

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Session for Senior Mental Health Leads, 7.12.22

Dr Josie Bainton, Senior Educational Psychologist

Bath and North East Somerset Educational Psychology Service

Acknowledgement

This training has been heavily informed by the EBSA Horizons course (for Educational Psychologists) by Dr Jerricah Holder and EdPsychEd.

The visuals and ideas have been taken from the training materials to facilitate information sharing and discussion.

There is much more in the EBSA Horizons course that is not covered or even touched upon in today's session.

It is highly recommended that you refer to the EBSA Horizons course (for schools) for more information on this topic

<https://www.edpsyched.co.uk/ebsa-horizons-schools>

EBSA – starting point

What is your knowledge and experience relating to EBSA?

Has EBSA been covered in any formal training you have participated in?

Are children and young people in your setting experiencing EBSA?

Do you directly support children and young people experiencing EBSA?

EBSA – A Definition

Definition by Dr Jerricah Holder:

An umbrella term that describes a group of children and young people who experience significant and enduring challenges in attending school due to emotional factors

A Spectrum of Need

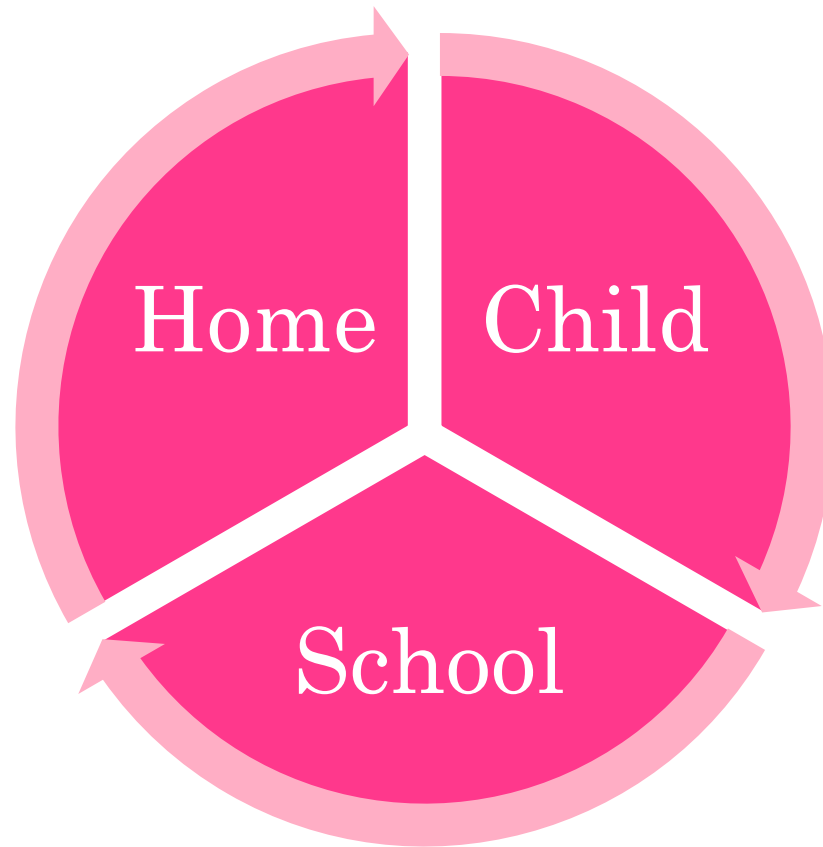


Dr Jerricah Holder & EdPsychEd, citing Thambirajah et al 2008



Dr Jerricah Holder's Integrated Model of EBSA

Understanding the CYP's EBSA: Child, School, Home



Concept taken from Dr Jerricah Holder and EdPsychEd EBSA Horizons materials

Understanding the CYP's EBSA: Push and Pull Factors

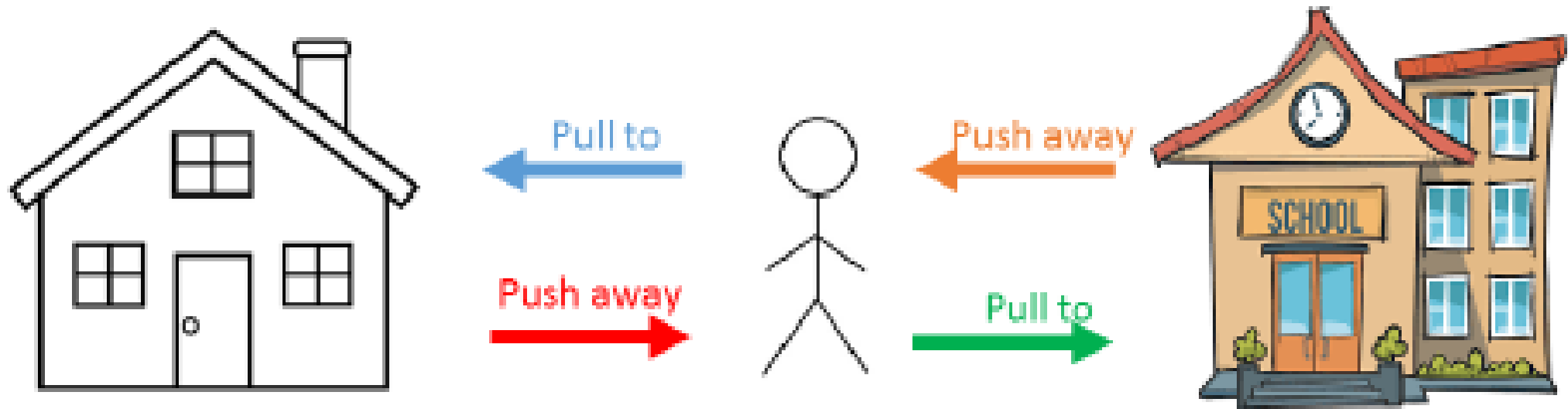


Image taken from Camden's guidance -

<https://www.royalfree.camden.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=378&type=pdf>

Understanding the CYP's EBSA: Key Functions

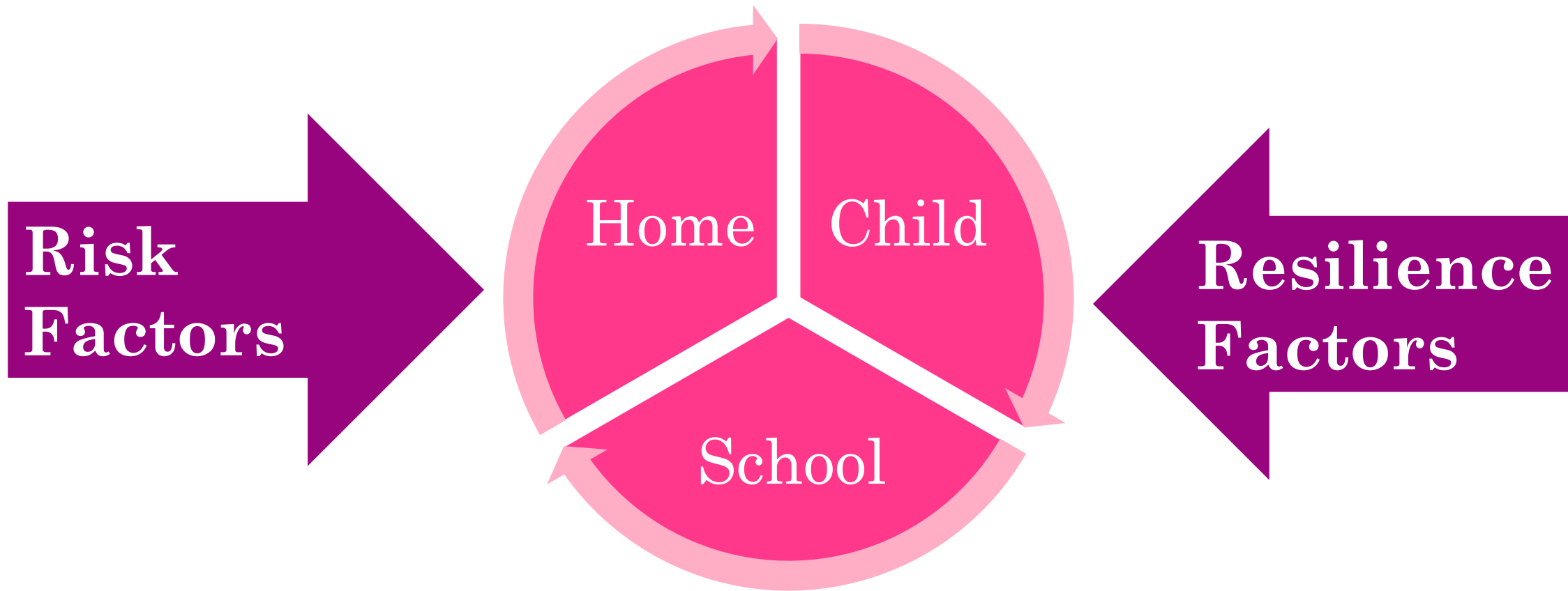
Function 1 – To avoid situations that elicit negative affect or provoke high levels of anxiety, so avoiding school to avoid these unpleasant or uncomfortable feelings.

