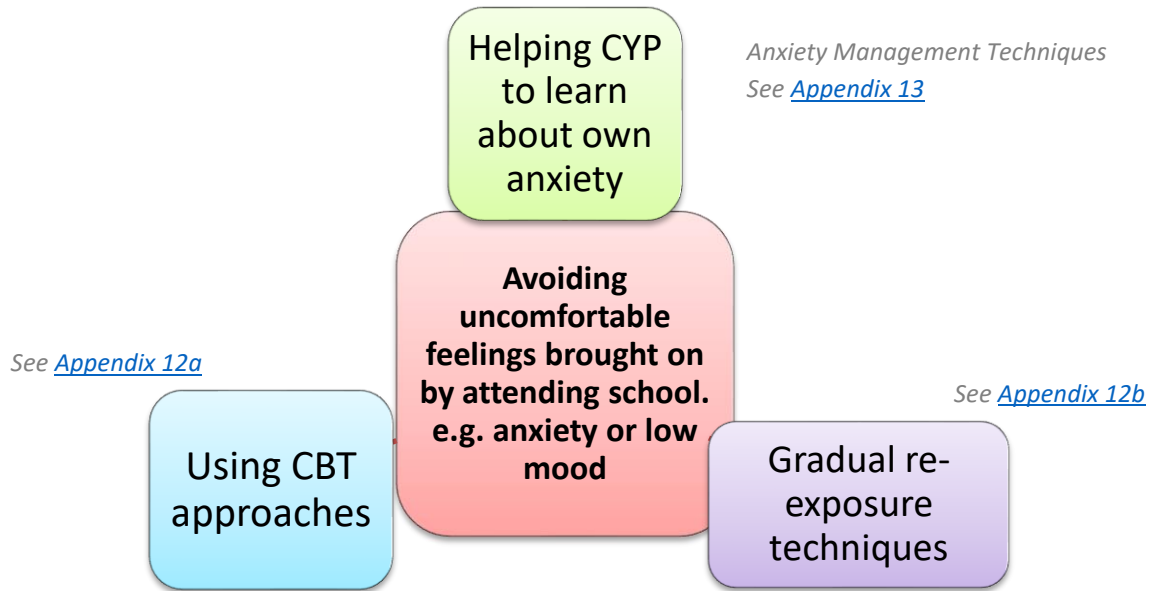


Approaches based on the function of the school avoidance behaviour

Different functions will require a different approach and in some situations a variety of approaches will be needed focusing on the school, family and the child.

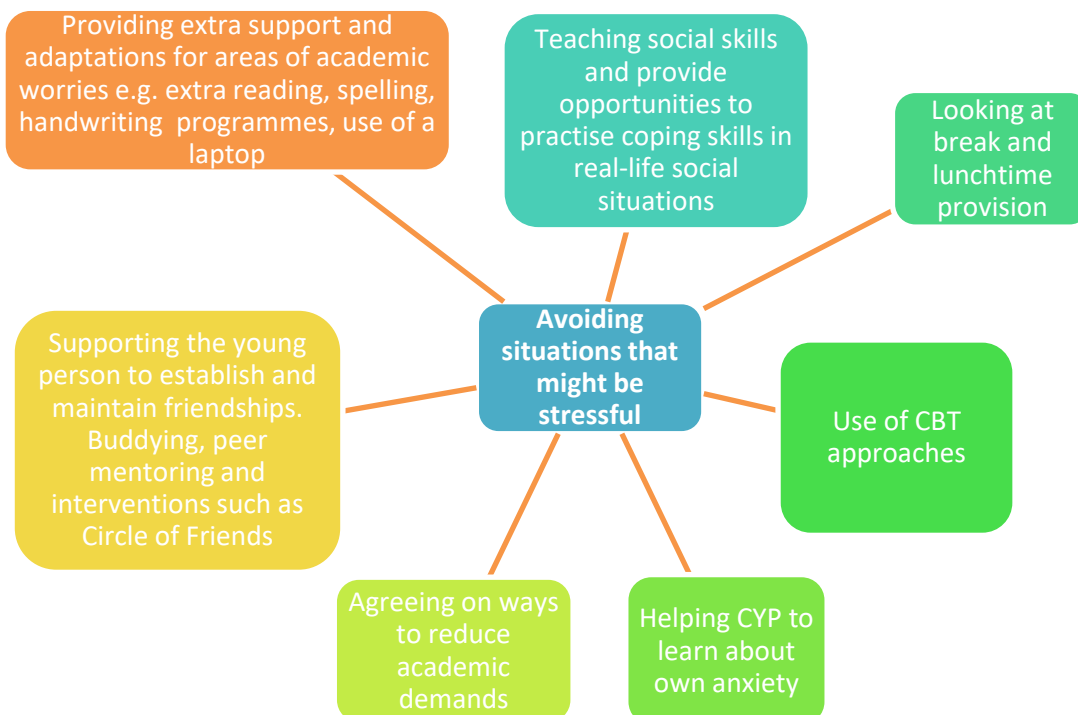
Function: To avoid uncomfortable feelings brought on by attending school

If the function of the child's behaviour for avoiding school is to avoid uncomfortable feelings brought on by attending school (anxiety, stress or low mood), interventions could also involve:



