

A Guide

FOR PARENTS AND CARERS of children and young people

Positive parenting



If you need this information in a different format or language,
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Welcome

Your job as a parent can be both challenging and rewarding. It is a job where very little training is given to prepare parents for what lies ahead. Every family experiences difficulty from time to time. When extra pressures come along, these can make a hard job even harder. At these times it may be difficult to think about what help or information you may need.

When things go wrong, and they almost always will at some point, it does not mean that you have somehow failed as a parent - things go wrong for everyone. It is often the way difficulties are handled that can make a difference to your children, both now and in the future.

What is this handbook about?

This handbook can offer some ideas to help you find your way through what can be a maze of issues and advice. It gives contacts and further information you can follow up when you are deciding how to deal with issues. This handbook also offers helpful tips from professionals and things to look out for.

Who has produced this handbook?

Flying Start, Children & Young People's Partnership, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council to promote children's well-being and help parents in their task of positive parenting.

We hope you find this handbook helpful and a useful resource.

* Throughout this booklet the term 'parents' has been used to mean mothers, fathers, carers and other adults with responsibility for caring for a child.



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All kinds of parents

Your family is unique

There's no such thing as an 'average' family - every family is different. Growing up with one parent can be a good thing, leading to a close relationship. Encourage your child to spend time with their other parent if it's safe and possible. Help them understand that it's okay to love you both.

Young parents may face extra challenges. Don't be embarrassed to ask for support and advice. Your education may have to be cut short, but don't give up on plans for the future. Make sure that you have good, reliable childcare.

In a new relationship, everyone needs time to get used to things. Change can make us all feel unsafe, so it's important to make sure everyone feels secure. Take things slowly and carefully.

Grandparents can help out and are an important link to family history and a sense of belonging. Their experience can be useful. They have lives of their own so don't ask them to do too much. In family break downs they may lose touch.

Stop

 We are separating and my son will be living with me.

Think

 Is he feeling insecure? Have you neglected his feelings?

Do

 A stable family life is important to children. Remind him that you both still love him.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



We are all equal

Diversity is all about differences. We are all different - physically, socially, culturally and sexually. You may have a child with Special Educational Needs (SEN) or a disability. But not everyone values and respects the differences in society. Discrimination is when you are treated differently just because of who you are. Although we're all different we all have the right to equal respect, opportunity and justice.



If your sleep is often disturbed, arrange for a trusted relative or friend to care for your baby or child so that you can get some sleep. Talk to your Health Visitor. Between the ages of three and four years, your child is likely to be dry during the day, with the occasional accident. This is often a gradual process where more and more nights will be dry nights.

Bedwetting & sleeping difficulties

Patience, praise and peace

There are many different reasons why babies and toddlers do not sleep through the night. Feel confident in yourself to know whether your child is really distressed or just restless. Trust your instincts.

Try to establish a regular night time sleep routine for your child early on by putting them to bed at a regular time each night. Prepare a warm, comfortable place for them to relax in. Reading to your child at bedtime helps them to unwind, and gives you some special time together. If your child is scared of the dark, try keeping a night light on.

Bedwetting may be stressful for both of you and will often wake your child. It is not easy to know why some children take longer to be dry at night than others. Try not to lose your patience or punish them, your child is not doing this on purpose. Children learn at their own pace and praise and support will help.

Stop
 ✘ Your child of seven often wets the bed.

Think
 ? Could they be unwell, or could there be something worrying them?

Do
 ✔ Try to understand how they feel and if they are upset by the wetting. Talk to your Doctor or School Nurse.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



- Night time checklist**
- Is your child too hot or cold?
 - Are they comfortable?
 - Could they be hungry?
 - Check their bed is not wet.
 - Are they scared of the dark?
 - Did they have a calm relaxed time before bed?
 - Is the house too noisy?

Bookstart in Wales is a programme that aims to encourage all parents and carers to enjoy books with children from as early an age as possible. Bookstart currently provides three packs for children up to the age of four. Every pack contains books for the child and guidance on book selection and reading for parents.

Bookstart Baby Pack

For children aged nine months. These are usually given out by Health Visitors to babies at around seven to nine months so most parents receive this one. Ask if you haven't received yours.

Bookstart Early Years

This pack is given in a 'grown up' school bag which is ideal for children starting nursery school. Health Visitors often distribute these packs but if you haven't received one ask your local nursery or library.

For more information visit: www.bookstart.org.uk

Books & learning

Making learning fun

Book sharing is a great way to help your child learn to talk, particularly when the stories have rhymes, lots of repetition or encourage joining in. You will be amazed at how books can influence your child's vocabulary and how many new words and phrases they pick up from the books and stories you share.

