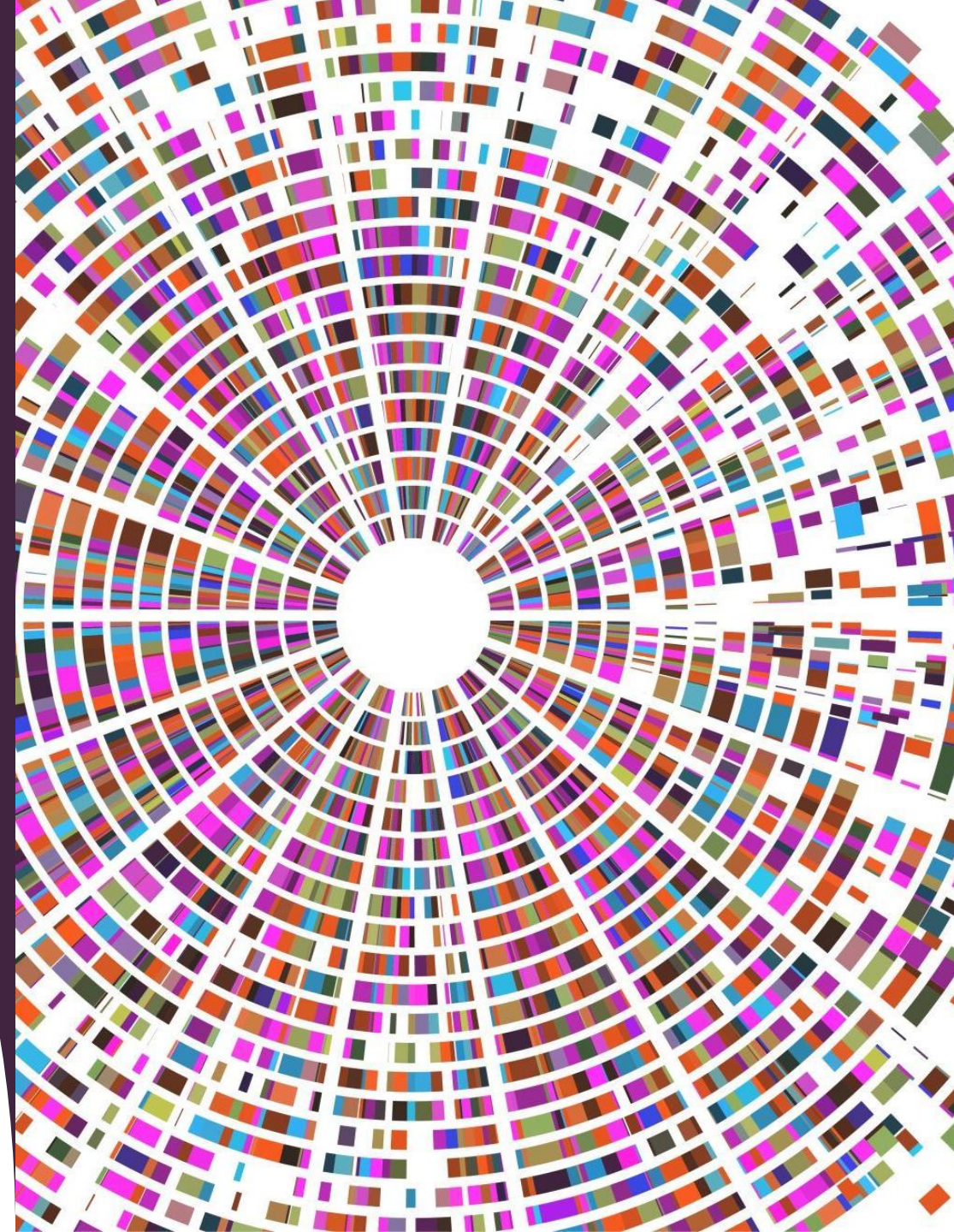


# **Emotionally Based School Avoidance(EBSA)**

Parents Workshop







Welcome


# Facilitator Introduction



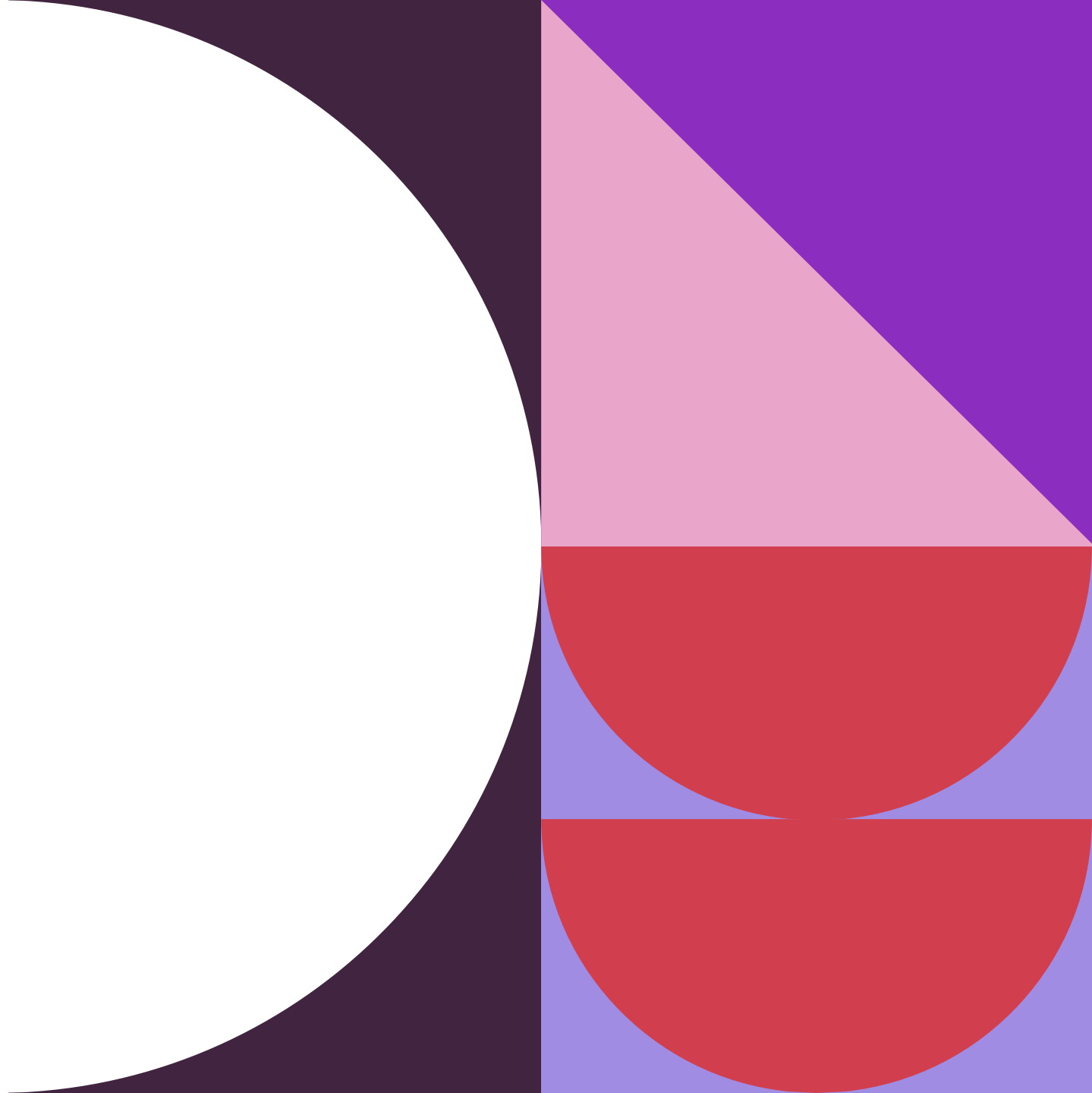
# Schedule

- 09:10 – Tea & Coffee
- 09:30 – 09:45 – Welcome & Introduction
- 09:45 – 10:40 – What is EBSA, Risk & Protective Factors
- 10:40 – 10:55 – Break
- 10:55 – 11: 15 - Initial Signs of EBSA
- 11:15 – 12: 15 – Responding to EBSA
- 12:15 – 12:30 – Feedback - "Share one takeaway" & Evaluation Form

# Workshop Content

- What is Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)
  - Difference between EBSA and poor attendance/truancy
  - Risk Factors for EBSA
  - Protective Factors for EBSA
  - Initial Signs of EBSA
  - How to Respond to EBSA
  - Support Available to Parents
- 
- A large, solid red curved shape that starts from the bottom right corner and sweeps upwards and to the left, partially obscuring the bottom right of the slide.

**WHAT IS EBSA**






<https://www.wexfordcypsc.ie/emotionally-based-school-avoidance-ebsa-resource-pack>




EBSA Steering Group  
Resource Pack Launch May 2023




### Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA) Resource Pack for Co. Wexford

A collaboration between Wexford CYPSC, Barnardos, CAMHS, CFSN, FDYS, HSE, IPPN, NAPD, NEPS, SCP, TESS, WxCCC, WWETB & YNR



Wexford

[www.wexfordcypsc.ie](http://www.wexfordcypsc.ie)





# What do you know about EBSA





# What is EBSA

---

EBSA is a broad umbrella term used to describe a group of children and young people who have **severe difficulty** in attending school due to **emotional factors**, often resulting in **prolonged absences** from school

---

There is **no single cause** for EBSA and there are likely to be **various contributing factors** for why a child may be finding it difficult to attend school.

---

EBSA is a **complex** issue

---

Each child and situation is **unique**.

---

Some factors are complex and **interlinked** (young person, family and school)

# What is EBSA

---

Students experiencing EBSA may experience a **range of difficulties** beyond school.

---

