



# **School Refusal: What works?**

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# School Refusal

- Young person experiencing significant distress at the idea of going to, or staying, at school
- Different to truancy
- Prevalence 1-5% of all students
- Increase since COVID-19



# Features

- severe emotional upset- can take many forms- fear, anxiety, depression, anger, somatic complaints, Sleep disturbance
- Frequent lateness
- Absences on significant days
- Poor teacher-student relationships
- Academic difficulties
- Frequent requests to go home



# Features

- Threats of self-harm
- Can be driven by negative reinforcement (avoidance of unpleasant feelings) and positive reinforcement (attention from parents, enjoyable activities)

# Drivers of School Refusal

## Individual factors

- Psychological difficulties
- Developmental disorders
- Physical health- chronic illness
- Substance abuse
- Undetected learning disabilities
- Age and transitions (moving home, school)
- Friendship difficulties



# Drivers of School Refusal

## Family Factors

- Family structure, functioning and parenting style
- Socio-economic disadvantage
- Parental physical or mental health problems
- DV- fear of harm coming to a parent
- Low parental involvement in schooling
- Overprotective parenting style



# Drivers of School Refusal

## School factors

- Lack of classroom order and poor structuring of instruction and/or interaction with students
- Poor management of bullying and social isolation
- School transitions
- Changes in pedagogical practices