As a parent, you are your child's first and most important Teacher. Children are born to be lifelong learners, with an eagerness to learn new things everyday. Babies and toddlers who are introduced to books early, grow into confident readers with a curiosity about life and a lifelong love of books. Sharing books with your child is also a wonderful way to build a loving relationship, increase their language skills and help them to understand the world.

As your child grows and develops, one of the best things you can do is to establish a routine of visiting the library together. This way your child will feel confident about using the library, finding books and information for school projects or to pursue an interest.



Stop

Is your child struggling with language and communication? Talk to your Doctor or Health Visitor.



Think

Choose a quiet place with no distractions and sit and read with your child.



Do

Talk to your child from birth as they listen to words spoken and learn how to talk.



Tips

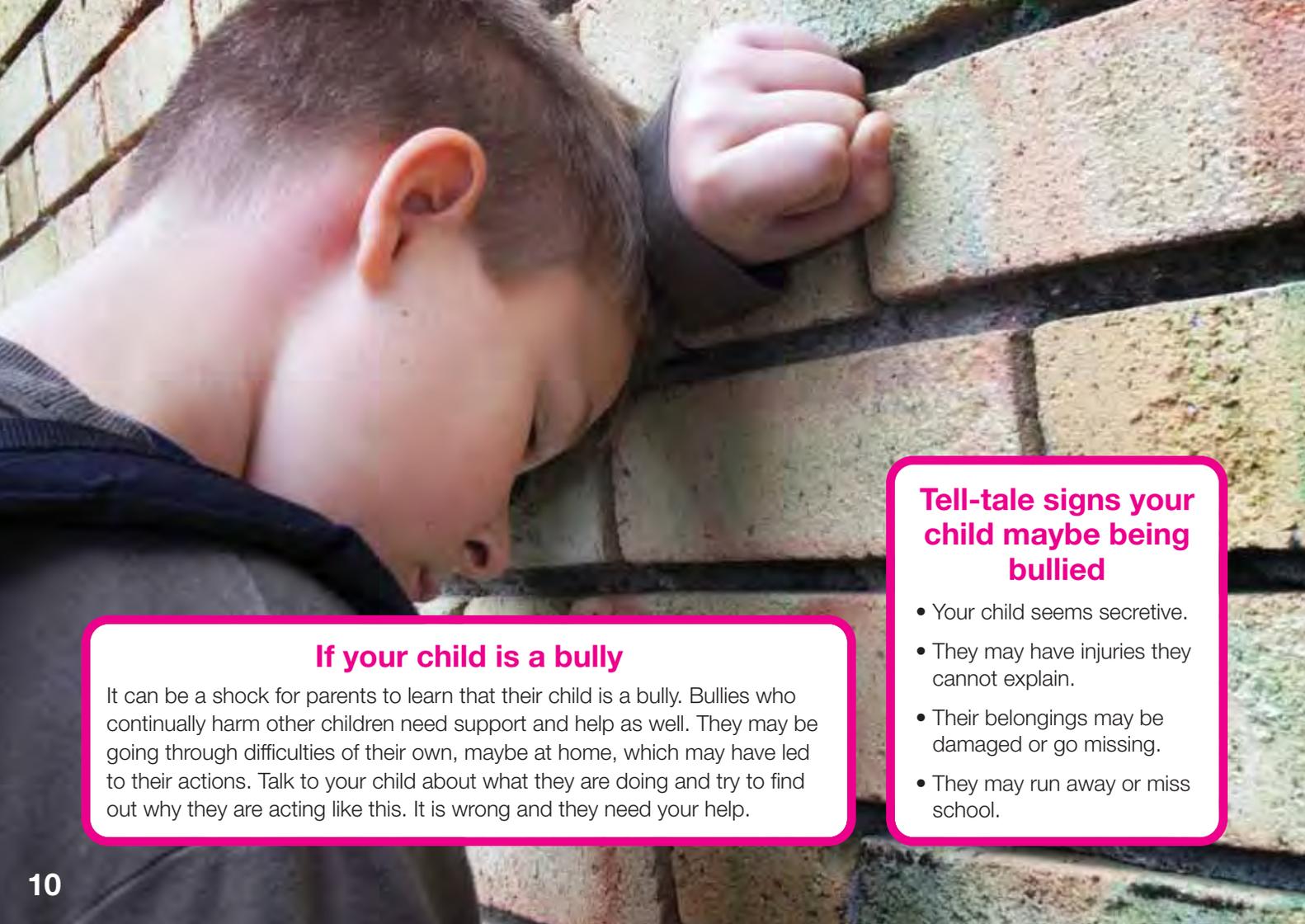
Libraries

Libraries have wonderful books for babies and toddlers and they don't mind how excited or noisy their young visitors get. All families are welcome.

