

Approaches to school can't

Part 2: implementing strategies

For teachers of Autistic students experiencing school can't.

After understanding school can't and how it can impact Autistic students, it's important to collaborate with families and care team members. Working collaboratively as a support team means that the most appropriate strategies can be implemented to support Autistic students experiencing school can't.

Speaking to families

Parents and carers may approach the school if their child begins to show signs of school can't. It's important to listen to their experience. Some parents and carers may not know what the causes of the school can't are and will need to work closely with you and the school to work out what is causing their child's stress. Establishing an effective line of communication with parents and carers is essential. This can look like regular meetings and regular communication between meetings.

In secondary school, there may be situations or changes in other classes that are causing the student's stress, or other teachers may notice changes in the student's behaviour. To help manage this, appoint a central person (e.g. coordinator or homeroom teacher) to collaborate with all of the student's teachers so that a comprehensive and holistic approach can be taken.

Maintaining a connection with peers and teachers

One of the most critical approaches to supporting an Autistic student experiencing school can't is maintaining their connection to the school.

- This connection may be maintained via a phone call or video call from the teacher, allowing the student to feel included even if they are not attending or visiting the school.
- The connection may be social, such as speaking to classmates and teachers. For primary school students, it could involve attending an excursion or meeting friends in the playground after school. For secondary school students, it might include attending a preferred subject.

It's important that these connections are positive, and that the student is engaged but not overwhelmed or overloaded by the experience. When supporting students with school can't, any challenges in their day should match their current capacity. This means that the demands placed on the student are within their current capacity to deal with successfully.

For some Autistic students, their capacity may fluctuate, and there will be periods of anxiety and/or absenteeism. For other Autistic students, it can be a gradual journey to build up their capacity and improve their school attendance.



Negotiating reduced hours and attendance

In certain circumstances, it may be appropriate for a student to have a modified timetable, where they attend school for reduced hours over an agreed period. This could include starting school later, finishing school earlier, or leaving school at lunchtime. This should be a short-term measure and be mutually agreed upon by the student's parents/carers and the school.

If the school and family agree that a modified timetable could be a reasonable adjustment to support an Autistic student experiencing school can't, it can be considered as part of a student's re-engagement plan.

Sensory supports

Many Autistic students experience sensory processing differences and report that sensory barriers contribute to school can't. Sensory barriers in the school environment can increase stress and anxiety levels for Autistic students. Implementing sensory processing accommodations in the classroom, such as tools to block sensory input (e.g. ear plugs / headphones) or items that increase pleasant sensory input (e.g. a fidget item) can help reduce stress.

Self-regulation opportunities

Autistic students need opportunities to self-regulate. This helps them to calm themselves and reduce their levels of overwhelm or anxiety. They may require frequent self-regulation breaks or activities throughout the day, either inside or outside, depending on their needs. While breaks can be a useful tool, they may not address underlying triggers or demands contributing to school can't.

Class-wide strategies

Structure and supported change are two key strategies that can help Autistic students thrive in the school environment. Strategies that provide structure, such as schedules, can reduce stress on Autistic students and benefit the whole classroom. Implementing these strategies and supports across the classroom can help to reduce stigma and ensure your Autistic student/s are not singled out.

Interest-based learning

Many Autistic students have a passion or intense interest. A great way to positively engage with an Autistic student is to create projects based on their interests or to integrate their interests into learning activities. This can help motivate the student and also support them through new experiences.

What doesn't work?

Treating school can't as a 'behaviour' does not work and using incentives often fails to address the underlying reason behind the challenge occurring. It's important to understand that forcing an Autistic student who is experiencing school can't to attend school can be dangerous and counterproductive. Any strategies that increase the student's distress will not work. Avoid offering incentives, behaviour charts, forcing attendance, physically removing the child from their parent, or applying punishment.

Remember, it's important to empower Autistic students experiencing school can't. They want to learn and engage with their peers and school community, they just need your support.

Summary

- Some Autistic students may already be working with allied health professionals. Their knowledge and involvement in putting together an approach to support the student can be invaluable when addressing anxiety.
- It's important to work with the student, their family and the school to find out the causes of school can't and collaboratively implement support strategies.

Additional helpful resources

Amaze - [Executive functioning resources for Autistic teens](#)

Amaze - [Creating a positive environment for Autistic people](#)

Amaze - [Teaching an Autistic student](#)

Association for Children with a Disability - [Reasonable Adjustments](#)

Positive Partnerships - [Interest-based learning](#)

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