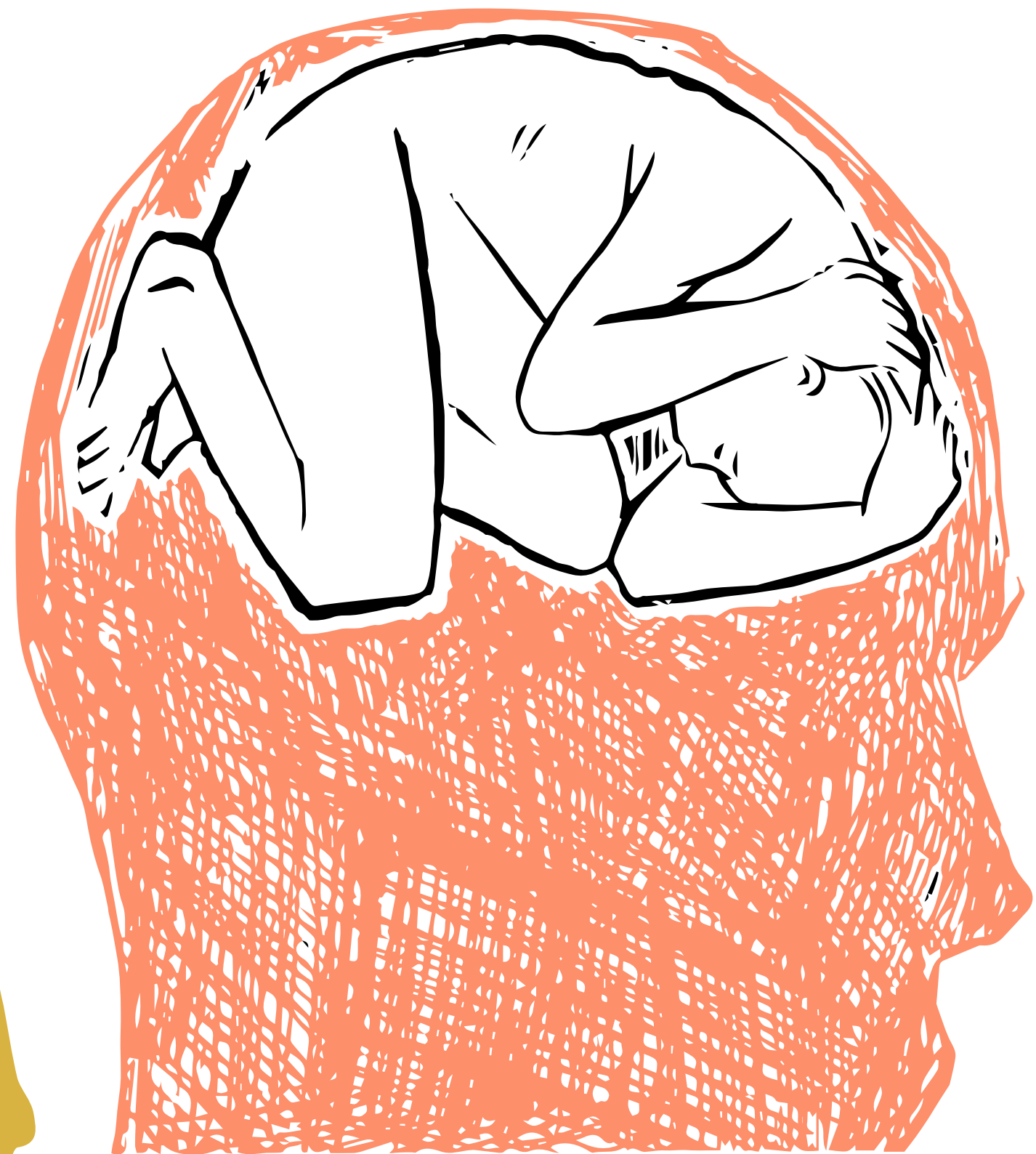
# Drivers of School Refusal

## Community factors

- Pressure to achieve academically
- Neighbourhood characteristics- e.g. accessibility to transport



