

'Sunday/Monday' Plans for parents

Sunday nights can be a very anxious time for everyone involved in supporting a child experiencing EBSA. This plan for Sunday night provides an outline for a good routine and, although presented in the form of an acronym 'SUNDAY', it is not intended as a set of rules. Instead, it's a simple reminder of important trigger points and how to deal with them that could facilitate a smoother end to a family weekend.

The following tips are adapted from the 'Sunday Evening Plan' and 'Monday Morning Plan' resources from the book 'Understanding & Supporting Children & Young People with Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)' by Dr Tina Rae.

Sunday Evening Plan

S

Soothe - Think about calming activities you can do with your child before they go to bed, such as naming 3 positive things about their day ([3 good things \(adyach.cymru\)](http://3goodthings(adyach.cymru))), or listening to a story for younger ones, a podcast for older ones, listening to calming music, and soft lighting etc.

U

Understand - Remind your child that you understand how difficult it is and that their feelings are valid.

N

Neutralise - Encourage your child to share their concerns (ideally a few hours before bed) and talk through all of them together. They can draw or write in a journal or worry book should they find it difficult to discuss verbally. Help them come to solutions, or even just listen to them and comfort them. Challenge any irrational or negative thoughts by helping them consider the evidence.

D

Decide – a plan of action or schedule that will be followed step by step, they could choose their clothes the night before and even their breakfast, who is taking them to school, to help them better predict what's going to happen the next morning. Some children may benefit from seeing their weekly/daily schedule in advance so they know what to expect, and some children or young people may prefer a visual layout.

A

Attend - Be aware of your child's emotional state and be more attentive if necessary. Challenge 'stinkin-thinkin' (a negative thinking cycle of self-doubting or anxious thoughts), and help older children identify and address any unrealistic fears by examining the evidence. Things are never all bad, but that anxiety tends to make us focus on the negatives.

Y

Yourself - Make sure you feel calm and regulated. Schedule in time for your own relaxation activities, and take time out after the bedtime routine. It is natural to feel worried but don't let it overwhelm you!

Monday Morning Plan

Monday mornings can mean stress for everyone involved in supporting the child experiencing EBSA.

This model plan provides a loose outline to manage morning events and, although presented in the form of an acronym 'MONDAY', is not intended as a set of rules!

M

Take time to **manage** your own emotional state and use self-linear strategies. Manage your emotional state by using your usual stress management tools (e.g. grounding, time alone, mindfulness, etc.)

O

Organise - Make sure you feel organised and ready in the morning. For example, have your own bag ready, and breakfast laid out so that you are available to support your child without distractions and in as calm a way as possible.

N

Neutralise - Allow time to talk to your child and check-in on their feelings. Help them find solutions, or even just listen and comfort them. Challenge any unrealistic thoughts by showing them evidence against any irrational or negative thoughts they might be experiencing.

D

Discuss what routine would work best including practical considerations (eating breakfast, brushing teeth, getting to school). A specific morning plan can help reduce the anxiety a child may have. Make it clear to your child how you will get there, what music you might listen to in the car/stories you might tell each other on the bus/as you walk/who else might be with you, and so on, so that it all becomes clear and they feel prepared for each step.

A

Accept - Be aware of your child's emotional state and ensure they know they are loved unconditionally and feel safe. Remind them that their feelings are valid, and that it's okay for them to feel anxious. Let them know that you will help them manage their concerns. Give reassurance and transitional object for younger children.

Y

Yourself - Take time to manage your own emotional state and use self-linear strategies.

