

HOMESCHOOL ISSUES

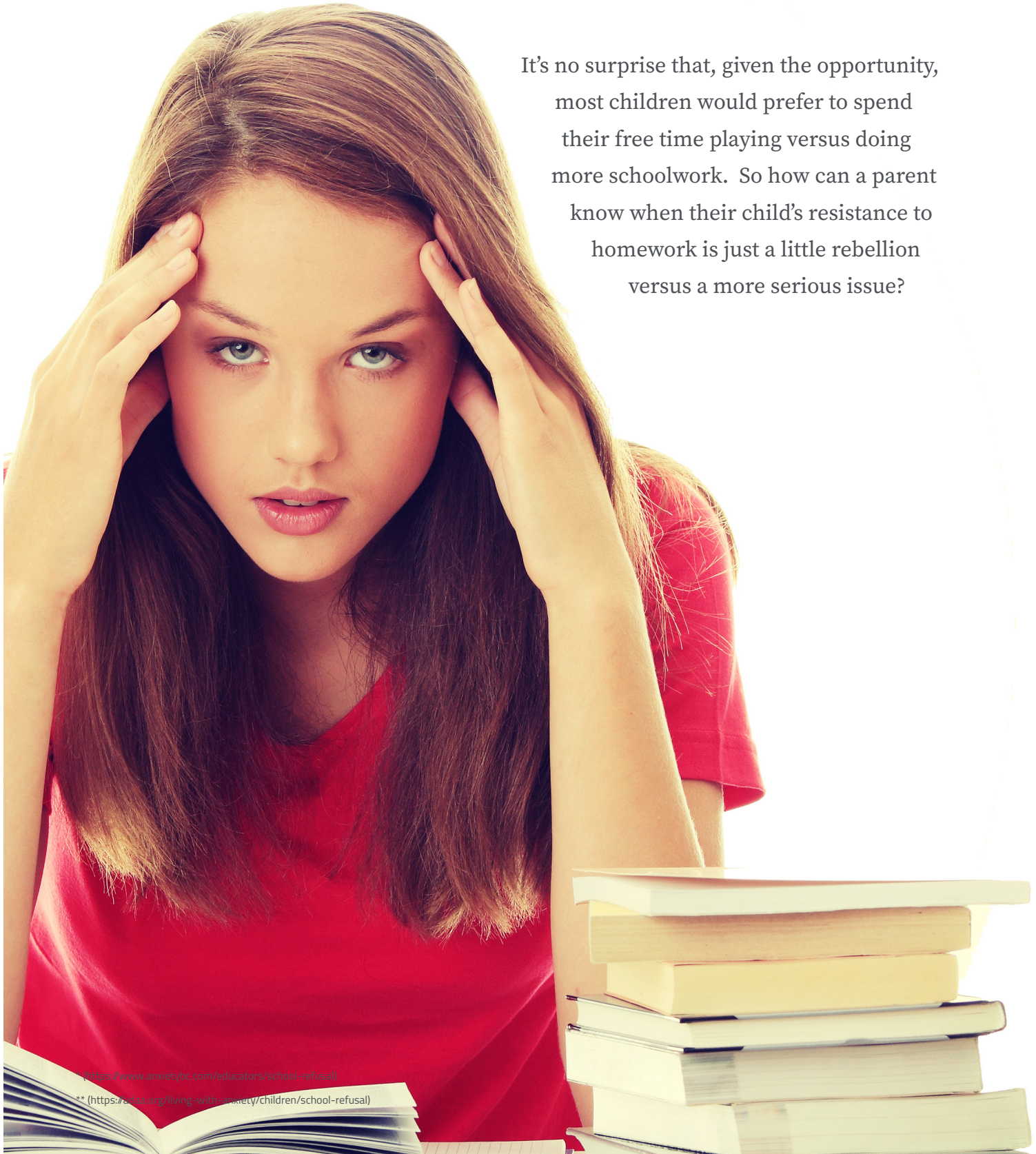
6 Warning Signs that Homework Battles Are More than Just a Passing Struggle.

Sarah A. Tannenbaum, Psy.D., Staff Psychologist
The Center for Effective Child Therapy, Boston MA



Now that school is back in session, many parents have likely waged a battle or two (or more!) over homework with their child.

It's no surprise that, given the opportunity, most children would prefer to spend their free time playing versus doing more schoolwork. So how can a parent know when their child's resistance to homework is just a little rebellion versus a more serious issue?



<https://www.asha.org/educators/school-refusal>

** (<https://relis.org/living-with-anxiety/children/school-refusal>)

6 POTENTIAL WARNING SIGNS

FOR PARENTS DEALING WITH HOMEWORK ISSUES:

1 IS YOUR CHILD CONSISTENTLY CHALLENGED BY HOMEWORK?

Every child is sure to have the occasional bad day or disruption to routine like a vacation, illness, or outside commitment that challenges homework. This is to be expected and it's okay to support your child through these more difficult times. However, once a child's daily schedule is set, homework should not be a source of persistent conflict or stress, but instead a normal daily routine.

