



Emotionally-based school avoidance (EBSA)

Dr Joe Vacher

Clinical Psychologist

Nice to meet you!

Dr Joe Vacher

Clinical Psychologist in Child and
Adolescent Mental Health Services

Wellbeing and Mental Health in
Schools (WAMHS) Project



A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a white page and an orange background. The spiral binding is at the top. The page contains the title 'Setting the Scene' and a bulleted list.

Setting the Scene

- Your safe space
- Use of jargon/acronyms
- Informal – ask questions!

Learning aims

- What is EBSA?
- What might maintain EBSA?
- How to overcome EBSA

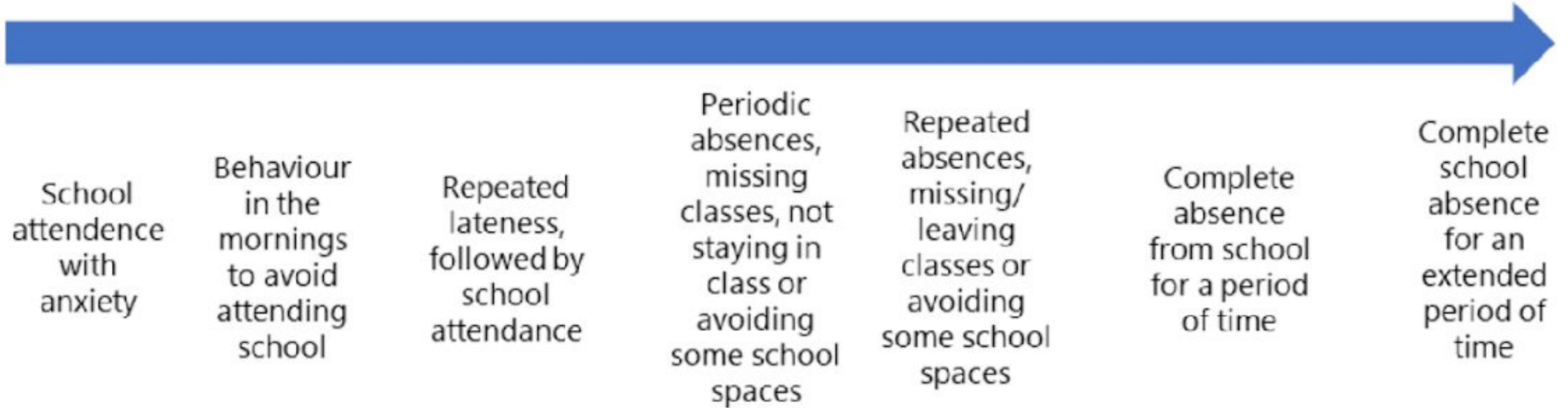


Emotionally-Based School Avoidance

Challenges attending school

Can be due to a range of factors

Emotionally-Based School Avoidance



Activity time!

*What might be the **impacts**
of EBSA?*



Family conflict

Low mood

Academic
difficulties

Impacts of EBSA

Anxiety

Social
difficulties

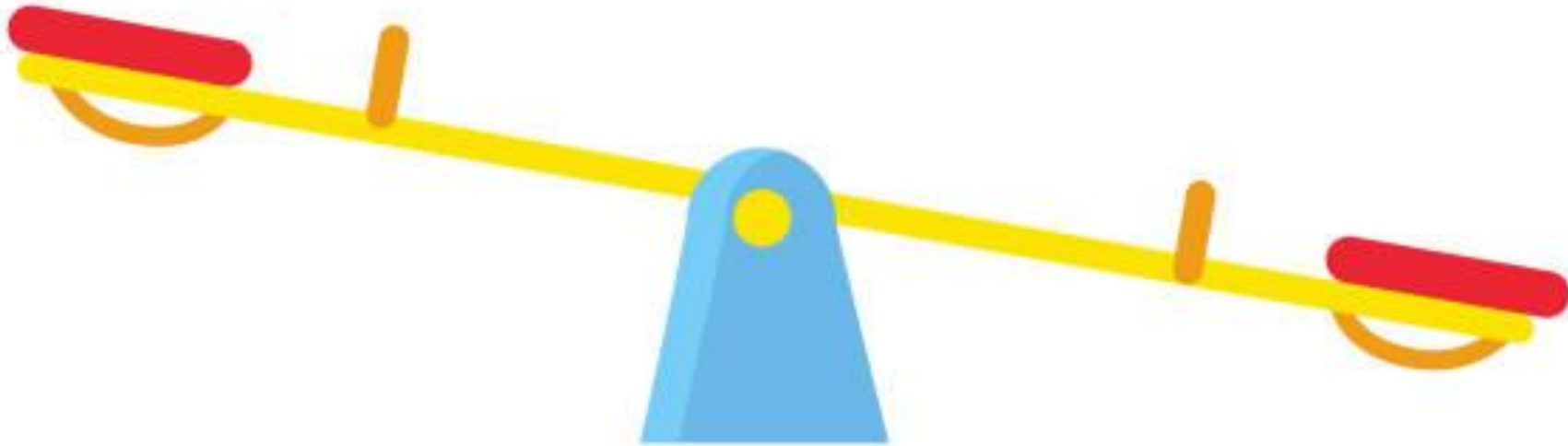
Difficulties in relationship
between family & school