Book Trust Early Years Awards

Is an annual event celebrating the best of new books for babies.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Bullying

Children have the right not to be hurt

Bullying is a frightening experience. It can isolate and damage self-confidence. Bullying can have negative long-term effects on children, leading to depression and even suicidal thoughts and actions.

What other children think is very important to your child and fitting in is a must. Those thought of as different for any reason may be picked on and bullied. Be aware of the possibility of bullying and make sure you know the tell-tale signs.

You may think that your child is unlikely to be bullied but the reality is that bullying can happen at any time and to any child. If your child tells you about a 'friend' who is being bullied listen carefully and take them seriously. They may be trying to tell you it's happening to them.

All schools in Neath Port Talbot have an Anti-Bullying Policy. School action alone cannot guarantee it stops, so it is important that you work together with your child's school.



The facts

- Bullying is unacceptable.
- Bullying can happen anywhere to any child.
- It can take many forms, from cyberbullying or verbal abuse to physical attack.
- Bullying is the repeated abuse of a child by one or several people.
- Most bullying is done by children who are the same age as the victim.
- Bullies may be children who are experiencing bullying themselves, maybe at home.
- Children with a disability or SEN are more likely to be bullied.

If your child is a bully

It can be a shock for parents to learn that their child is a bully. Bullies who continually harm other children need support and help as well. They may be going through difficulties of their own, maybe at home, which may have led to their actions. Talk to your child about what they are doing and try to find out why they are acting like this. It is wrong and they need your help.

Tell-tale signs your child maybe being bullied

- Your child seems secretive.
- They may have injuries they cannot explain.
- Their belongings may be damaged or go missing.
- They may run away or miss school.



Stop

You notice injuries with no explanation. Behaviour seems different, they may seem secretive.



Think

They may be being bullied. You need to do something about it and find out what is happening.



Do

See the Headteacher. Outside school consider contacting the Police. Reassure your child.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



If your child is between three and four years old, they are entitled to a free part-time nursery place. Early education and nursery classes are usually open during term time. Children attend on a sessional basis. Contact Neath Port Talbot Childcare and Family Information Service on 01639 873018 for advice.

Childminding & daycare

How do I make the right choice?

You are responsible for the safety and well-being of your children. It is important that you think carefully about the person you are going to leave them with, whether this is a babysitter, childminder, at a nursery or with a relative or friend. Local Children's Centres can offer fantastic childcare and advice.

When you leave your child in the care of someone else you want them to be as well cared for and safe as they are with you. Therefore, when choosing childcare take your time and visit a number of different settings. Do not be afraid of asking to see qualifications and registration certificates. Talk to other parents.

Babysitters do not need qualifications or certificates and it is recommended they are over 16. A good babysitter will have a good reputation locally. Even with family and trusted friends you should establish rules and let them know your childcare routines, like bedtimes and food they like. Also let them know about any allergies and leave a number to contact you in an emergency.



Stop

You would like your child to be cared for by a childminder in their own home.



Think

Has anyone been recommended? Talk to Neath Port Talbot Family Information Service.



Do

Check qualifications and visit more than once at different times of the day. Make sure you feel happy.



Types of childcare

The main types are:

- **Day nurseries** for under fives during the working day.
- **Playgroups** for children between two and five. Sessions usually last no longer than four hours.
- **Out of school clubs or kids clubs** provide sessional play care for over fours.
- **Childminders** who care for children in their own home.
- **Nannies, au pairs and home child carers** employed by parents to provide care in the child's own home.

Ensure that your chosen childcare is registered with CSSIW.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



What is neglect?

Neglect happens when a parent or carer fails to meet a child's basic needs of food, shelter, security, attention or protection.

Children left alone

It can be a lonely and frightening experience

If a child is left alone it can be a sad, lonely, frightening and dangerous experience. There are possible risks, both physical and emotional.

The level of responsibility which is given to the child to look after themselves and to somehow manage whatever may happen is impossible for a younger child. They may say that they do not mind being left and may find it exciting at first, but they cannot fully know the possible risks and how to handle them.

Everyday things that happen in life such as hunger, a storm, the phone ringing or someone coming to the front door can cause problems. An accident, feeling ill or a power cut may occur and these may not be issues that a child could cope with.

If they are told, the Police and/or Children's Services may take action if they think that a child has been neglected by being left alone.



Stop

You notice a child who appears to be left alone for long periods of time.



Think

Is there immediate risk of harm to the child?



Do

If you are worried contact Children's Services. If they are in danger now, call the Police.



Guidelines

The NSPCC have guidelines advising that children under 13 should not be left alone. This does not have the force of law, but is suggested as good practice.