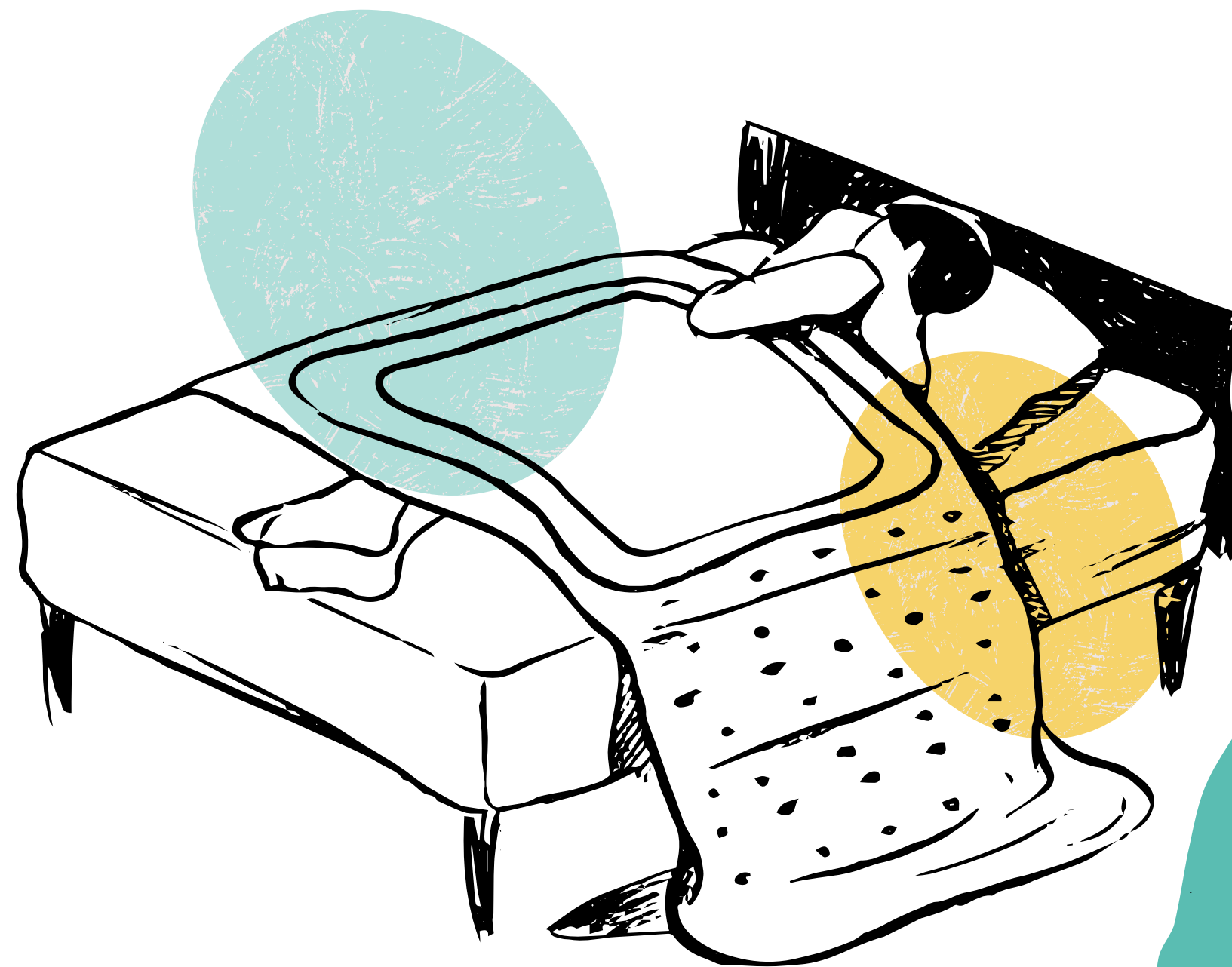


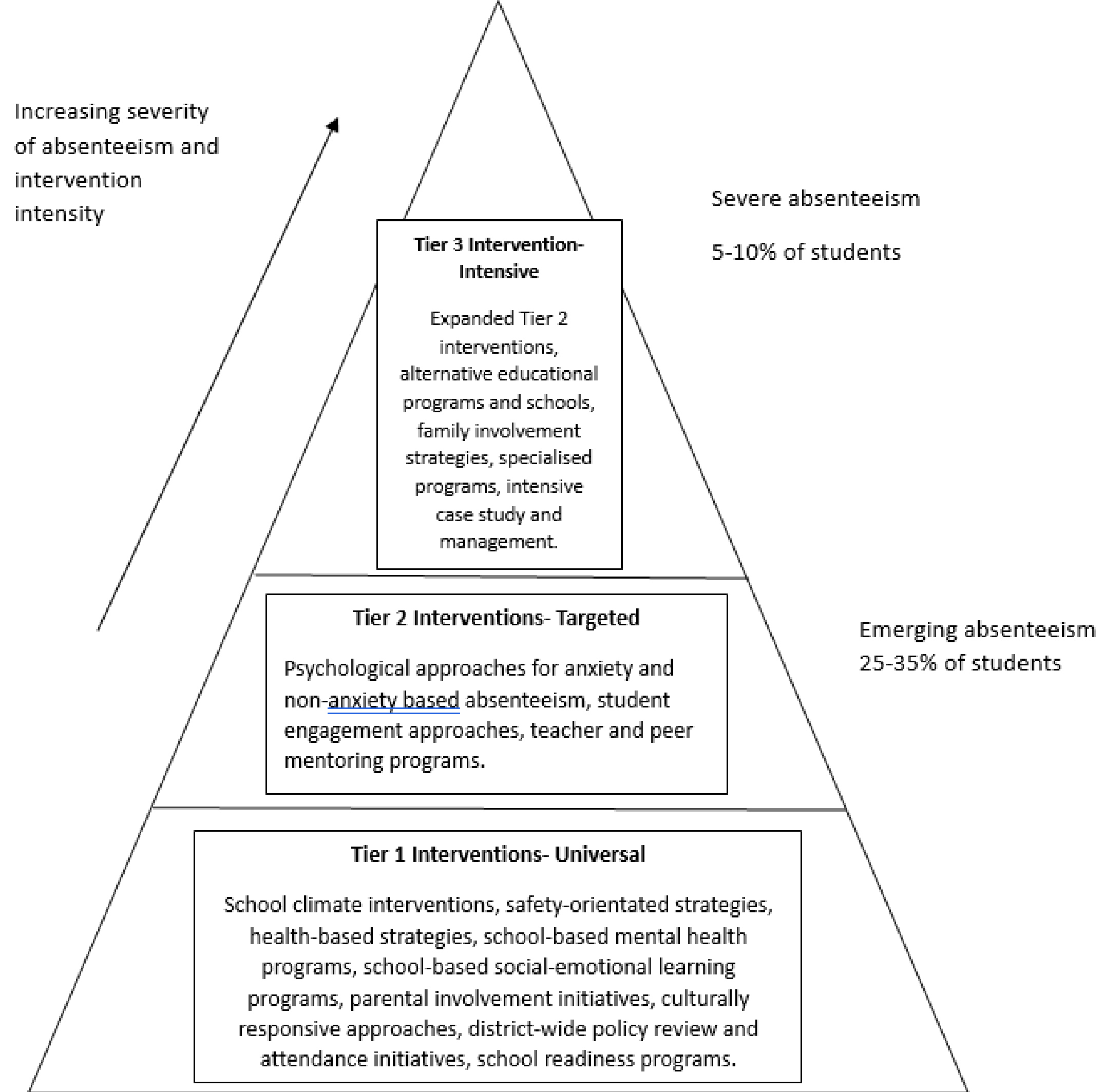


# Consequences

- More likely to experience social adjustment problems and have ongoing mental health problems
- Family conflict
- School staff stress
- Poor health outcomes, marital and occupational difficulties
- Every day counts- NAPLAN results
- Impact on other children in the classroom