2 IS HOMEWORK A CHALLENGE ACROSS THE BOARD OR ONLY IN ONE SUBJECT?

Children will often avoid doing homework in subjects they don't like or where they don't demonstrate strong skills. It's natural to want to do your English homework when you're a good writer and push off the algebra if Math isn't your strong suit. But if your child is avoiding homework across the board, it may be a cause for concern.

3 IS YOUR CHILD'S RESISTANCE TO HOMEWORK AFFECTING THEIR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

When a child with no history of poor academic performance is getting poor grades because they are not doing homework, it is time to start asking questions.

4 ARE THEY PUTTING MORE EFFORT INTO AVOIDING HOMEWORK THAN DOING IT?

A common avoidance tactic that children will use is to put off homework by doing other "important things" until it's time to go to bed; some may even fake an illness or injury. If your child is putting more effort into avoiding homework than it would probably take to do it, then there may be more significant issues at play.

5 IS HOMEWORK AFFECTING THEIR SELF-ESTEEM?

When your child is struggling with homework, it takes courage for them to admit that they are having a problem. "This is hard" or "I don't get this" are common responses that indicate they are feeling challenged, but when they start to say things like "I'm stupid, why even try?" or "I'm just going to fail anyway, why bother?" it could be a sign of underlying self-esteem or learning issues.

6 DOES YOUR CHILD SAY THEY "JUST DON'T CARE"?

When a child says they "just don't care" or are unconcerned about the situation, it is a red flag for clinicians and should be for parents too. Indifferent attitudes usually have little to do with the work itself and could be an indication of more serious, underlying issues.

What Can Parents Do to Help Overcome the Homework Struggles?

TALK TO YOUR CHILD

Many times your child may have a simple answer. Ask, "It seems like your homework is becoming a really big challenge for you. What do you think is going on?"

You may be surprised at your child's insightfulness in this situation. They often understand their problem but need your help to work out a solution. Also, this creates a scenario where they can accept help without feeling inadequate.

VALIDATE THEIR CHALLENGE

Make sure your child knows that you understand that homework is a tricky time for all kids, not just them. It might make them feel less vulnerable and reduce their discouragement. Confidence is a huge factor in a child's success and helping them to understand that they are not alone in their challenges can go a long way in helping overcome them.

TALK TO OTHER PARENTS

Other parents can be a great resource. They may have been through something similar, or they may recognize something in your child that you haven't observed. Having a support system where you can ask questions and talk out challenges can be a big help.

IDENTIFY ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS DEFICITS AND/OR PERFORMANCE DEFICITS

Organizational skills deficits are often found in older children and are characterized by the inability to prioritize tasks and poor time management. Do they wait until the last minute to do an assignment? Do

they hyper-focus on one subject, and not have the time or energy left to do the others? These can all be signs of organizational skills deficits.

Children with performance deficits have the necessary skills to complete the assignments they are given, but they fail to complete them for a variety of reasons such as a lack of motivation or they fail to grasp the importance of completing the assignment.

It is important to determine which type of deficit is contributing to your child's struggles because there are different approaches to dealing with each type.

TALK TO THE SCHOOL

Have they done a good job of explaining to your child why they are assigning the homework and how it will benefit them? Many children see it as arbitrary or even punitive, and that can predispose them against doing their homework.

SEEK PROVEN AND EFFECTIVE TREATMENT OPTIONS

If you are still experiencing homework challenges, or your child is exhibiting any of the "red flag" behaviors discussed above, you can be proactive and seek supplemental, professional help in addressing your child's needs. [The Center for Effective Child Therapy at Judge Baker Children's Center](#) is located in Boston, and provides organizational skills training, mental health assessments, and short-term focused treatments for children and their families. You can call them at 617-278-4288 or email cect@jbcc.harvard.edu to begin the process with a free pre-screening with one of the Program Coordinators.

ABOUT

THE AUTHOR



Sarah A. Tannenbaum, Psy.D. is an Associate Director of the Summer Enrichment Institute at Judge Baker Children's Center and a Staff Psychologist at the Center for Effective Child Therapy at Judge Baker Children's Center. Dr. Tannenbaum graduated summa cum laude with her B.S. in Psychology from Northeastern University. She received her Psy.D. in Clinical Psychology from William James College with a concentration in Children and Families of Adversity and Resilience (CFAR). Dr. Tannenbaum completed a clinical internship at Riverbend Community Mental Health, Inc. where she did rotations in early childhood and Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs). She came to Judge Baker Children's Center as a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Center for Effective Child Therapy and accepted a staff position at the conclusion of her training. Dr. Tannenbaum has extensive experience delivering evidence-based treatments to caregivers and children ages 3 to 18 years old in individual, group, family, and parent-only formats.

JUDGE BAKER CHILDREN'S CENTER

An affiliate of Harvard Medical School, [Judge Baker Children's Center](#) is a nationally recognized children's mental health non-profit organization dedicated to improving the quality of mental health care for children and families. Named in honor of Harvey Humphrey Baker, the first judge appointed to the Boston Juvenile Court, Judge Baker opened its doors in 1917 and has been serving the children and families of greater Boston for over 100 years. The multi-faceted organization provides the very best in evidence-based practices for children and families struggling with a range of behavioral, emotional, educational, and mental health issues. Judge Baker is dedicated to improving the lives of children and families by bridging the gap between science and practice to improve access to the highest quality care in community-based settings.