Function 2 – To escape aversive social situations or negative appraisals by others, so avoiding school to reduce social anxiety or social pressures.

Function 3 – To reduce separation anxiety, so avoiding school to spend time at home with a significant parent/carer or other family members.

Function 4 – To pursue rewarding experiences outside of school, so avoiding school in order to engage in pleasurable activities at home or in the community.

Understanding the CYP's EBSA: Child, School, Home



Concept taken from Dr Jerricah Holder and EdPsychEd EBSA Horizons materials

Important key ideas

- Relationships
 - Attachment
 - Belonging
 - Strengths
 - Recognising positives (gratitude)
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- Also.... Graduated and small step plans!!



School Based Factors

RAG (Red Amber Green) the school environment to review hotspots and areas requiring support, as well as areas that feel more manageable

Targeted support to reduce areas of particularly **high anxiety** e.g. 'meet and greet', peers to walk to school with

Support to **identify positive aspects of school** (e.g. favoured lessons/ teachers) which could provide basis for return

A **'safe space'** to **escape to** when feeling overwhelmed and access to **'calming toolkits'** to aid regulation

Complete a **friendship audit** to review pre-existing friendships as well as friendship opportunities (e.g. Sociograms)

Practical support to develop friendships e.g. Circle of Friends, Buddy systems, lunchtime clubs and structured group activities

Access to **catch up tutoring and pre-teaching** (online or face-to-face) so that the child feels more confident re-entering the classroom

Support the CYP to **prepare a script** that they can use when other children ask them why they have not been attending school

Make a **commitment to connection and belonging** e.g. spend additional time welcoming back, video calls prior to transition, special jobs and responsibilities

Provision of a **secondary attachment figure** - someone the CYP can build a trusted relationship with over time at school



Child Based Factors

Rebalance and dishabituate high stress levels through regular relaxation, sensory breaks, calm starts

Discuss and plan for situations that they find difficult - role play to gain a sense of self-efficacy and build confidence

Explore social anxieties and develop insight into the aspects of social interaction that they find worrying or difficult

Targeted support to develop key social communication and assertiveness skills

Complete the 'Ladder of Strength and Courage' activity with the CYP to empower them to see the small manageable steps to achieve a return to school

Gradually increase duration or complexity of the demand to build a sense of mastery over reduced school avoidance

Behavioural experiments to build confidence and a resilient evidence base of coping and succeeding

Harness existing strengths and interests and explore hopes and dreams for the future

Psychoeducation around anxiety and EBSA, developing the CYPs understanding of their experience of anxiety and school

