

HANDOUT #4

WHAT TO SAY WHEN YOUR CHILD DOES NOT WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL

Your child says...	What might be going on?	What you can say...
“I don’t feel like going.”	It’s possible your child is having a hard time at school. The problem could be something very recent or something that’s been building for a. long time.	“I wonder if you want to stay at home because things aren’t going well at school. When you get home, let’s talk about what’s going on and if we can do something to make things better. Is there something we can ask the school to do to help us?”
“School is boring.”	Kids might say they find school boring for a number of reasons. They might not feel challenged, they might not see their education as connected to their lives, they might not feel connected to their peers or their teachers, or they might not feel prepared for their school work, which may make them lack the confidence needed to try hard things.	“What do you find boring? Do you enjoy the topics you are learning? Do you find the activities you are doing too easy or too hard? Would you be less bored if school was different? Can we talk to your teacher about how to make school more interesting?”
“I have a stomach-ache/ a head-ache.”	Sometimes not feeling well can be a sign that a child feels anxious. Many kids feel anxious about going to school – especially if something hard is happening that day, like a big test or a presentation. Kids can also worry if they haven’t finished their homework or they aren’t getting along with the other kids or an adult in the school.	“Is anything special happening today? Do you have a test or a big assignment due? Do you have to make a presentation? Everyone feels worried about these kinds of things, but they always get easier with practice.” “Are you getting along with everyone at school? Lots of people feel sick then they are worried about things.” You might also be able to share some times in your life when you felt worried but you got through it. “I used to feel that way and I understand, but I’m glad I kept trying. Just not doing things doesn’t make things easier.”

<p>“I’m too tired to go.”</p>	<p>School can be exhausting. That’s especially true if kids are struggling in some way. It takes a lot of energy to try to keep up or hide difficulties.</p>	<p>“It surprises me you’re tired. I thought you were sleeping well. Is there something you’ve been working extra hard at or that’s using up a lot of your energy? Is there something keeping you up at night?” Also, if your child does seem extra tired, it might be useful to consider an earlier bed time or other things you can do to improve sleep habits.</p>
<p>“I hate school.”</p>	<p>Sometimes a specific bad experience or trouble with one aspect of school can cast a cloud over everything else.</p>	<p>“I know there’s a lot that you like at school. Is there something in particular that’s making you so unhappy that you want to stay home?”</p>
<p>“The kids are mean.”</p>	<p>It can be tough for some kids to understand social situations and fit in. Making friends can be hard. And kids are sometimes the targets of bullying.</p>	<p>“I’m sorry kids are being mean. What are they doing? Can you tell me about it? Would you like me to talk to your teacher and come up with a plan?”</p>
<p>“School’s too hard.”</p>	<p>School isn’t always easy, even when kids seem to be doing OK. Sometimes kids might find it hard to meet class expectations, and they often worry about falling behind or failing.</p>	<p>“It sounds like things aren’t going as well as you’d like at school. What’s the most challenging thing about school right now? Can we ask your teacher or principal for help?”</p>
<p>“I forgot to do my homework again.”</p>	<p>For some kids, keeping track of assignments and managing time is really tough, no matter how hard they try. And if it happens a lot, they might feel embarrassed or fear they are going to get in trouble.</p>	<p>“You seem to be having trouble staying on top of your work. Do you feel like that’s a challenge for you? Should we ask about some resources and different ways to help you stay organized?”</p>