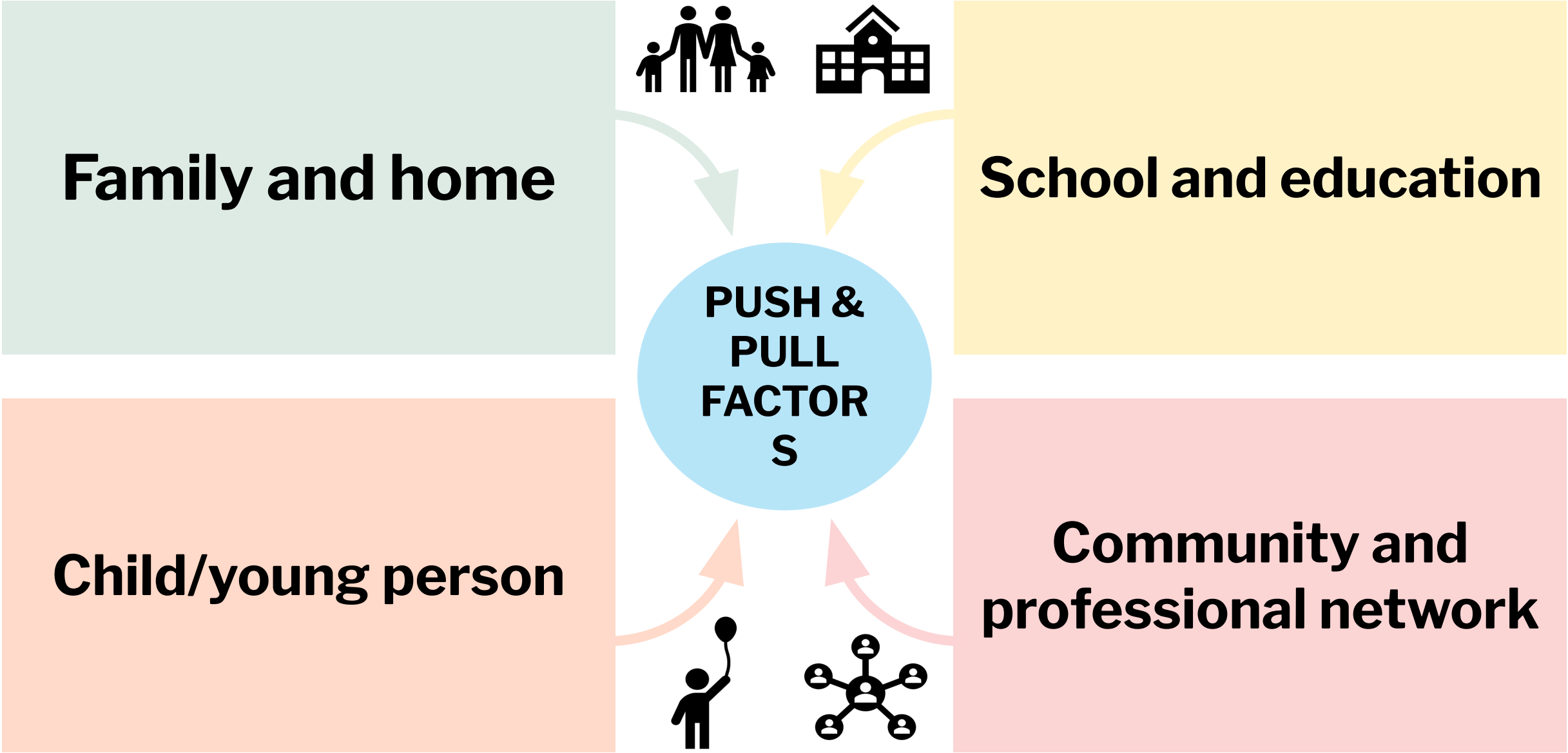
**ALL CHILDREN HAVE PUSH & PULL
FACTORS FOR ATTENDING SCHOOL**

EBSA occurs when **pull factors
outweigh **push** factors**

Push Factors

Pull Factors





Activity time!

*Brainstorm push & pull
factors for each area*



Child

PULL (barriers)

Anxiety

Low mood

Poor sleep

Learning difficulties

Neurodivergence

PUSH

(helpful)
Sociable

Excitability

Energy

Favourite subjects

Hopes for the future

Family and home

PULL (barriers)

Bereavement

Parental
separation
Housing issues

Parental wellbeing

Sibling wellbeing

Lack of
boundaries
Parental perception
of school

PUSH

(helpful)

Parental dedication
to school

Boundaries

Energy

Favourite subjects

Hopes for the future

School & Education

PULL (barriers)

Bullying

Academic
pressure

Staff turnover

Transitions/change

Exams

Discrimination

Lack of
communication

PUSH (helpful)

Open communication

Consider range of factors

Connection with other
agencies

Experience with EBSA

Belief in the child

Community

PULL (barriers)

Finances

Housing

Transport links

School closure

Discrimination

Waitlists

PUSH

(helpful)

Joint working

Multi-professional meetings

Re-engagement Units

Attendance officers

Bringing it all together

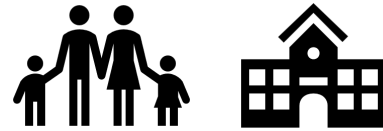
Family and home