As a child grows up and becomes more responsible, leaving them alone after school, or during the day is okay as long as they are prepared. If your child is 13 or over and you feel they can deal with this, it is important that they know where you are and who to contact in an emergency.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Education

Depending upon the disability or Special Educational Need that your child has, they may need additional support in their mainstream school. In some circumstances your child may need to attend a special school - a specialist environment designed to match their educational needs. Every school has a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) who can discuss any issues with you. You can also contact the Child Disability Team 01639 686850 for impartial information.

Children with disabilities

Getting the best support available

If your child has a disability the future can feel like a real challenge, but you are not alone. You can't stop your child's condition, but you can help with the disability they experience by making sure that they get the best support available. Neath Port Talbot Children's Services provides a range of support.

Your Doctor and Health Authority provide the help you need to understand your child's disability and help you plan treatment, therapy, equipment and ongoing care. There is extra support which can include special leisure facilities and short breaks.

Your child is especially protected by law. The Disability Discrimination Act makes it unlawful for any service provider like schools to treat disabled people differently because of their disability. We support equal rights.



Benefits

Benefits that you could receive to help you include Disability Living Allowance, Carer's Allowance, help with extra housing costs, Carers Blue Badge Scheme, free dental treatment and prescriptions and help with the cost of glasses. In some cases travel to hospital, school meals and road tax exemption. There are organisations and charities who provide further help, advice and support.



Stop

You think your child may have some form of disability.



Think

Some children do not appear to have a disability at birth, it can develop over time. Do not panic.



Do

Contact your Health Visitor, Doctor, local Children's Centre or school.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



You can never overestimate the effect that a dad can have on their children's lives. Therefore, it is important to get involved, as much as possible, as you can have a huge effect on your child. If you are worried or have any concerns then try talking to other fathers about their experiences.

Dads matter

An important part of your child's life

Becoming a dad is a fantastic experience, and one that will change your life. However, with it will come lots of questions, and you may find yourself having worries or concerns about becoming a father. You may find that it helps to talk to other fathers about their experiences, as most of them will have asked themselves the same questions.

Fathers play a significant role in the lives of their children, and this is often underestimated. Research shows that children who have a positive relationship with their dads are more likely to do better at school, be more confident, and develop better adult relationships.

Children need to feel that they have unconditional love from both of their parents, and that whatever happens in life their parents will always be there for them. Therefore, try and develop a caring and loving environment for your child and get involved with their schoolwork and their extra curricular activities.

Stop

Are there warning signs that your relationship with your child is suffering?

Think

Children, who have a positive relationship with their dads, are more likely to succeed at school.

Do

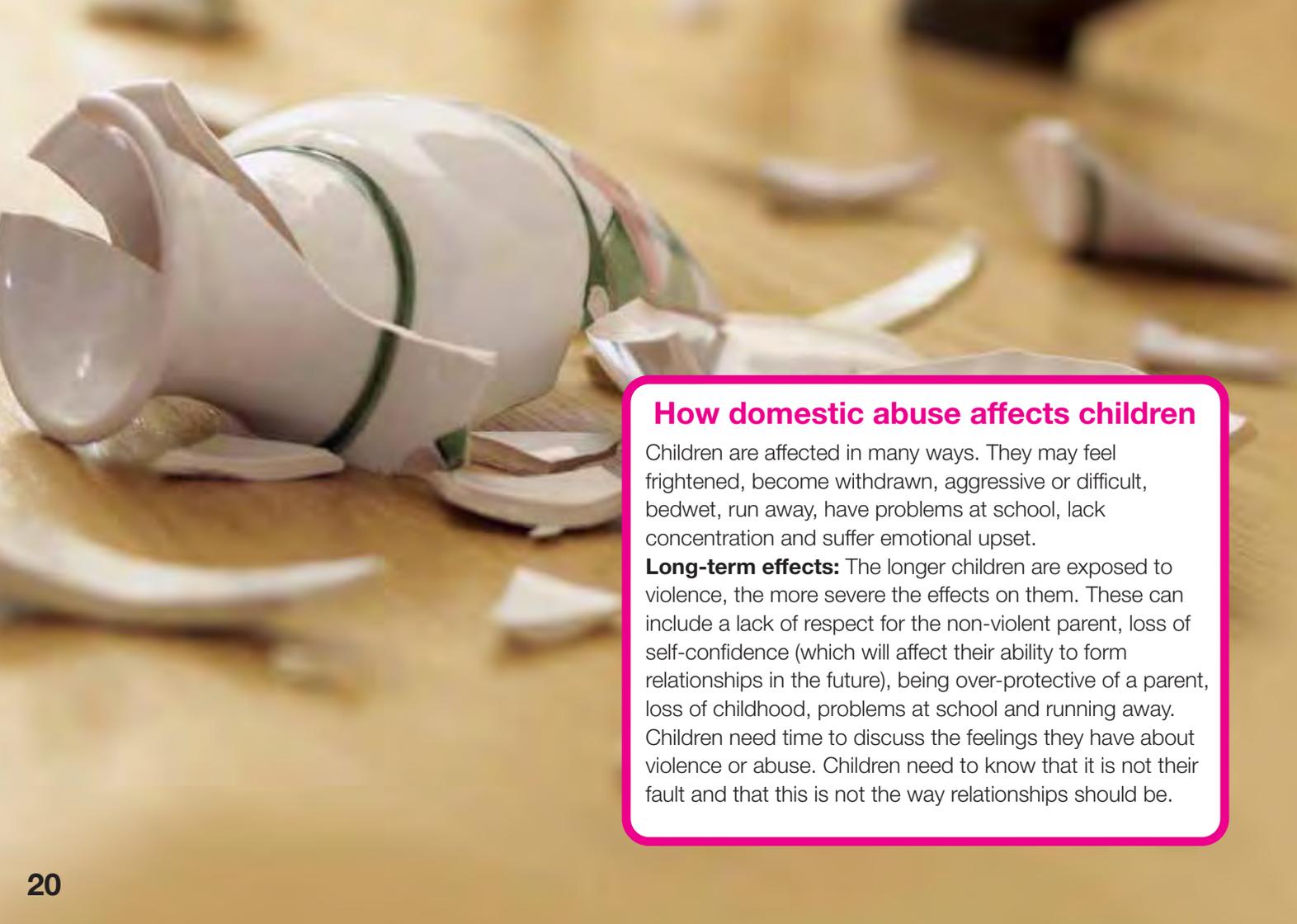
Listen and talk to your child, and try to be involved in their lives as much as possible.