EBSA negatively impacts **academic attainment** and leads to **fewer social** and, eventually, **employment opportunities** in adult life

---

**Links** have also been made **between EBSA** and significant adult **mental health difficulties**, including depression and anxiety without intervention

---

In addition, there may be some association between **suicidal thoughts** and school attendance



## **What is EBSA**

---

No links between **EBSA** and **gender**- affects girls and boys equally

---

No link between **EBSA** and **socioeconomic status**- all types of families

---

**EBSA prevalence** is **higher** amongst **secondary-aged students** with rises around **periods of transition** between school phases

---

Onset of EBSA may be **sudden** or **gradual**.

# Difference Between EBSA and Poor Attendance/Truancy

---

There is a **difference** between students who are **absent** from school due to **truancy** and those who struggle with school attendance due to **EBSA**

---

**Truancy** is **unexplained absences** from school for no good reason- this can lead to Educational Welfare Officer involvement.

---

**Truancy** can be **with or without** parental knowledge

---

**Parental condoned truancy** is when parents **know** their child is **not going** to school and they **allow** it.





# Difference Between EBSA and poor attendance/Truancy



Young people experiencing EBSA can be **highly anxious** and show **significant distress** about attending school



Despite this they often **remain engaged with education** and **want to return** to school even though they feel unable to do so.



Young people choosing **not to attend**( Truancy) generally **do not stay engaged** with school



Important that **EBSA is not used as a label** to justify not going to school /Truancy

# Four main reasons for EBSA

1. To **avoid** negative feelings provoked by school-related stimuli.
2. To **escape** from social aversion and evaluation, often to avoid being rejected or disliked.
3. To gain **attention** from significant others, e.g., parents.
4. To seek **tangible reinforcers** outside of the school setting, such as going shopping or playing computer games during school time.

