



# How can I get my teenager to go to school?

Many teenagers seek independence and think they know best. No matter how hard parents try, some students may be reluctant or refuse to go to school. These are some ideas which may assist parents in dealing with teenagers and school refusal. Addressing this issue promptly and setting up good patterns in adolescence can lead to future success.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- *Missing one day of school each week adds up to 2 months missed over a year.*
- *Each day absent in high school has an impact on numeracy skills.*
- *Poor attendance may be associated with future unemployment, criminal activity, substance abuse, and poorer health and life expectancy.*

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Talk about the importance of showing up to school every day, make that the expectation. Regular attendance at school sets up good behaviours for regular attendance at work.
- Help your teenager maintain daily routines such as finishing homework and getting a good night's sleep. On average, teenagers need 8-9 hours sleep to be healthy and alert. You may also need to monitor their use of the Internet, mobile phone and TV at night to ensure they are not staying up too late or being disturbed while sleeping.
- Try not to schedule hair, dental or medical appointments during school hours. Arrange family holidays during scheduled school holidays so that they are not missing out on classes and, therefore, will not have to struggle to make up for lost time.
- Don't let your teenager stay home unless genuinely sick. Complaints of headaches or stomach aches may be signs of anxiety
- If your teenager wants to stay home to finish an assignment, rather than letting them stay home, expect them to go to school – make attendance the number one priority. Later, you can discuss with them how they can improve their study habits or adjust their schedule.
- If your school has an assessment calendar on its website, use this to help your teenager plan their study so that they avoid working late the night before an assignment is due
- Be sure to set a good example – how you meet your commitments impacts on how they will meet theirs.
- Talk to your teenager. What are their feelings about school? What interests them at school? Are there any difficult situations? It helps if you open these discussions in a relaxed way so that your teenager knows you are demonstrating concern, not authority.



- Try to be aware of your teenager's social contacts. Peer pressure can lead to skipping school, while students without many friends can feel isolated.
- Encourage meaningful extracurricular activities that your teenager enjoys, such as sports and clubs, to develop positive relationships and have success outside of a classroom setting. These activities can help your child feel part of the group, important to the school, and more motivated.
- Set clear parameters around part-time work. Make sure that the hours your teenager is working do not impact on their ability to go to school the next day, or interfere with school assessment expectations or exam preparation.
- Familiarise yourself with the school's attendance policy. This can help when trying to reason with teenagers.
- Monitor your teenager's attendance and school performance. Periodically check with their teachers to find out how things are going. If you find it difficult to contact several different teachers by phone, try email. Alternatively, if your school has a year level coordinator, they may be a helpful point of contact in relation to specific issues.

### **Remember...**

You can talk with school staff (such as the teacher, year level coordinator, deputy principal or principal) to find out what assistance they can provide to keep your teenager attending and engaged.

### **USEFUL WEBSITES**

<http://raisingchildren.net.au/>

<http://www.mindmatters.edu.au/default.asp>

<http://deta.qld.gov.au/initiatives/learningandwellbeing/resources.html#>

<http://www.qld.gov.au/youth/health-looking-after-yourself/>

<http://au.reachout.com/>

<http://www.andrewfuller.com.au/article.php?Do=ContentView&pageno=159&preprocscreen=ContentShow&menuvar=Green&menuval>