Tips

Dads can often be forgotten, but it is important to remember that both parents are just as important as each other. Parents need to work together and keep to the same rules. This applies when disciplining your child, and it is also important that you do not take sides in an argument. You should also never argue with your child's mother in front of your child, and if you are separated, its important to get on well together.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



How domestic abuse affects children

Children are affected in many ways. They may feel frightened, become withdrawn, aggressive or difficult, bedwet, run away, have problems at school, lack concentration and suffer emotional upset.

Long-term effects: The longer children are exposed to violence, the more severe the effects on them. These can include a lack of respect for the non-violent parent, loss of self-confidence (which will affect their ability to form relationships in the future), being over-protective of a parent, loss of childhood, problems at school and running away. Children need time to discuss the feelings they have about violence or abuse. Children need to know that it is not their fault and that this is not the way relationships should be.

Domestic abuse

You are not alone

Domestic abuse is a crime. It affects many families across Neath Port Talbot. Women (often pregnant) and children are those mostly affected by domestic abuse, often when drugs or alcohol are involved.

Children do hear, they do see and they are aware of violence at home, even if you think they don't. Children react in different ways to violence and research suggests that they are more likely to become abusers or victims later in life. Be a positive role model so that they learn other ways of behaving.

Many people find it difficult to understand why people stay in abusive situations. Fear, love, the risk of homelessness and money can make it difficult for women with children to leave and some may want to stay put and get their abuser to leave. It is your responsibility to protect your child and remove them from harm. You can seek help from a range of specialist services in Neath Port Talbot. You can also report incidents to the Police.



Stop

Any violence or abuse between adults at home will negatively affect children.



Think

Take responsibility by seeking help to stop or make it stop.



Do

In an emergency, call 999. Get support and help now. The longer it lasts, the more damaging it becomes.



What is domestic abuse?

Abuse can be physical, sexual or verbal. It can also include things such as the constant breaking of trust, psychological games, harassment and financial control.

What do I do now?

If you want to leave an abusive relationship and are worried about safety, you do not have to suffer alone. There is support out there. There are three important steps you must take:

- Recognise that it is happening.
- Accept you are not to blame.
- Get help and support.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Don't shake the baby

Different ways to cope

It is normal to get frustrated sometimes when a baby will not stop crying. It is the way all babies make sure that their basic needs are met. It is neither your fault nor the fault of your baby. A baby with additional difficulties may cry more which can be very stressful.

A shake can cause death or serious and long-lasting brain damage. Shaken Baby Syndrome is an injury caused as a result of a baby being shaken so that their head wobbles rapidly back and forth. The force of this can tear the blood vessels that connect the brain and skull. A baby's neck muscles are not strong enough to hold their head firmly. Never ever shake a baby for any reason. It is never safe to shake a child, not even in play. It is important for other children at home, your babysitter or any other carer to understand the dangers.

Contact your Health Visitor or Doctor. Do not allow a situation to go on where you feel that you are unable to cope.



