

Newsletter

Supporting your child with bullying *The Wellbeing in Mind Team*

NHS

Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys
NHS Foundation Trust

Autumn Term 2

What is bullying?

Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else. It includes name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening, or undermining someone.

It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online. It's usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally (NSPCC).

Types of bullying can include:

- Physical bullying: hitting, slapping or pushing someone
- Verbal bullying: name calling, gossiping or threatening someone
- Non-verbal abuse: hand signs or text messages
- Emotional abuse: threatening, intimidating or humiliating someone
- Exclusion: ignoring or isolating someone
- Undermining, constant criticism or spreading rumours
- Controlling or manipulating someone
- Making silent, hoax or abusive calls.

Signs that your child is being bullied

Every young person is different, but typical signs that your child is being bullied may include:

- Appearing more withdrawn, low in mood or more anxious than usual.
- Having sudden outbursts of anger at home which can't be explained.
- Seeming less confident within themselves.
- Beginning to avoid school or refusing to go to school altogether.
- Complaining of physical symptoms of anxiety and saying they are unwell.
- Changes to their behaviour, for example, beginning to dress differently or doing new activities to meet the demands of peer pressure.
- Having unexplained physical injuries such as bruises or scratches.
- Personal belongings becoming damaged or missing.

Top tips for helping your child

Open up a conversation

An effective way of opening up a conversation about bullying is explaining what bullying is and how it can make people feel. This can normalise what your child might be feeling and can it easier for them to open up. Conversation starters can include:

- "I've noticed you've been feeling... lately, do you want to talk about it?"
- "What has been on your mind recently?"

- "You've not seemed yourself in the past couple of weeks, is there anything you want to talk about?"
- "What has been the biggest challenge you have had today?"

Listen to their experiences

At times, it can be difficult to discuss with your child how they're feeling, especially if you are concerned that they are having hard time. You might be worried that you don't know what to say or how your child could react or respond, here are some tips that could help:

- Find a suitable time and place.
- Think about what you want to say.
- **Be patient** – remember it can be difficult for young people to collate their thoughts and feelings and find the right words to express themselves.
- **Try not to feel disheartened** at your first attempt, sometimes it can take young people a while to open up.
- **Remain calm** - it can be difficult to hear that your child is being bullied and struggling, try to remain calm and manage your own emotions.
- **Give your child the space that they need** – pressuring your child to talk about their experiences can adversely push your child away.
- **Be non-judgement** – it is important to try and set aside pre-conceived judgements and try to avoid expressing those judgements.

Help your child build their self-esteem

- Tell them how much you love them and what makes them special.
- Gently challenge some of their negative beliefs about themselves.
- Encourage them to be themselves, and show you value who they are and not what they do or perfection.
- Help them to identify their identity, qualities and strengths, and their sense of belonging.

Encourage them to spend time with people and do the things that they enjoy

Encourage your child to spend time with peers who treat them well. Help them to think about who these people are and support them to arrange times to hang out or do activities with them.

Take action to stop the bullying

Giving your child emotional support is very important, but they can only begin recovering from their experiences when the bullying has stopped and they feel safe again. You can find tips and advice to help you address the bullying on the following websites:

- <https://www.kidscape.org.uk/> (includes a parent advice line)
- www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk



Follow us on Instagram @wellbeinginmind.mhst and X @WiMT_MHST