1



Avoid situations  
that evoke  
negative affect

2



Escape from  
aversive social  
situations

3



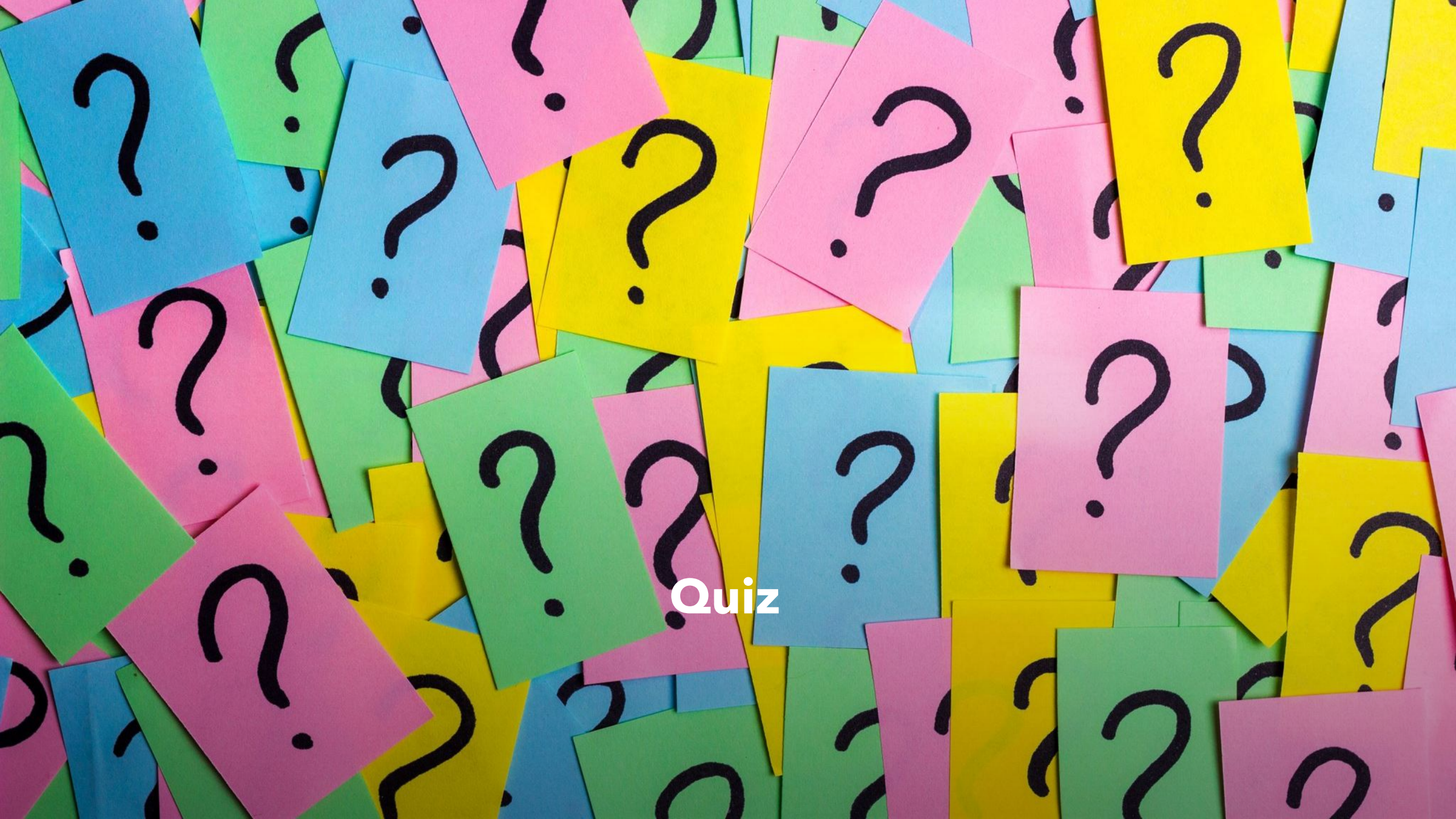
Reduce  
Separation Anxiety

4



Rewarding  
experiences at home

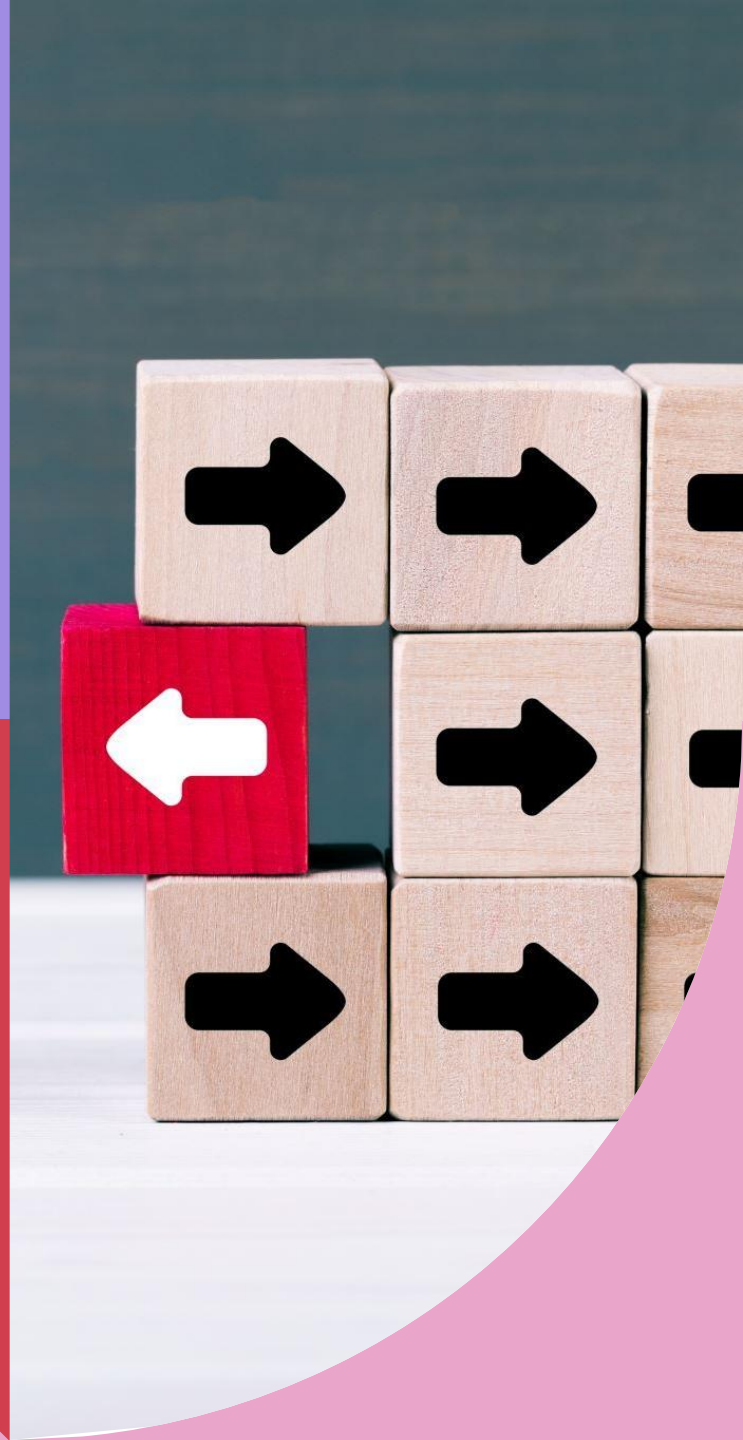




Quiz



# **Risk and Protective Factors**



# Risk Factors

Individual

Family

School

Community



# Individual

- **Family dynamic**

Parents relationship and involvement in child's life- over or under involved

Attachment styles

ACES

- **Learning needs**

Some evidence suggests children with learning needs are at risk of EBSA particularly ASD

- **Social Personal**

Friendship issues

Poor sleep hygiene

Poor diet and nutrition

- **Psychological wellbeing**

Temperament

Lack of resilience

Mental health diagnosis

Identity issues

# Family

- **Parental mental health/substance use**

Parents own energy/ motivation can be low if experiencing these issues

Young person can also be worried about parent or other siblings

- **Parenting Style and family transitions**

Parenting style can result in school withdrawal which is a significant risk factor for EBSA.

