Why Won't My Child Go to School?

Amanda Dudley and Bruce Tonge write about school-refusing children and ways in which to help them and their parents.
medical problems.

Because school-refusing children often present with physical symptoms, a check-up with a medical practitioner is important in order to rule out any underlying health conditions.
School refusal may show itself as a prolongation of a refusal to go to school, manifest in various ways. Some children object to school only at specific times or on specific days. School refusal is often associated with depression; children who are depressed may also refuse to go to school. Some children may avoid school by pretending to be ill or by claiming to have lost their appetite. Others may simply refuse to go to school, claiming they have a headache or stomachache. School refusal can also be associated with anxiety, which may be triggered by the fear of negative social interactions or academic pressure. School refusal can also indicate a lack of interest in learning or a desire to avoid academic challenges. It is important to rule out any medical conditions that may be affecting the child's ability to attend school, such as allergies or physical disabilities. Treatment options vary and include individual therapy, group therapy, medication, and family therapy. It is crucial to work closely with the child and their family to develop a plan that addresses the underlying issues and supports the child's overall well-being.

**Samantha's Story**

Samantha is a 12-year-old girl who has been refusing to go to school for several weeks. Her parents have noticed that she becomes very distressed when asked to go to school and has a history of school refusal. Samantha's refusal is also affecting her relationships with her peers and her academic performance. The school district has recommended a multi-disciplinary approach to addressing Samantha's refusal, including individual and group therapy, as well as academic interventions and support.