Ways to cope

Some of the ways to cope include:

- Count to ten before doing anything, allow yourself to calm down.
- Hug and cuddle your child.
- Check they are not hungry, too hot or cold or need changing.
- Go for a walk or a drive to help them sleep.
- Make use of a helpline in times of crisis.
- Walk out of the room for a short time, but stay nearby.
- Ask someone else you trust to take over for a while.



The facts

- Shaking is often a response to extreme frustration.
- Shaking can cause damage that you cannot see.
- Shaking can cause damage that is long-lasting.
- Never shake a child for any reason.
- There are different ways to cope with a crying baby.
- Do not suffer alone, seek support from others.



Stop

Your baby will not stop crying and you cannot sleep. You feel tired and frustrated.



Think

It is not your baby's fault, they may be feeling upset or uncomfortable in some way.



Do

Try to understand your baby's needs when they are having difficulties. Take a break if you can.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Tell-tale signs

Signs to look out for are:

- Appearing panicky or tense.
- Being drowsy and lacking concentration.
- Complaining of sickness.
- Strange eating patterns.
- Has no energy.
- Seem depressed.
- Has skin problems or spots.
- Is aggressive.
- Unable to sleep.
- Seem secretive.

Not all of the signs above mean your child is taking drugs. Look out for changes in their behaviour and relationships.

Drug & alcohol misuse

Look out for the signs

There are many reasons why young people may start to drink or use drugs. They want to show they are growing up and see it as a sign of maturity. They may also feel under pressure from their friends to experiment. It is also seen as a means of escape and having fun.

There are many tell-tale signs that your child may be using drugs or alcohol, take a look at the box on the left. There may be a change in relationships with family and friends, how they act or a change in performance at school.

Other signs can involve changes in a financial situation and personal possessions 'disappearing' and being sold.

It is important to discuss drugs and alcohol early with your child. Some parents worry that doing this may encourage their child to use drugs but avoiding talking about drugs will not protect them.



Stop

Your child's behaviour seems to have changed completely.



Think

Could they be using drugs or drinking alcohol?



Do

Don't jump to conclusions, find out the facts. If your child needs help get it now.



The facts

- If you or someone at home uses drugs or alcohol you are seriously affecting the care and well-being of your children.
- Children of users are more likely to become addicts.
- Most children will be aware of drugs and alcohol before they leave primary school.
- Children will be more responsive to being told about the risks.
- Provide good information about the dangers. It does not guarantee non-use but will increase the chance of an informed choice.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Encouraging good behaviour

Communication through the years pays off

Every day, your child learns new things. It's what makes childhood so exciting. You have an important job in teaching them about values and beliefs and by being a good role model. Start early and see your hard work pay-off.

Using positive feedback is a great idea. Build up self-esteem by talking about their strengths, not their weaknesses. Being too critical can damage confidence. When they do something good, praise them and explain why. Rather than saying "Good girl" try saying, "You're a good girl for helping me."

You can use positive feedback when they are misbehaving too. Tell them you're upset about their behaviour, not them. They won't see themselves as a bad person and know they have the power to change the way they act. It's up to you to set boundaries and rules in their life, which will change as they grow. Be consistent with your rules.

Life is busy but take time to sit down and spend time together.

Stop



Do they say things like "I'll never be able to do this right"?

Think



Is your child's self-esteem low?

Do



Praise them where you can. Tell them you're unhappy with their behaviour, not them personally.



Positive feedback

- Use positive feedback to build up their self-esteem.
- Praise your child when they do well and explain why you're pleased with them.
- Children are happier if they have rules to follow.
- Use play to teach your child good behaviour.
- As they grow, change the way you encourage them.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Smoking at home can lead to health problems. This is called passive smoking and it means you are forcing your child to breathe in your smoke. Even if you smoke outside it can still damage their health. Now you are responsible for your child why not give up smoking? Visit <http://smokefree.nhs.uk> for more information.

Healthy lifestyles

Start healthy habits early in life

With healthy habits from birth, you can give your baby a good start for a healthy and happy future. Breast milk is ideal for your baby's growing needs and giving them breast milk can make a big difference. If you are not as healthy as you could be, now could be a great time to establish good healthy habits for all the family.

Babies like the foods they get used to. If you give them lots of different, healthy foods to try when they are babies and toddlers, they are more likely to eat a variety of healthy foods as they grow up.

As they grow, you can help them by playing with them and helping them make new movements and explore their surroundings. As they develop encourage them to start a sport or take up a new activity. The whole family can enjoy a healthy lifestyle together, even simple things like hiking or cycling help our health and allow us time together to relax and get fit.

Stop

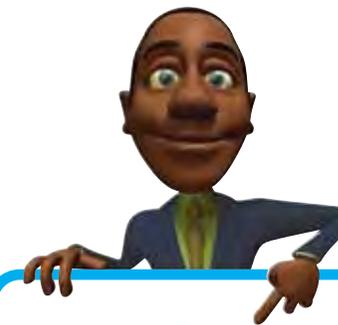
Do you drink too much alcohol, take drugs or smoke?