Function: To avoid situations that might be stressful

If the function of the child's behaviour for avoiding school is to avoid situations that might be stressful (academic demands, social pressures and/or aspects of the school environment), interventions could also involve:



Function: To reduce separation anxiety or to gain attention

If the function of the child's behaviours for avoiding school is **to reduce separation anxiety or to gain attention from significant others** (parents or family members), additional interventions could involve work with the parents to support them in developing skills and techniques in:

- Establishing morning routines
- Managing school avoidance behaviours such as tantrums and physical/somatic complaints
- Problem-solving
- Focusing on positive behaviours

Healthy Minds Sheffield

Further information and a poster on Separation Anxiety can be found at

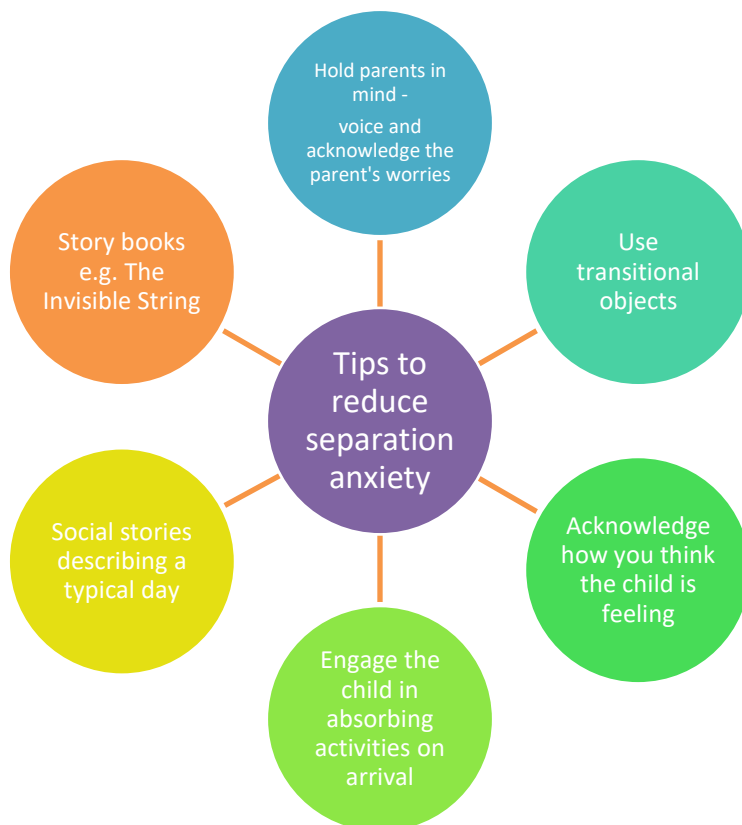
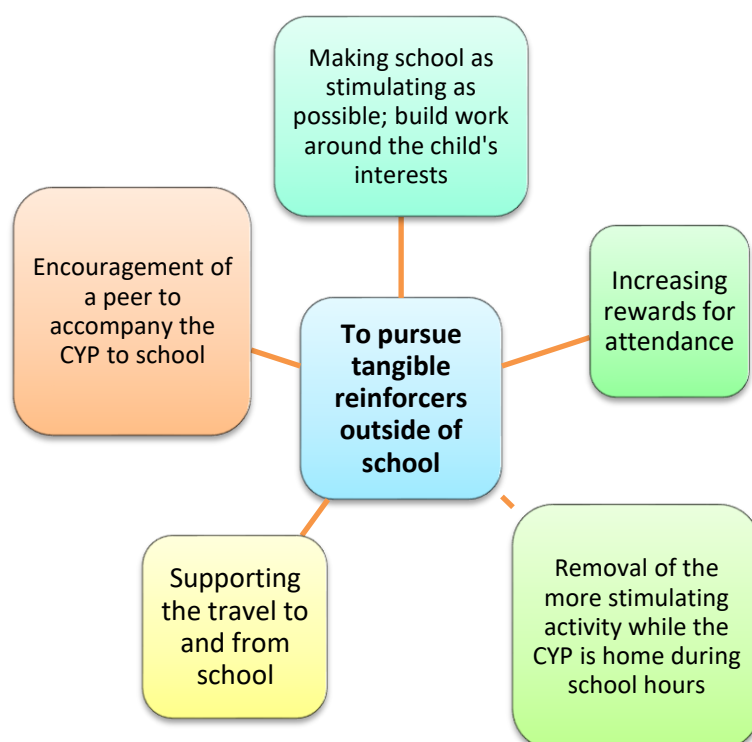
<https://www.learnsheffield.co.uk/Covid-19>

Social stories

Information on social stories can be found on Carol Gray's website <https://carolgraysocialstories.com> and the book: The Invisible String by Patrice Karst is available to buy from many retailers. Sheffield EPS and Autism Team can also support with social stories.

Function: To pursue tangible reinforcers outside of school

If the function of the child's behaviour for avoiding school is **to pursue tangible reinforcers outside of school** (going shopping or playing computer games during school time), additional interventions could involve:



Approaches Task Instructions

Breakout room 1 : Read pages 1 & 2

Breakout room 2: Read pages 3&4

Breakout room 3 : Read pages 1 & 2

Read through your section of the approaches document

Decide in your groups which approaches may be worth including in a support plan for Alison

Give consideration to the pros and cons of the approach

Be prepare to feedback and justify the use of an approach to the group