

For Immediate Release



**Ben Gordon Center Offers Tips
On Understanding School Phobia across the
age span:**

A look at Pre-School to High School

All children experience periods when they don't want to go to school. This has challenged parents and caregivers when they miss school usually for vague reasons. The child does not act happy or well with symptoms common to anyone who is worried. These symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, headache, stomach, and dizziness. Parents may also witness behaviors that resemble oppositional defiant and other avoidant behaviors.

The Experts at the Ben Gordon Center suggest that the reason that the child finds it difficult to leave home may be adjusting to a new classroom or teacher, a class bully or an embarrassing experience. The reason behind these superficial issues is the child lacks the self-confidence to leave home and develop on their own without the family or parents. Some children who seem to show the highest risks for this behavior are an only child, the last child or a child with chronic illnesses.

The Ben Gordon Center offers a few definitions that distinguish Social Phobia from other behavioral health concerns. ***School Phobia*** (or social anxiety) is a fear of being with groups of people, both strangers and family members. Social phobias may also fear all strangers. If a child avoids or

seems ill at ease in family gatherings of five or more people, or won't go out of the house alone, won't go into a well known store alone, or won't

play with groups of children, socialize with peers, he might have social phobia. If a child or teen is okay with groups, is able to go outside alone, or will do an errand in a nearby store, the problem is NOT social phobia

Some children and teens have a very difficult time getting to school in that they complain of headaches, stomach aches or generalized fears about school. This has been traditionally called, "school phobia". It is now referred to as school refusal because children are often not afraid of school but are having specific fears which cause them to refuse to come to school. Many other children are experiencing separation anxiety, which is a difficulty leaving home and parent(s). For Teens we may be looking at other concerns as these students adapt to a different level of social and peer issues.

The professional staff at the Ben Gordon Center offer strategies and suggestions to help your child or teen through this period. They can also offer tips and strategies in parenting a school phobic child as well as education on how to recognize school phobia and when it may be another behavioral health disorder such as anxiety or depression.

The majority of children who refuse school are between eight and thirteen years old. Some are trying to avoid uncomfortable feelings associated with school. They tend to be sensitive, overactive students who don't know how to deal with their emotions. They may fear being criticized or evaluated. A few are truly frightened by a particular activity, such as riding the school bus, speaking in front of the class or attending an assembly.

Many of these children do attend school but with great discomfort. They tend to be highly anxious and lack the skills needed to handle social interactions. Perhaps they have had negative experiences in the past and are afraid something else will happen.

Research indicates many children experience school events as stressful enough to produce such symptoms as withdrawal, aggression, moodiness or anxiety. "At the Ben Gordon Center we have found that a child's behavior may even resemble symptoms of depression, anxiety or stress disorders. In this condition, these symptoms continue to interfere with daily functioning and the child's ability to learn and require attention by a professional.

The Ben Gordon Center offers mental health and substance abuse services though out the area with convenient and confidential offices in DeKalb County. The Ben Gordon Center also accepts all Insurance Plans Medicaid, Medicare. Ben Gordon Center offers services on a sliding fee for those who qualify. The Ben Gordon Center is fully accredited by JCAHO, the Illinois Division of Mental Health and the Illinois Office of Substance Abuse. For more information about Ben Gordon mental health and substance abuse services call **815-756-4875**.