Think

You may be passing these habits onto your child. Now is the time to get healthy together.

Do

Get help if you need it from NHS websites and speak to your practice nurse.



Tips

Here are some basic rules to help you lead a more healthy lifestyle:

- Set a good example. Your good health habits will become your child's good health habits.
- Exercise together.
- Eat well.
- Drink alcohol with caution. Know the limits.
- Do not smoke or take drugs. If you do, get help to give up.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Play & learning

Parents have a key role

Playing is a natural way for your child to learn about the world around them. Children who are encouraged to express themselves freely through play tend to be more able to adapt, learn skills and perform better at school. Your child will learn through play at home, at nursery, at playgroups, with their friends and at school.

As a parent it's important to spend time playing with your child, providing stimulation and interaction. Involving children in daily activities such as shopping, laying the table or cooking will provide 'real life' opportunities for them to learn. Play is a vital part of your child's development and you have an important role to play. Learning to play with your child can be great fun and can bring you closer together.

If your child isn't receiving enough stimulation they may not be getting the opportunity they need to learn. Therefore, you should try to introduce as many different experiences as you can. Try to discover what sort of play interests your child and play along with them.



Stop

Avoid letting your child get bored. Spend time with young children and keep them stimulated.



Think

Are they receiving enough stimulation from you or from other carers?



Do

Make time to have fun playing with your child.



Early Years Foundation Phase (EYFP)

All Welsh Assembly Government funded nurseries, reception classes and more recently the 6-7 year olds carry out the Foundation Phase education.

School Years

Primary schools recognise the value of play and employ it as a crucial learning tool throughout the school day. At home children will begin to play more on their own or with their friends, but it is still vital to be involved in your child's play activities.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Positive parenting & self-esteem

Make them feel great!

Positive parenting is about doing things you enjoy together and bringing out the best in your child. You can do this by listening and understanding, praising and encouraging their efforts, and noticing and rewarding good behaviour.

It is often easy to point out where your child is going wrong and forget to notice the things they do right. Parental attention and praise affects children so you need to use it in the right way! Not only will this have an effect on your child's behaviour in a positive way, it will also make your child feel happy, loved, wanted and secure and this is the basis of lifelong confidence and self-esteem.

Children have to learn to make their own decisions and to establish their independence from their parents. Unfortunately their decisions might not always fit with yours. Choose your battles and let some go! Be friendly and supportive and let them know you understand and that you are always willing to listen.

Stop

✘ Is your child eating well and getting enough exercise?
Are they trying to tell you something?

Think

🔍 Set rules and stick to them and remember that you are in charge! Don't give up on talking.

Do

✔ Develop a good relationship with your child. Lead a healthy lifestyle and do things together.



Self-esteem

A sense of self-esteem is your child's best protection from other difficulties. You can help to make them feel good about themselves in many ways. By being a good role model, giving good feedback, understanding and helping your child and being natural and affectionate, you can give your child more confidence. Make sure you praise your child when necessary and make them feel good about themselves.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Potty training

How and when to potty train

Most children begin to start using a potty around their second birthday, although it is important to remember that every child is different. Potty training can be stressful for both you and your child so it is important to introduce the concept fairly slowly. This can make the process much smoother as it removes the pressure.

You can't force your child to use a potty and if they aren't ready they won't be able to do it. However there are a number of signs that your child is starting to develop bladder control, such as, they get to know when they're passing urine, the gap between wetting is at least an hour and they know when they need to pee. Potty training is usually fastest if your child is at the last stage before you start the training. If you start earlier, be prepared for a lot of accidents as your child learns.



Stop

Don't get frustrated with your child and be patient.



Think

Every child is different so try not to compare your child to others.



Do

Praise your child when they succeed but don't make a big deal out of it.



Tips

It's probably easier to start potty training in the summer, when washed nappies dry more quickly and there are fewer clothes to take off. Try to start it over a period of time when there are no great disruptions or changes to your child's or your family's routine.

Leave a potty where your child can see it and can get to know what it's for. Introduce the potty to your child's toilet routine gradually and praise them when they get it right.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Safer sleeping

Reducing the risks of cot death

A cot in your room is the safest place for your baby to sleep in their first six months. Keep the cot tidy and do not use plastic sheets. Babies can overheat, so try to keep the room between 16-20°C. Do not use duvets, quilts or pillows until your baby is one year old and never use hot water bottles or electric blankets. Always position your baby in the 'Feet to Foot' position, with their feet at the foot of the cot so that they can't move down inside their blanket. Unless a health professional has told you to do something different, always put your baby to sleep on it's back. Never let your baby fall asleep propped up on a cushion, on a sofa or chair, and don't let anyone fall asleep while nursing your baby.