Separation, bereavement and parental conflict can place extra stress in home

- **Parents educational experiences**

If parent has had poor experiences with schooling/no education they may not value education which can impact on students desire to attend/ fear of being different

- **Cultural differences**

Members of travelling community

Minority groups



# School

- Lack of Knowledge EBSA and Wellbeing

Training for teachers to be aware of issues is needed

- Not reviewing attendance regularly

Staff may not have time to review early

- Bullying
- Common reason why young person may fear school
- Transitions

Move to secondary school / junior to senior cycle

Pressure to achieve academically

Feeling of being overwhelmed

- Relationship difficulties
- With teachers and/or peers
- Journey to school

How do they get to school

Any fears to face ?

Arriving late- creates anxiety for some

# Community

- Antisocial behaviour
- Feeling of judgement by peers on community
- Criminality
- Fearful within community/worried about family members

- Wealth and Social Status
- Pressure to meet high standards can overwhelm
- Inconsistent professional advice.
- Early intervention/community supports not clear in best ways to support young person

# Protective/resilience Factors

Individual

Family

School

Community



# Individual



Developing ambition, aspiration and motivation



Increasing confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, value in themselves



Developing feelings of safety, security and a sense of belonging



Having positive experiences where they can succeed.



Holding positive relationships with peers or staff



Feeling listened to and understood.



Emotional Literacy



Coping Skills



# Family

Development of parenting skills and understanding of EBSA



Partnership with schools



Participating in support groups for EBSA



Strong relationships and connection with children

## **School**

---

Trauma Informed Approaches

---

Pastoral care teams

---

Key adult in school

---

Enforcement of anti-bullying  
strategies Collaboration with parents

# Community



Safety of neighbourhood



Availability/adequacy of  
health and other services



Availability of jobs and career  
paths for future

# Signs of EBSA



## Signs of EBSA

I DON'T WANT TO GO TO  
SCHOOL! I HATE SCHOOL!  
I'D RATHER DO ANYTHING  
THAN GO TO SCHOOL





A circular icon with a grey-to-white gradient, featuring a stylized profile of a person's head and shoulders.

