



When Your Child Hates School



The new wears off really quickly. All the excitement generated by the new teacher and new backpack has already evaporated, and your child has decided that he or she hates school. How do you respond?

Kids often say they hate school. They prefer playing games and watching television and sleeping late. But when it goes beyond the childish grumbling to tears, headaches, stomachaches, and bad behavior, you must take the complaint seriously.



- **First, is your child healthy?** Is she getting enough sleep? Are allergies under control? Can she see what is written on the board? She cannot be her best at school if she feels rotten. Check in with your pediatrician first.
- **Talk to the teacher.** What is happening in the classroom? Is your child constantly in trouble? If so, no wonder he hates to go to school. What can you do to encourage his obedience to classroom rules? What does he need help understanding or practice to improve? What suggestions does his teacher have about improving the school day? Your child may have an undiagnosed learning disability that explains a behavior problem. Invite the teacher to help you and your student to be problem solvers. The teacher is not the enemy. Even if his or her teaching style is new to or difficult for your child, learning to adjust and work with that teacher will be a valuable skill for your child for the future.
- **Is there a problem with bullying?** Some children bottle up their injuries. If your child faces physical or emotional attacks from others—in person or online—you need to uncover that and deal with it. The school should support your efforts to appropriately address any bullying, so speak up as your young child's advocate or encourage your older student to speak up on his or her own.
- **Is there a problem with self-talk?** If your child is telling herself that she is not smart enough or pretty enough or popular enough, school becomes an insurmountable challenge. Spend some time one-on-one with your child, doing something he or she loves to do, and invite the child's confidence. This conversation should not take place on a Monday





morning 15 minutes before the bus comes. You both need to be prepared to uncover some painful issues and work through them, so find some time to talk without stress or interruptions.

- **Give your child some tools to take to school.** No matter how old your child is, prayer is the first tool you can hand over. Remind your child that God is always listening and wants to help him. He should be confident that God will answer prayers.
- **Try giving him a Scripture verse or a phrase as a ready reminder.** “I can do all things through Christ” or “I will listen carefully and obey” can help your child think positively and direct their own behavior. Help your child make a new friend.
- **Coach him on friendly behavior** (give him a good “opening line”) and see if you can discover a student new to the school whom your child could befriend. Arrange an outing to the bowling alley or trampoline park or something that is a sure kid-pleaser.
- **What can you put in your child’s pocket or lunchbox to encourage him or her?** A note from home or an extra fun-size candy bar can change a miserable day into a not-so-miserable one.
- **Pray for wisdom.** Pray in your child’s presence so he or she can hear you. Make mornings peaceful, serve a favorite breakfast, plan some debriefing time together after school, and add incentives for good behavior and good attitudes.