- Family stress (e.g.: housing and financial struggles, DV, substance use, dynamics)
- Parenting style and skills
- Parental separation; loss and bereavement
- Parental conflict about EBSA management
- Parental inadvertent reinforcement of EBSA
- Parental confusion, anxiety and well-being
- Parents derive secondary gain from EBSA

Family history of EBSA

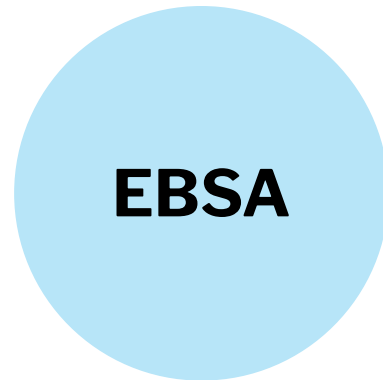
Child/young person

- Difficulties with tolerating bad feelings and social/evaluative situations, emotional regulation, low self-esteem, being away from family/parent, other mental health needs
- Neurodevelopmental and learning needs
- Developmental delay
- Physical illnesses
- Attachment and trauma
- Sleep hygiene



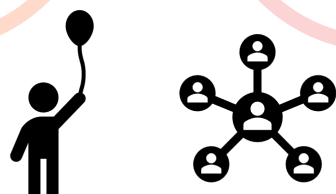
School and education

- Bullying by peers; difficulties with friendships and staff members
- Discrimination (at any or all levels from individual to systemic) and lack of response
- Staff turnover and conflict
- School culture and policies
- High academic demands and pressures
- Transitions throughout education
- Poor school-home links



Community and professional network

- Lack of coordination
- Confusing communication with parents
- Council policies and thresholds
- Funding for support services (e.g.: psychological provision, attendance officers etc.)