Developing strategies to manage worries such as deep breathing techniques, mindfulness, CBT and balanced thinking strategies



Home Based Factors

Use of a **visual timetable** to increase predictability and security and clearly indicate when the CYP will see the parent/carer again

Consider small amounts of **contact with parent/carer** throughout the day e.g. allowing phone calls home to check-in with family members

Gradually increase tolerance for **time away from parent/carers** through use of the key adult(s) approach

Establish **calm and consistent routines** for saying goodbye to parent/carer ahead of the home-to-school transition

Make use of **'transitional objects'** that represent their parent/carers are holding them in mind even though they are not physically present

Give the child **time to prepare for a return to school**; getting back into sleep routines, trying on school uniform, organising school bag, practicing the walk to school etc

Increase **incentives and rewards** for attending school and decrease rewards for non-attendance

Try to **increase the appeal of school** e.g. utilise the child's interest, start with a favoured subject area or a particular teacher, and shine a light on positives

If possible, **limit use of fun activities** e.g. no computer games until after school hours and increased focus on educational orientated tasks during the day

Home-School projects which span across environments so that the CYP has a **sense of continuity** even on days when they do not feel able to attend

Discussions

- What factors are there relating to your setting that might be a risk factor for some children and young people experiencing EBSA?
- What factors are there relating to your setting that might be resilience factors?
- Where can your setting “flex” to help children and young people experiencing EBSA?

Signposting for BANES

Rapid Intervention Team

<https://mentoringplus.net/getting-someone-help/rapid-intervention-team>

<https://livewell.bathnes.gov.uk/special-educational-need-or-disability-send/education>

CAMHS Mental Health Support Team (for schools):

<https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/banes/mhst/>

Resources

EBSA Horizons School Training by Dr Jerricah Holder and EdPsychEd

<https://www.edpsyched.co.uk/ebsa-horizons-schools>

Book: Understanding & Supporting Children & Young People with Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), by Tina Rae

Anna Freud website: <https://www.annafreud.org/schools-and-colleges/resources/addressing-emotionally-based-school-avoidance/>

School Wellbeing Cards - <https://www.schoolwellbeingcards.co.uk/>

Resources Cont.

Well at School website: <https://www.wellatschool.org/emotionally-based-school-avoidance>

Medical Needs in Schools website – free EBSA course:
<https://medicalneedsinschools.co.uk/courses/emotionally-based-school-avoidance/>

Not Fine In School: <https://notfineinschool.co.uk/>

Resource packs prepared by LAs

Somerset: <https://www.supportservicesforeducation.co.uk/Page/20029>

Camden:

<https://www.royalfree.camden.sch.uk/attachments/download.asp?file=378&type=pdf>

Partners in Salford: <https://www.partnersinsalford.org/salford-0-25-advisory-board/salford-thrive-ehwb/emotionally-based-school-avoidance-ebsa/>

West Sussex:

[https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/10483#:~:text=Emotional%20Based%20School%20Avoidance%20\(EBSA,and%20schools%20is%20far%20reaching](https://schools.westsussex.gov.uk/Page/10483#:~:text=Emotional%20Based%20School%20Avoidance%20(EBSA,and%20schools%20is%20far%20reaching)

Hampshire County Council: <https://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/EBSA-good-practice-guidance.pdf>

Milton Keynes Council: https://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-06/Emotionally%20Based%20School%20Avoidance%20Guidance%20for%20schools_Part%202%20Practical%20Support.pdf

References

EBSA Horizons Training by Dr Jerricah Holder & EdPsychEd

<https://www.edpsyched.co.uk/ebsa-horizons>

Understanding & Supporting Children & Young People with Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), by Tina Rae

Mental Health and Attendance at School, edited by Katie Finning, Tamsin Ford and Darren Moore

Coping with Life by Coping with School? School Refusal in Young People, by Anthea Gulliford & Andy Miller, chapter in Educational Psychology, edited by Tony Cline, Anthea Gulliford and Susan Birch

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