# Initial Signs of EBSA



## **How to Respond**

# Content

Active  
Listening

Connecting  
with my  
Teenager

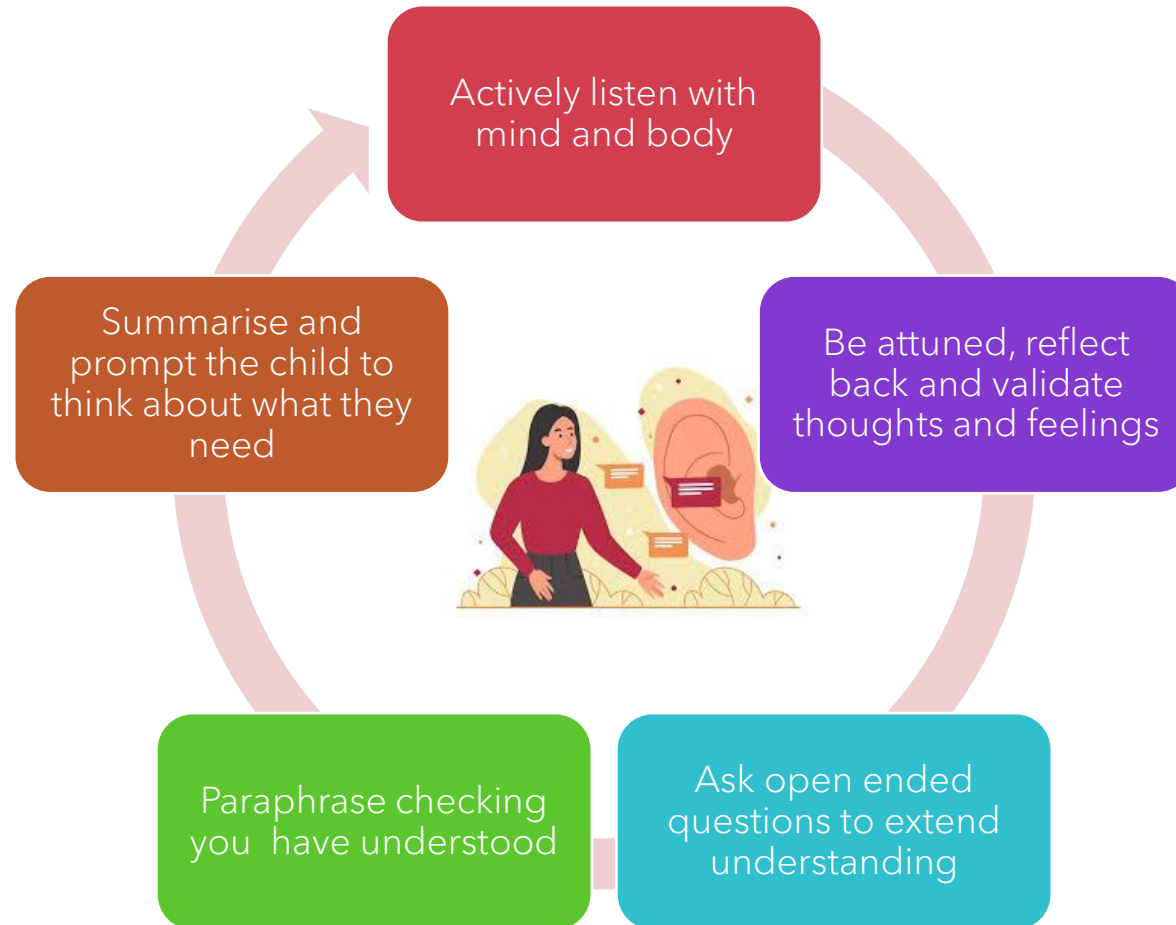
Wheel of  
Change

Push and  
Pull factors

EBSA Cycle

What can  
you do

# Active Listening



# Best time to Actively Listen and Connect

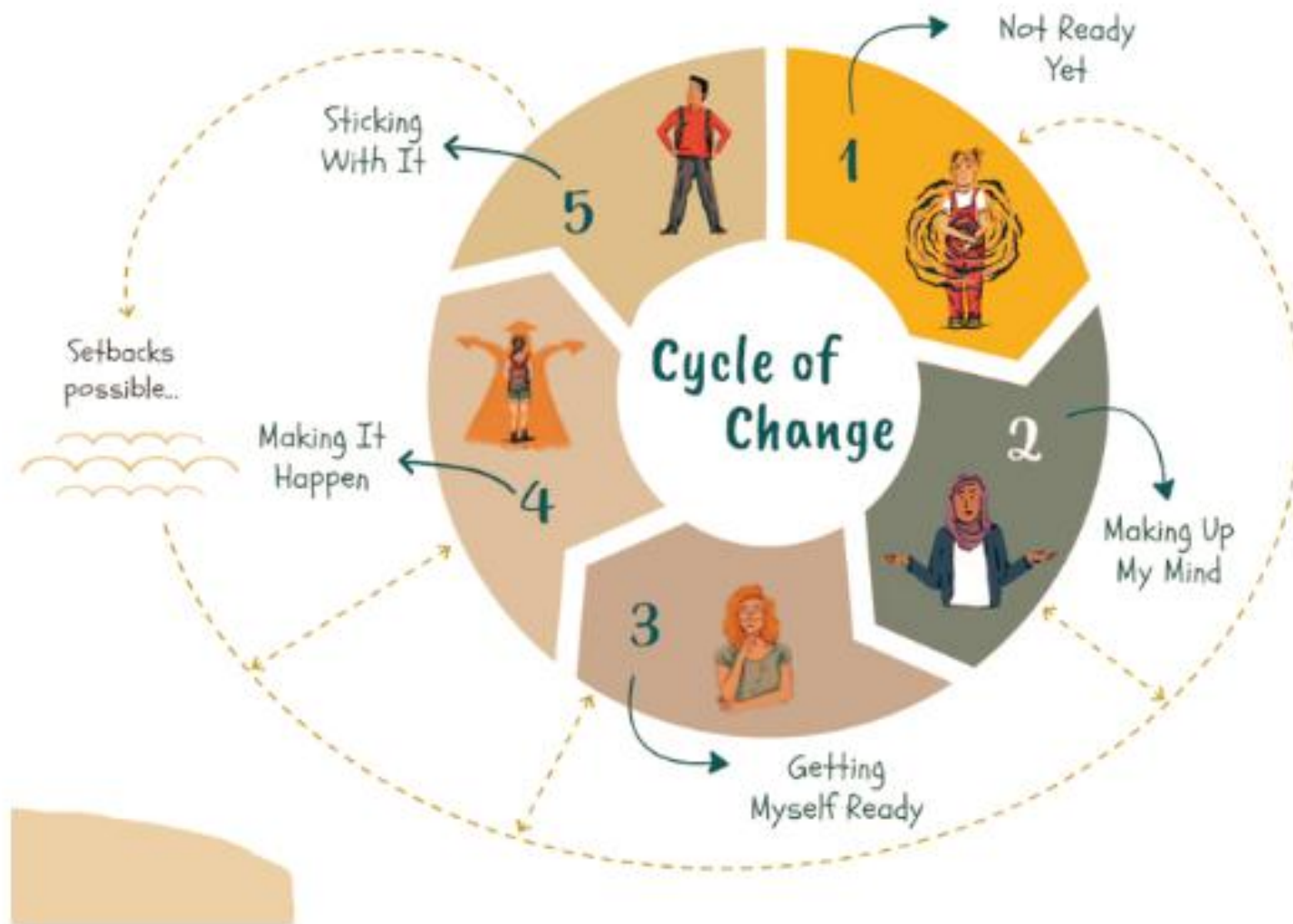
- When is your time to connect and listen to your teenager?

## Some Examples

- In the car
- On walk
- Sharing an activity



# Cycle of change- where is your young person?





# NOT READY YET- GOAL CREATE SPACE for Change

01	Rapport	Build rapport,listen to resistance and roll with it- empathise but don't collude!
02	Exploring change	Acknowledge the disadvantage of change and the distress that thoughts around change can bring. Explore the barriers of change
03	Exploring strengths	Explore their wider strengths, interests and aspirations for the future - shine a light on these!
04	Preferred future	Help them to develop an alternate and preferred future, see that things can be better or different
05	Future Orientated	Emphasis the preferred future, bring it to the forefront of their mind
06	Exceptions	Identify exceptions - are there aspects of the preferred future that are already happening?
07	Here and now	Change talk focussed on exploring ambivalence towards change in the 'here and now'

# Making MY MIND up- Goal resolve ambivalence

01	Explore ambivalence	Empathise, tolerate and explore ambivalence for change
02	Balance	Support them to balance reasons for changing and not changing (Pro/Cons activity)
03	Highlight discrepancies	Sensitively highlight discrepancies (e.g. between the 'preferred future' and the 'here and now')
04	Explore exceptions	Explore exceptions that are in favour of the preferred future/Times when change is happening
05	Curiosity	Be curious about previous changes and the internal and external resources that made this possible
06	Hope	Instil hope that change is possible

# Getting myself ready/making it happen- Goal - moving towards making a decision

01	Importance of change	Support them to explore the importance of the change
02	Readiness for Change	Offer support in a non-directive way - get their views on what would be helpful to facilitate change
03	Setting goals	Set small realistic goals with them
04	Barriers	Monitor and plan for potential barriers to change
05	Strengths	Identify strengths to support the barriers to change
06	Emphasise positives	Emphasis the positives and look for exceptions - when change is happening/ has happened

# Sticking with it- Goal encourage commitment to change

01	Change plan	Create a change plan with them/school
02	Consider challenges	Acknowledge circumstances that may make maintenance challenging and consider additional support
03	Setbacks	See setbacks as a learning opportunity and an opportunity to build resilience
04	Triggers/barriers	Help to evaluate triggers/barriers - how the setback occurred, what they might be do differently next or what additional support do they need
05	Revisiting	Revisit commitment to change and what they have achieved so far return to change ASAP