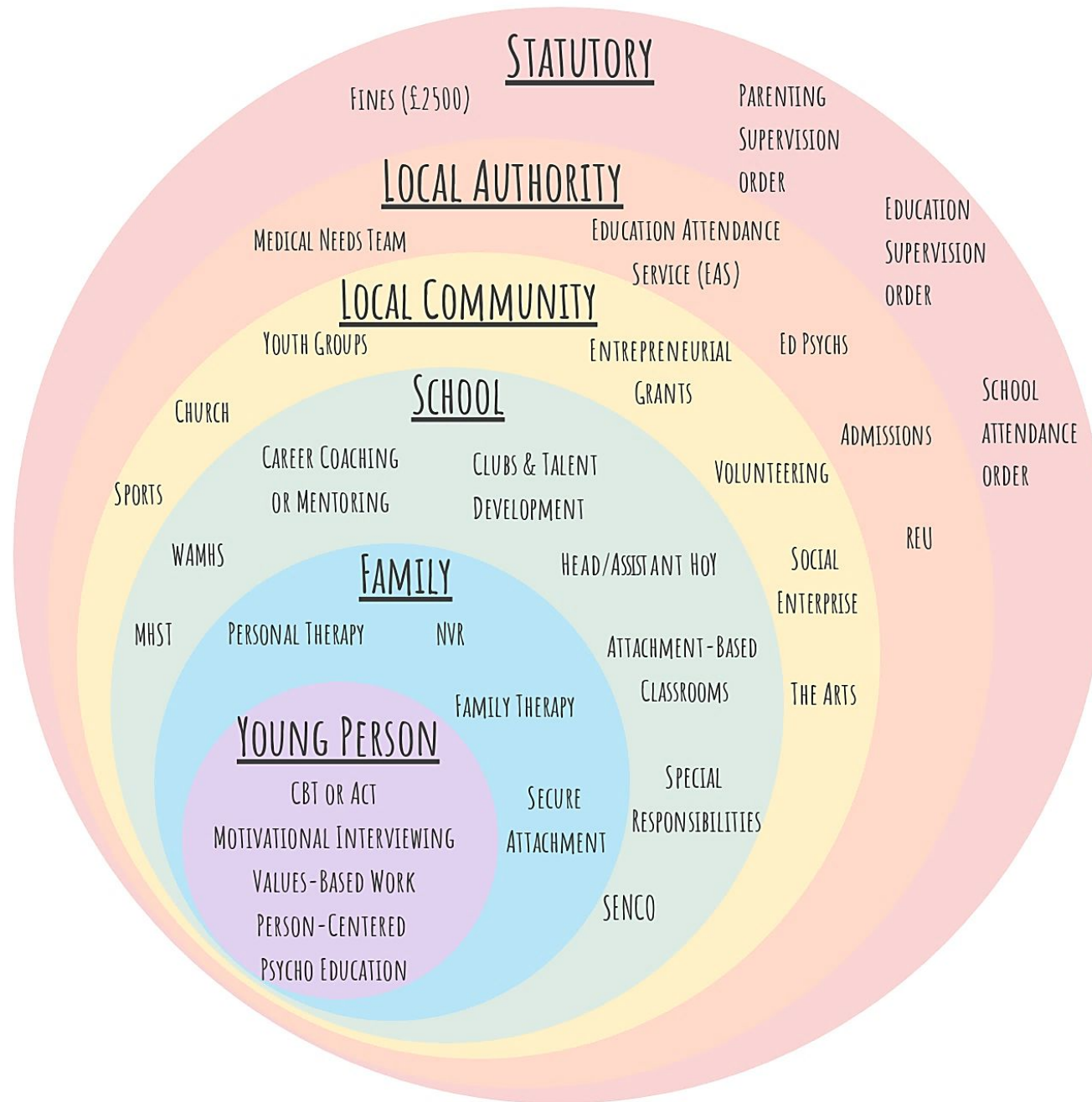
Activity time!