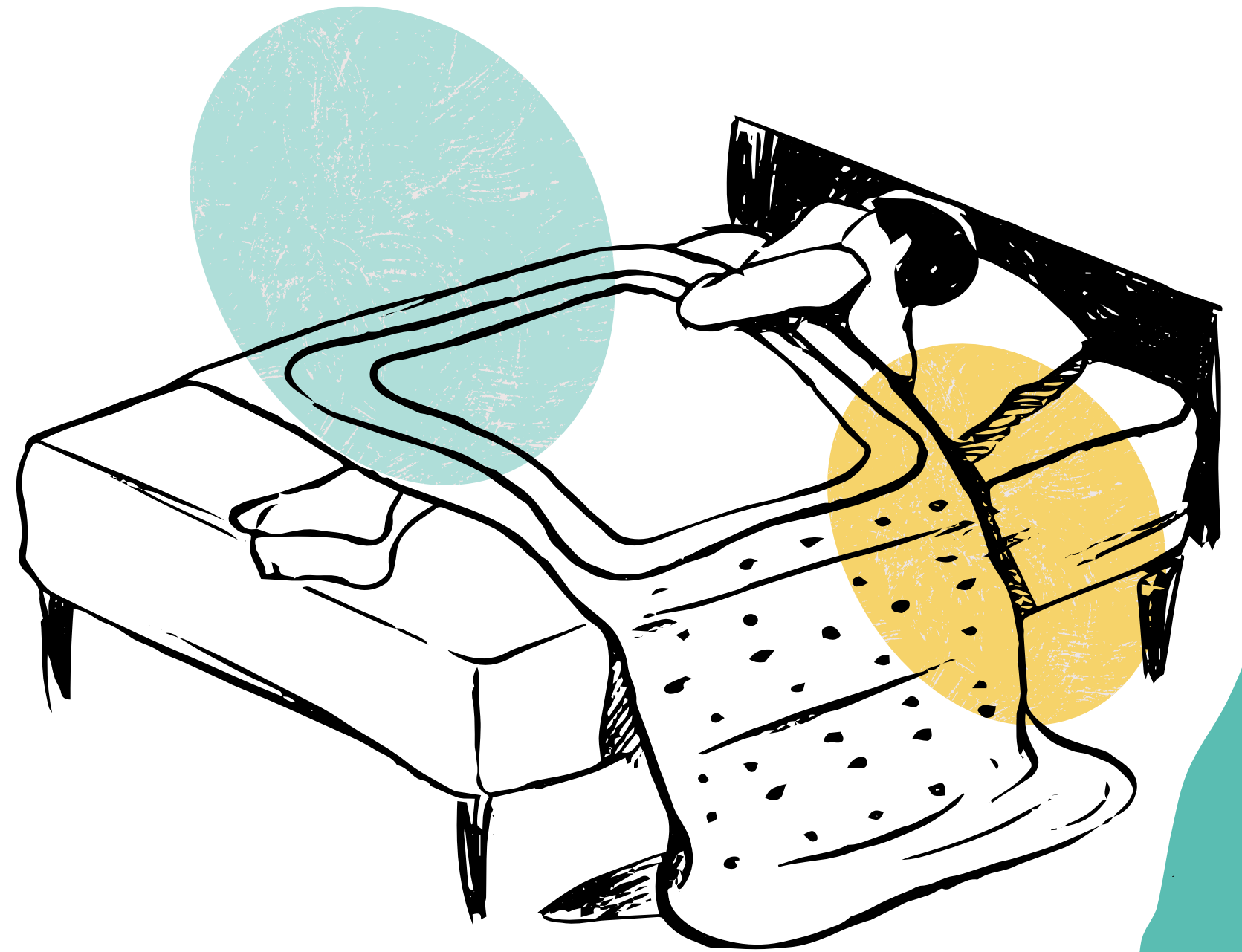
# Addressing the issue





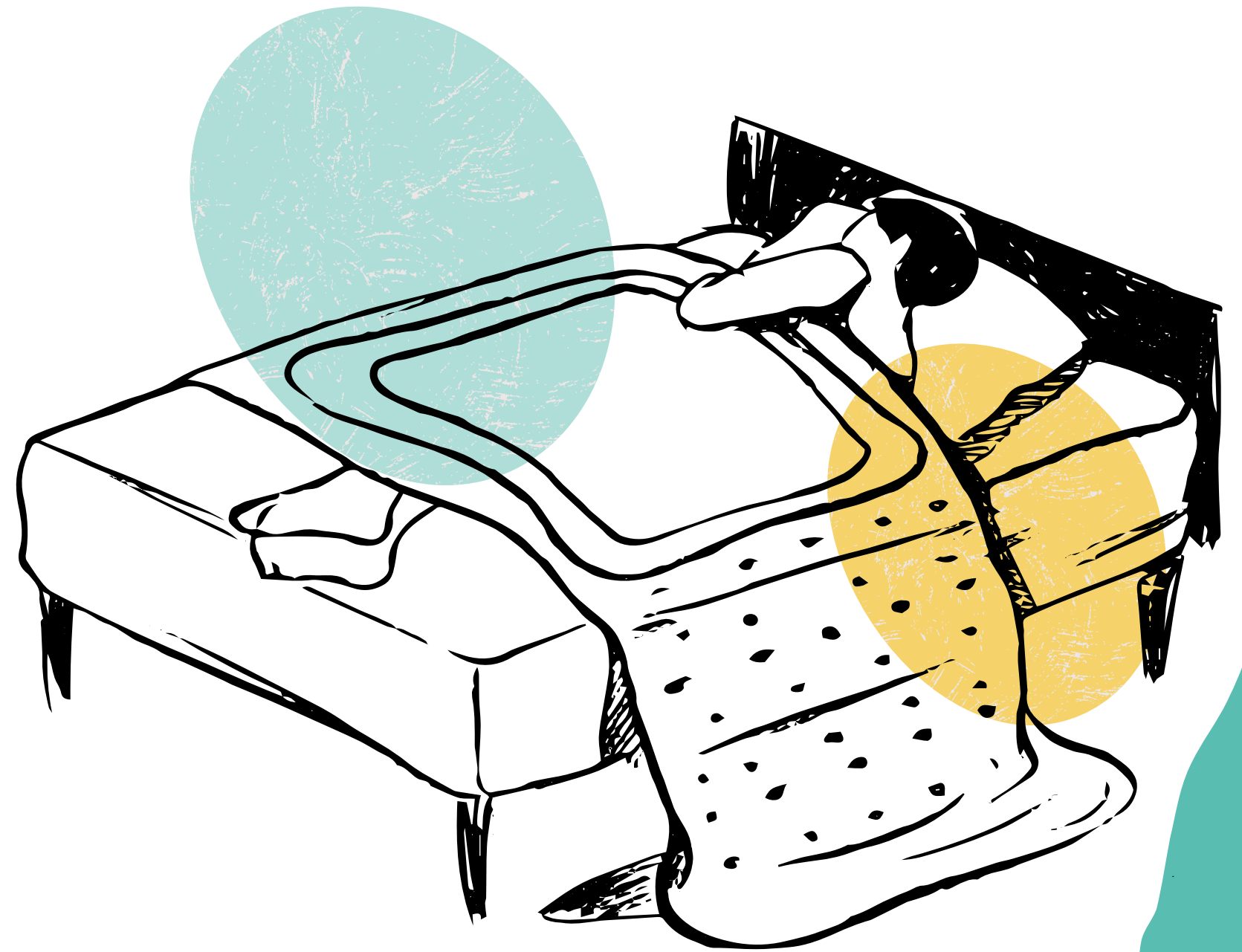
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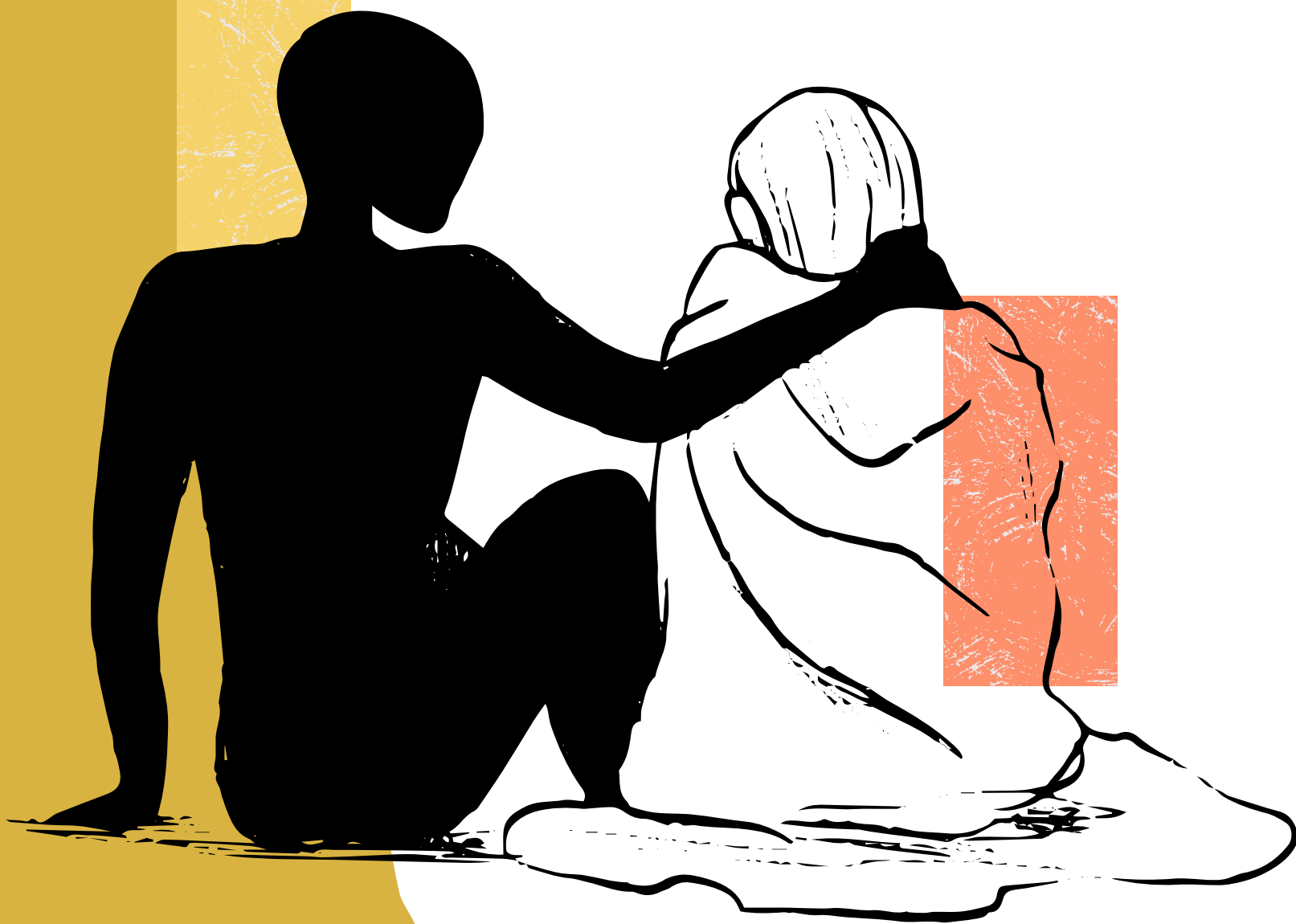
- Assessment, including exploring motivation behind behaviour
- Solution focused questions
- Contributing factors- CBT and exposure therapy
- Relationships are key:
  - Meetings
  - Liaison with stakeholders
- What is possible at school- guaranteeing success



# Addressing the issue

- Case management
- School programs e.g. Beyond the gates
- ROSH- educational neglect
- Alternative schooling options
- Punitive approaches





# Resources

Headspace

Reach Out

Kids Helpline

Parent Line

Smiling Minds

The Brave Program

Parent Works

Pip-Ed

[parentingstrategies.net](http://parentingstrategies.net)

This Way Up



# Questions and Comments

# References

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