## EBSA over time...



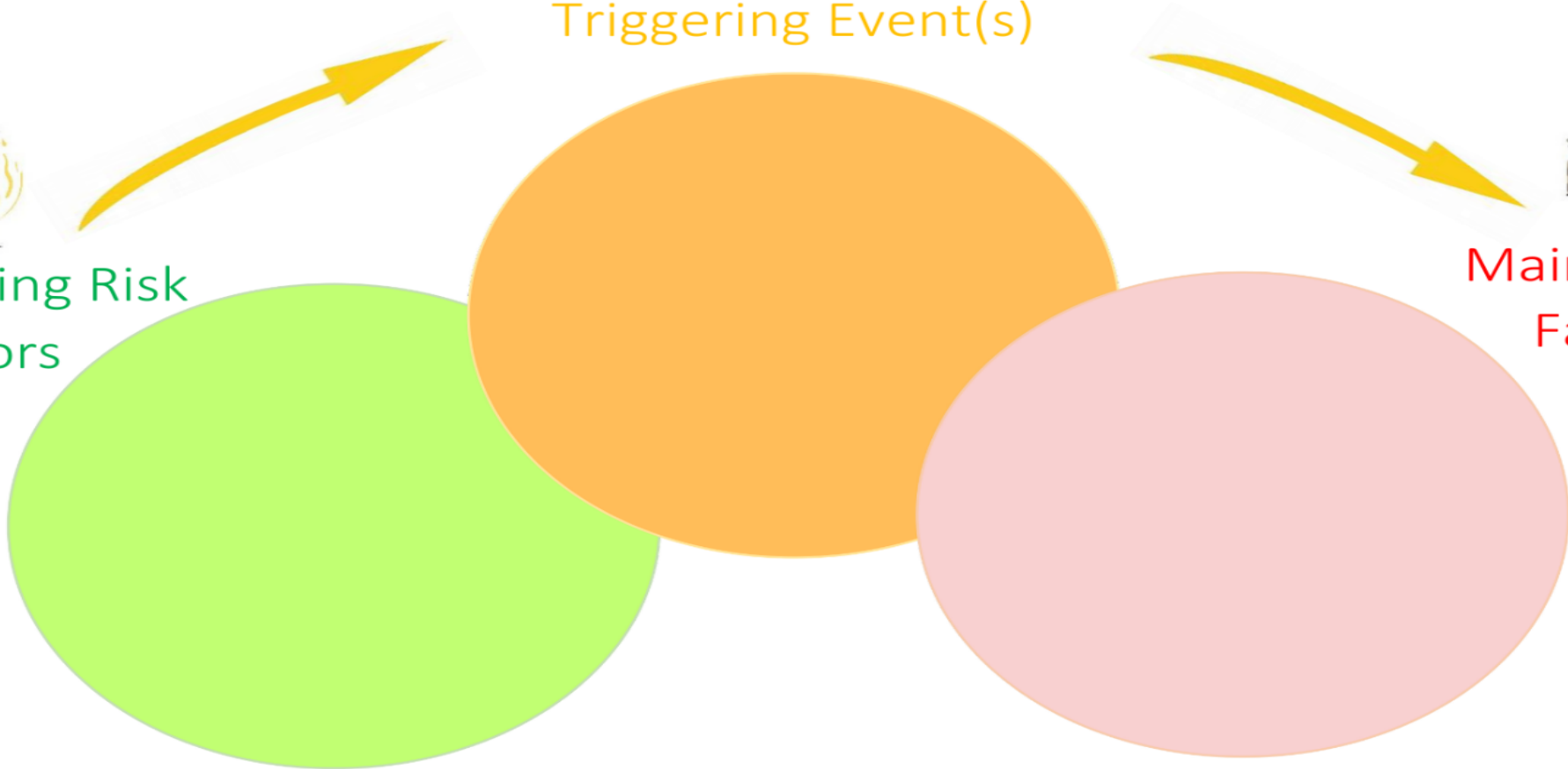
Triggering Event(s)



Predisposing Risk  
Factors



Maintenance  
Factors



- Case study 1 Ann
- Ann is in first year and has 2 younger siblings, one in primary school and a baby sister who is at home with mam. Ann moved from a small country primary school to a large town school. Four of Ann's friends from primary school went to the same school but they are all in different classes. Ann was excited about going to secondary school but did tell her parents that she was a bit nervous talking to new teachers and getting into trouble. At the end of September Ann forgot her book for English class, the English teacher put a note into her diary and told her it is important to be prepared for class. Ann didn't want to tell her parents about the note as she was afraid she might get in more trouble. Ann was finding it difficult dealing with the fact that she got in trouble and it began to affect her sleep. Ann was tired in the mornings and would tell her mam that she was feeling sick. Ann's mam would then let her stay at home and Ann got to spend a lot of time with her baby sister and her mam, Ann would rest in the sitting room with her baby sister a lot while her mam did jobs around the house. Ann really enjoyed this extra time with her baby sister and felt she was helping her mam. Each school morning Ann claimed to be sick, when her mam questioned her she began to get angry with her mam and began refusing to go to school.....

- Case Study 2 Brian

- Brian is in 2nd year and has just moved to a new secondary school. He did first year in a different school in another county. His Dad has got a new job so they needed to move. Brian enjoyed first year in his previous school, it was a small secondary school, lots of his friends from primary school went there. Brian is now finding it difficult to make friends in his new school. He feels that no one likes him and that they are slagging his accent. Brian spends a lot of time on his phone and xbox because he is trying to stay in contact with his old friends. Brian's dad is aware that he is spending a lot of time on his devices but when he tries to reduce time Brian gets angry that he took him away from his friends and then he feels guilty. Brian's dad leaves home for work early and Brian gets the bus to school. Brian's dad is receiving texts from the school several days to say that Brian is not in school. Brian's dad talks to him and finds out that Brian is staying in bed and playing his xbox online with his new friends from America. Brian is refusing to go to school because no one likes him.....



- Case Study 3 Cathy

- Cathy is in 3rd year. Cathy is currently living in foster care because her mother has addiction issues and is in a treatment centre. Cathy has been able to stay in the same school as her foster family lives close to her school but her younger siblings are with a different foster family. Cathy is very worried about her mam and her siblings. Her foster parents are very understanding and will get updates often for Cathy, they spend a lot of time talking with Cathy and are often telling her that they understand why it is so difficult for her to attend school. The foster mother once even said ' if I were you I wouldn't be able to go to school with all I'm dealing with'. Cathy enjoys this time and attention and gets alot of it during the school day when the other children are at school. Cathy's foster mother has brought her out for hot chocolate and cakes on the days that she is finding school too difficult to cheer her up.....

- Case Study 4 David

- David is in 2nd year, when he was in first year his mam was diagnosed with cancer. David's mam has finished treatment but is still very weak. When his mam was going through treatment they got a lot of support from extended family. This has now stopped and David is worried about his mam being at home on her own. Last week David got sick in school, he vomited outside the bathroom and some of his friends saw him, some laughed and some offered him help. David was sent home from school as he was sick and he spent the next couple of days resting on the sofa with his mam watching movies. The following week David returned to school but after his first class he went to his year head looking to go home stating he was sick. The year head encouraged him to stay as he hadn't been sick and didn't look very sick. David left school at lunchtime, the next day he refused to go back to school and spent the day on the sofa with his mam watching movies.....

- **Case Study 5 Ella**

- Ella is in Transition Year. When Ella was in 6th class primary school she was diagnosed with ASD and generalised anxiety disorder. Ella's secondary school offers a lot of support through their special ed department and Ella was assigned a SNA to support her in school. Ella's parents wanted her to do transition year as they felt the extra year in school would benefit her. Ella wasn't too sure about this choice, she liked that most of her friends were doing TY but she felt a bit anxious about how TY is structured. A couple of weeks into TY the group were going on hiking trip. The morning of the trip Ella was too anxious to go so her mam contacted the school and said she wouldn't be going. The next day when Ella returned to school all her friends were talking about the trip saying how much of a good time it was. Ella felt left out as she wasn't on the trip. She asked her year head to ring home as she had a really bad headache. When Ella's mother collected her she brought her home and made her favourite snack of homemade pizza. Over the next few weeks this became a regular pattern and Ella began getting very stressed on school mornings. Ella found she was unable to get out of bed in the mornings even though she wanted to go to school to see her friends and to attend workshops.....

