

# Withdrawal Behavior Encyclopedia Article

## Withdrawal Behavior

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# Withdrawal Behavior

*Tendency to avoid either unfamiliar persons, locations, or situations.*

Withdrawal behavior is characterized by the tendency to avoid the unfamiliar, either people, places, or situations. Though withdrawal, or avoidance, can be the result of a temperamental tendency toward inhibition to unfamiliar events, anxiety over the anticipation of a critical evaluation of the child, or a conditioned avoidant response, often called a **phobia**, can produce withdrawal. These are three different mechanisms, each of which can mediate withdrawal behavior in the child. The withdrawal or avoidance that is seen in the preschool years is, most of the time, due to a temperamental bias that makes some children uncertain over unfamiliar events. During later childhood, withdrawal or avoidance occurs to very specific events, like lightening, animals, insects, or foods. At this state, withdrawal is usually not the result of a temperamental bias, but more often is due to conditioning experiences in which the child had a painful or frightening experience in association with the even he avoids.

A small group of children who appear withdrawn may have serious mental illness, including **schizophrenia** or **autism**. However, these are relatively rare illnesses and therefore the average child who appears withdrawn will probably not be afflicted with these problems.