**Emotionally based school avoidance:**

Can manifest in:

* A desire to control people and events.
* Difficulty getting to sleep.
* Feeling agitated or angry.
* Defiance and other challenging behaviours.
* Having high expectations for self, including schoolwork & sports.
* Avoiding activities or events (including school).
* Pain like stomach-aches and headaches.
* Struggling to pay attention and focus.
* Intolerance of uncertainty.
* Crying and difficulty managing emotions.
* Over planning for situations and events.
* Feeling worried about situations or events.

Triggers can be related to:

Disability

* Feeling different
* Worrying about using specialist equipment
* Looking different
* Not being able to see or hear what is going on in class
* Not being able to keep up with the pace of the lesson
* Needing extra time to process information
* Not having specialist equipment
* Being forgetful
* Not understanding instructions or being able to give answers
* Not being able to see what peers are doing
* Missing body language of staff/students

Family

* Parents arguing or separated
* Members of your family being unwell
* Changes at home, such as the arrival of a new baby
* Death of someone in the family, including pets
* Feeling no one understands you
* Pressure to do well

School

* Changing school
* Too noisy
* Too many people
* Pressure to achieve your target grades
* Not understanding the class work
* Not getting on with staff
* Worrying about exams

Peers

* Problems with friends
* Worrying about how you look
* Feeing different to other people
* Bullying
* Worrying about getting changed for PE

Negative thoughts

**All-or-nothing** – "everything has to be perfect or else it’s a failure"

**Negative self-labelling**– "I got that question wrong. I’m so stupid."

**Catastrophizing**– "I got a B+ on the test. I’ll probably be held back a grade."

**Minimizing**– "I scored the game winning goal. But anyone could have done it."

**Jumping to conclusions** – "No one is looking at me. They must hate my new shirt."

**Remember these are just thoughts! Not reality.**

1. Identify and question negative thoughts:

* What evidence is there?
* How would someone else see this?
* What advice would I give to someone else?
* Share your thoughts and feelings with an adult or peer you can trust.

**What can help?**

* Speak to your QTVI/ToD or specialist teaching assistant-they are there to support you. They can help you to put strategies in place that will help you manage your school day. They will also speak to school on your behalf.
* Recognising your anxiety-school may assign a key worker or an adult you feel you can talk to so that you can share your feelings with them when you are having a particularly bad day.
* Find a safe space for you to go to
* Talk to your parents for you if you feel you can’t share your feelings with them yourself.
* Make changes to your timetable-give you extra time
* Help you to do your schoolwork
* Help you to build friendships
* Speak with other professionals to get you support