



The Mind Hub

By



Topic: What If My Child Doesn't Want to See the School Psychologist Because They're Afraid Their Friends Will Find Out?

It's not uncommon for students to hesitate or outright refuse to meet with the school psychologist because they worry their friends might find out. For many children and teens, concerns about privacy, embarrassment, or stigma can feel overwhelming.

As parents, this can leave you feeling stuck. You want your child to get support, but you don't want to push so hard that they shut down completely.

This month's newsletter focuses on understanding why children may resist school-based mental health support, how confidentiality works, and how families can navigate these concerns with empathy and clarity.

Why Might a Child Not Want to See the School Psychologist?

Children and adolescents are highly attuned to peer perception. Common fears include "People will think something is wrong with me.", "My friends will find out.", "I'll get labelled as weird.", "Only kids with serious problems go there.", "What if someone sees me walking in?".

For older students especially, social belonging feels critical. The fear of being judged can outweigh the desire for help.

What is Stigma?

Stigma refers to negative attitudes or stereotypes about a person based on a particular characteristic, such as needing mental health support or speaking to the school psychologist.

Even though conversations about mental health are more common today, some students still worry that seeking help signals weakness. In reality, asking for help is a sign of self-awareness and strength.

How does confidentiality work in schools?

One of the most important things families (and students) should understand is confidentiality. In most school settings conversations with the school psychologist are private, information is not shared with peers, staff only share information on a need-to-know basis, parents are informed when appropriate, exceptions exist if there are safety concerns (harm to self or others). Students are never publicly identified as receiving support.

Helping your child understand these boundaries can reduce anxiety.

Warning Signs that Fear of Stigma is Blocking Support

You may notice:

1. Refusal to attend meetings despite clear need
2. Anxiety about being called out of class
3. Requests to cancel services after starting
4. Downplaying struggles (“It’s not that bad.”)
5. Increased defensiveness when the topic is raised

Resistance does not necessarily mean a child doesn’t need support, it often means they feel vulnerable.

Tips & Advice

1. Validate before you persuade.
2. Reframe what support means

3. Offer choices when possible
 4. Normalise mental health support
 5. Address the “what if my friends find out?” question directly. Often, the fear is bigger than the reality.
 6. Strengthen home support too
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❖ **FAQs**

1. *Q. Should I force my child to attend sessions?*

A. This depends on the level of concern. If there are safety issues, severe emotional distress, or significant academic impact, intervention may be non-negotiable. For milder concerns, gradual encouragement and collaboration often work better than force.

2. *Q. Will other students know my child is seeing the school psychologist?*

A. No. Students are not called into or publicly requested to come into the school psychologist’s office. In addition, there are many reasons students might visit the school psychologist. Staff do not disclose who is receiving services.

3. *Q. What if my child says, “I’m not crazy”?*

A. Reassure them that seeing a school psychologist is not about being “crazy.” It’s about learning skills, solving problems, and having a safe space to talk.

4. *Q. Can we try outside therapy instead?*

A. Yes. Some families prefer private therapy settings. School-based services are convenient and collaborative with educators, but outside therapy is another valid option.

5. *Q. What if my child refuses completely?*

- A. Continue the conversation calmly over time. Avoid power struggles. If concerns escalate, consult with the school psychologist yourself for guidance on next steps.
6. *Q. How can I reduce mental health stigma in my home?*
- A. Speak openly about emotions. Avoid negative labels. Share examples of successful people who value mental health. Model help-seeking when appropriate. Children absorb our attitudes.
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Final Thoughts

It's natural for children and teens to care deeply about what their peers think. Wanting privacy does not mean they don't need support; it often means they are protecting their social identity.

Our role as adults is to reduce shame, increase understanding, and make support feel safe. Seeking help is not a weakness. It is a skill.

If you have questions about confidentiality, school-based services, or how to approach this conversation with your child, please reach out. We are here to support students quietly, respectfully, and professionally.

If you have any concerns about your child's stress levels or would like further resources, don't hesitate to reach out to the school psychologist.

- The Mind Hub, by Marina Stavrou