- Case Study 6 Fergal

- Fergal is in 5th year. The start of secondary school wasn't great for Fergal; he experienced a lot of bullying but it was sorted out between school and home. Fergal's parents supported him a lot to get through the bullying and to not let it impact on him achieving good grades in school. Fergal got good results in his Junior cert and his teachers and family were very proud of him. He is now very focused on getting at least 550 points in his leaving cert and has a study schedule each day as well as his homework. A week before the midterm exams Fergal was sick and missed a week of school. He didn't do his best in his exams, his parents and teachers understood why and told him that they know he is able to do much better. He didn't do very well in his favourite subjects which are maths and science. Fergal is now going into school late in the mornings as he has these subjects first thing. He is now getting lunchtime detentions and stating that he is going to get a job as he doesn't legally have to go to school anymore anyway.....

# Push and Pull Factors (Maintenance factors)

## Push Factors

- Push factors are factors that push the child away from school



## Pull Factors

- Pull Factors are factors that pull the child towards the home



# Push and Pull Factors (opposite)

## Push Factors

- Push factors are factors that make home life during school time less appealing/not comfortable



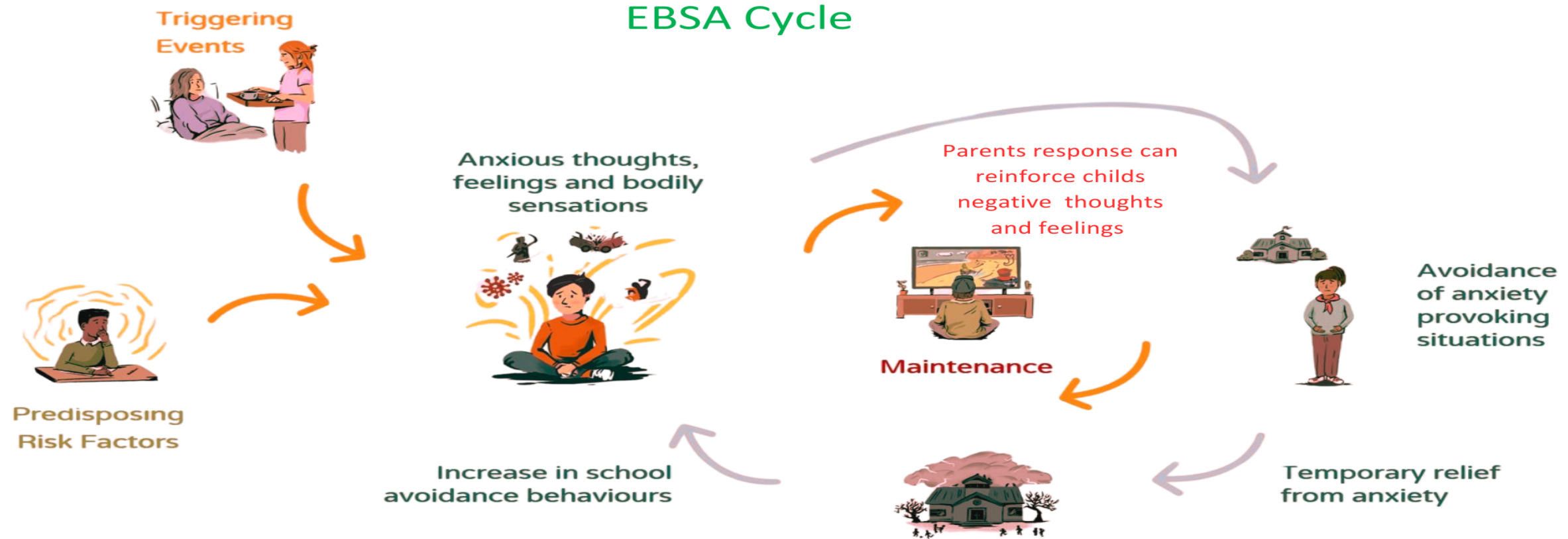
## Pull Factors

- Pull Factors are factors that pull the child towards school





# EBSA cycle



# What can you do



Gradually increase tolerance for time away from you and other care givers



Establish calm and consistent routines in mornings



Visual timetables/contract of agreement- show classes to attend on each day



Try to establish way to have contact when at school e.g. phone call at lunch time



Prepare for return to school – sleep routines, uniform, school bag, locker key etc

# What can you do



Increase incentives and rewards for attending school( positive praise)



Decrease rewards for non attendance ( not punishment)



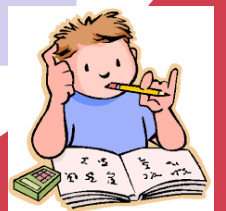
Try to find positives about school eg particular subject they enjoy, friends, sport etc



Limit the use of fun activities when not in schools e.g. no devices until after school hours



Encourage to do school work even when not going (prevents total disconnection)



# What can you encourage your teenager to do

- Help them to understand what EBSA is and how it feels for them
- Help to develop strategies to manage worries eg mindfulness, coping skills
- Role play situations they may find difficult
- Gradually increase demands when attending school
- Help them to build confidence and resilience
- Encourage their friendships
- Explore their strengths and hopes and dreams for future



# Graduated Return to School

- Gradual and graded (small steps)
- Realistic and not overly ambitious
- Maximise opportunity for success at each stage
- Individualised according to specific needs
- Anticipation of areas of difficulty ( have plans to respond)
- Thinking ahead support strategies
- Practised daily



- REACH OUT TO FRIENDS, FAMILY, SCHOOL AND OTHER SERVICES
- DO NOT WORK IN ISOLATION

# Key Questions

- Have I set aside time to sit down and talk about this issue with my child?
- Have I acknowledged their fears and concerns?
- Have I let them know that I understand?
- Have I checked what the issues might be. Try not to jump to conclusions or ask leading questions.
- Have I explained that difficulties happen in life and explained how we cope with them?