*Why is it helpful to map out
the push & pull factors?*



Support for EBSA

LEVELS OF SUPPORT FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

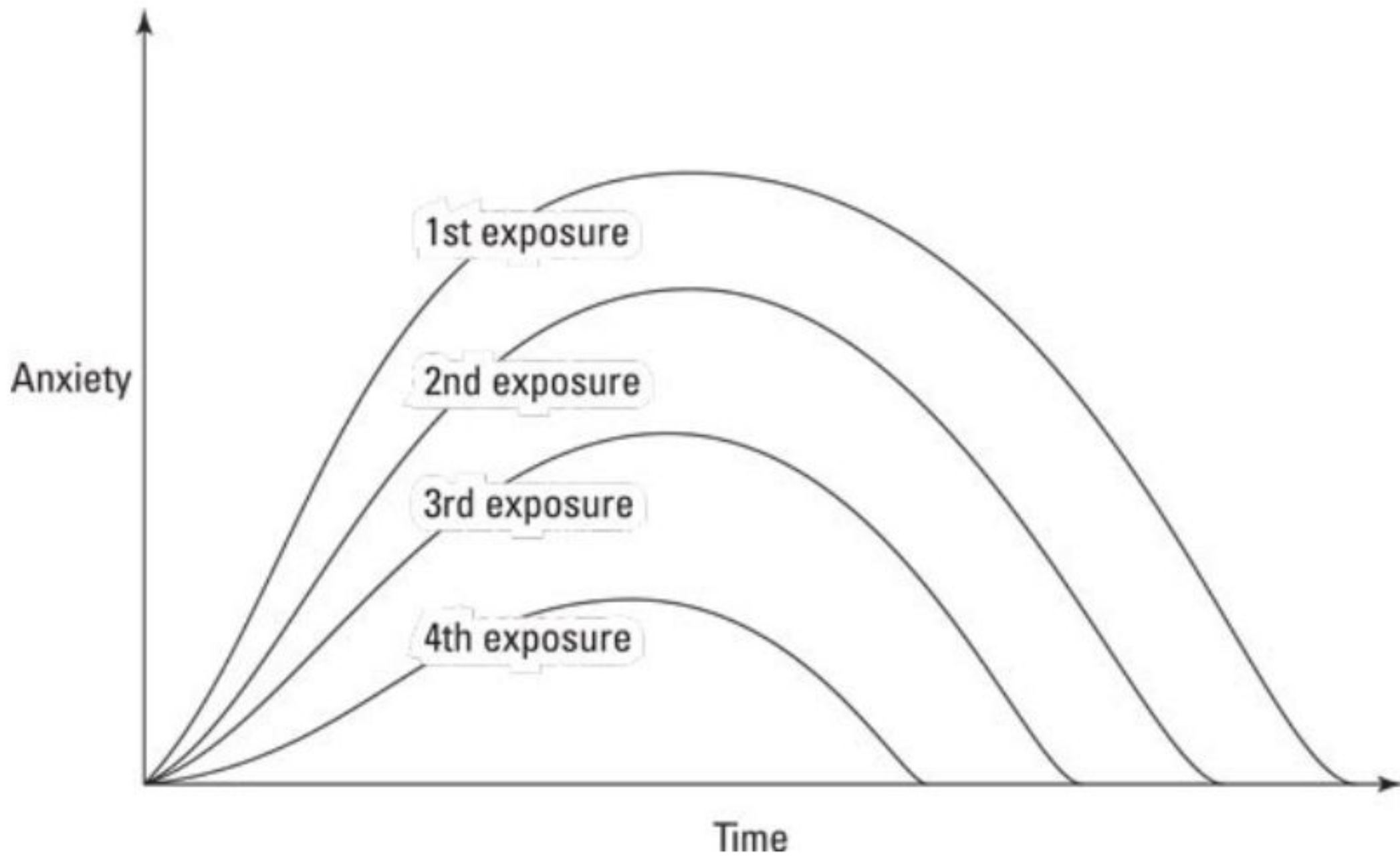


Fear ladder!



<i>Most feared</i>
Going into lunch hall with best friend
Going to PE lesson
Going into next 2 favourite lessons
Going into favourite lesson
Joining in a small group activity
Staying in the resource base
Entering the school going into the reception area
Entering the school when the school is closed
Standing outside the school when the school is closed
<i>Least feared</i>

- Create a "fear ladder" with your child
- Work from the least scary to the most scary
- Do not move up the next "step" until you have achieved the first



Connect with others!



- Attendance officer
- SENDCO
- Class teacher
- Early Help (Family Support)
- WAMHS
- CAMHS