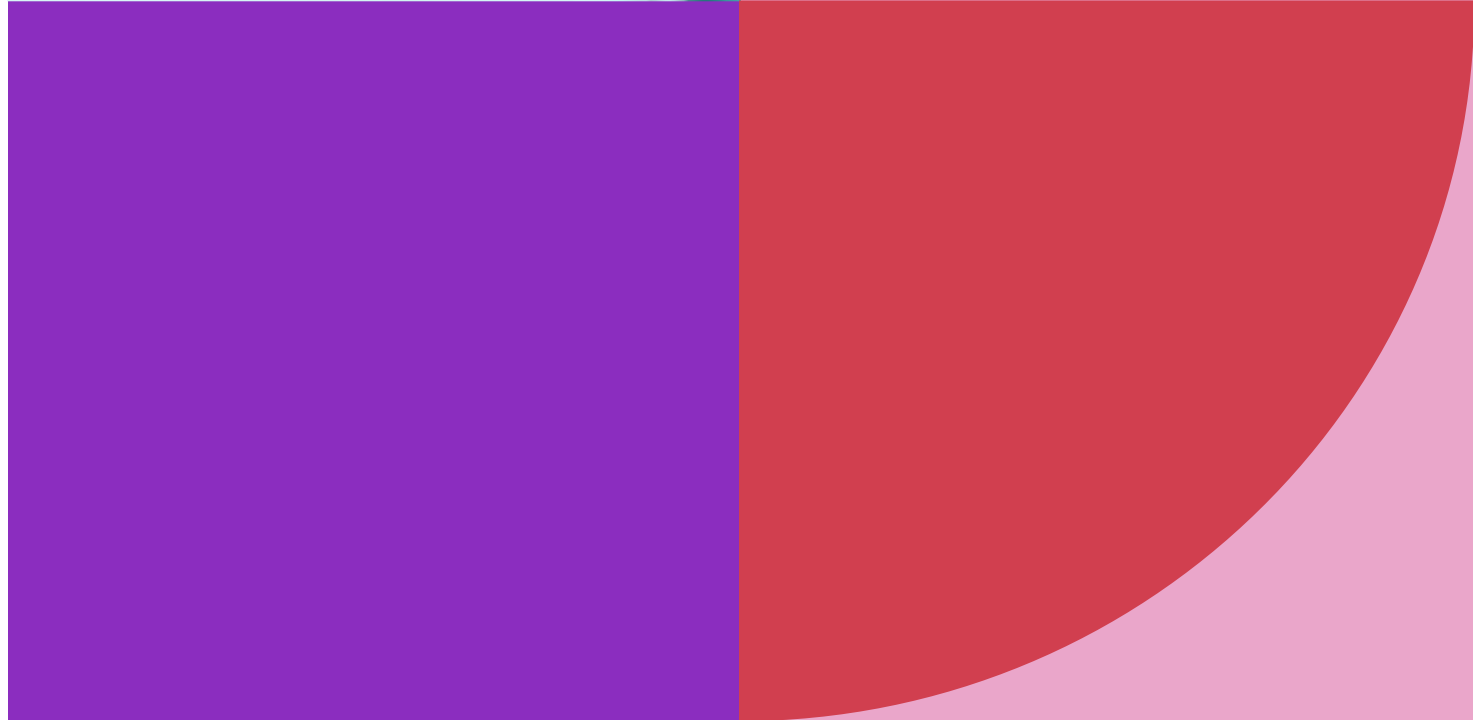
# Key Questions

- Have I developed a plan with my child? -Anticipate that this plan will probably be met with opposition by your child. Be prepared for this. Be reassuring and praise your child's efforts.
- What reasons might there be for my child not wanting to go to school/stay at home?
- How do we return to routine after school holidays or after weekends.
- Who is in my support network ?





**Supports  
Available**



# Supports Available

Prevention, Partnership and Family Support  
(Tusla)

053-9243790 (Sinead Cronin Daly/Sinead  
Joyce)

[www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-  
support/prevention-partnership-and-family-  
support/](http://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/prevention-partnership-and-family-support/)

Barnardos – Family Support Service

053 9236342

[info@wexford.barnardos.ie](mailto:info@wexford.barnardos.ie)

[www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie)

Wexford Parents Hub (Barnardos)

Ger O'Connor – 086 0491118

[wexfordparentshub@barnardos.ie](mailto:wexfordparentshub@barnardos.ie)

Gorey School Completion Programme

Amy Goodison -087 4100792

[Amy.Goodison@scp.ie](mailto:Amy.Goodison@scp.ie)

Gorey Youth Needs (GYNG) – Youth Service

053-9422611

[info@gyng.ie](mailto:info@gyng.ie)

[www.gyng.ie](http://www.gyng.ie)

FDYS – County Wide Youth Service

053-9123262

[www.fdys.ie](http://www.fdys.ie)

# Supports Available Continued

Gorey Family Resource Centre  
053 9489017  
[goreyfrc@gmail.com](mailto:goreyfrc@gmail.com)  
[www.goreyfamilyresourcecentre.ie](http://www.goreyfamilyresourcecentre.ie)

Advocates for Autism  
[afawexford@gmail.com](mailto:afawexford@gmail.com)  
[www.advocatesforautism.ie](http://www.advocatesforautism.ie)

Cottage Autism Network  
087 1035355  
[info@cottageautismnetwork.com](mailto:info@cottageautismnetwork.com)  
[www.cottageautismnetwork.com](http://www.cottageautismnetwork.com)

Dreambig Foundation – Support for  
neurodivergent children  
087 7486842  
[Dreambigfoundation22@gmail.com](mailto:Dreambigfoundation22@gmail.com)

The word "RESOURCES" is rendered in large, white, 3D block letters. It is surrounded by a cluster of colorful squares in shades of blue, green, yellow, orange, and pink. Some of these squares are solid, while others are outlined with dashed lines, creating a dynamic, geometric composition. The background of the top-left corner is a solid purple color.

# RESOURCES

**Resources**

# Sources used

- Halligan, C., & Cryer, S. (2022). Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA): Students' Views of What Works in a Specialist Setting. Continuity in Education, 3(1), pp. 13-24. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5334/cie.38>
- Sheffield Educational Psychology Service (2020 )Emotionally Based School Avoidance Guidance for professionals working with families and young people
- Keppens G., Spruyt B ( 2020) The impact of interventions to prevent truancy: A review of the research literature in Studies in Educational Evaluation, Volume 65, 100840, ISSN 0191-491X, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2020.100840>.
- Wexford EBSA resource pack 2023<https://www.wexfordcypsc.ie/emotionally-based-school-avoidance-ebsa-resource-pack>
- EBSA Horizons

# Additional Resources

- <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/children-families-and-learning/wellbeing-in-education/ebsa-emotionally-based-school-avoidance/ebsa-resources-for-children-and-families>
- <https://positiveyoungmind.com/back-to-school-blues-supporting-school-anxiety-and-reluctant-returners-with-resources-by-dr-tina-rae/>
- <https://www.socialworkerstoolbox.com/emotionally-based-school-avoidance-guide-for-parents/>