Always put your baby to sleep in the 'Back to Sleep' and 'Feet to Foot' position.

Babies aren't good at keeping their temperature constant, so make sure they don't get too hot or too cold.

Keep your baby's cot in your room for the first six months.

Stop

Always put your baby to sleep in the 'Back to Sleep' and 'Feet to Foot' position.

Think

Make sure they don't get too hot or too cold.

Do

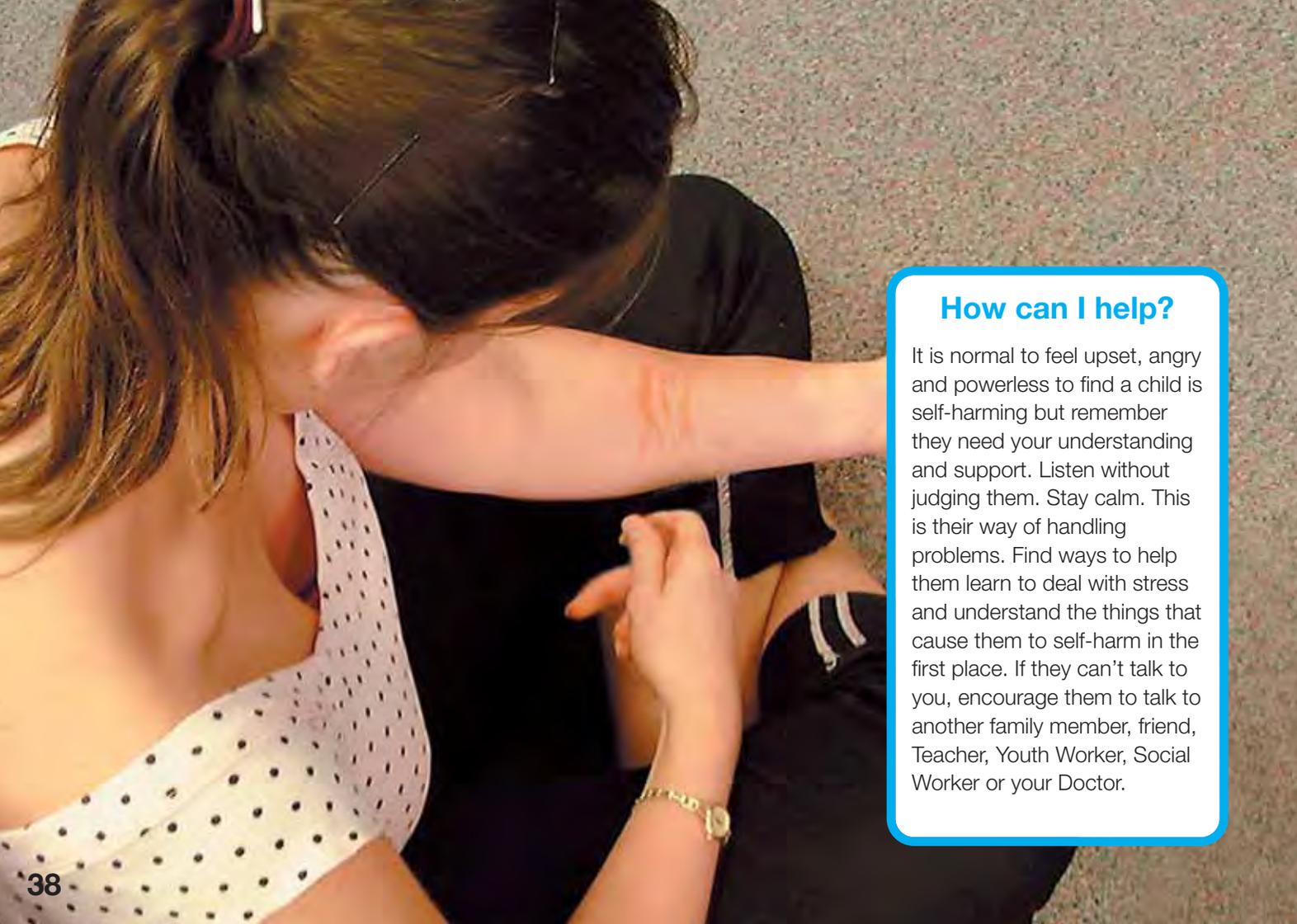
Keep your baby's cot in your room for the first six months.



Tips

If you take a baby who cannot sleep into your bed, do not take any medicine, drugs or alcohol that may make you sleep more heavily than usual. Remember that when sleeping next to you your baby will be warmer anyway, so if they fall asleep under your duvet they may get too hot. Be aware that they face a bigger health risk if you or your partner is a smoker.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



How can I help?

It is normal to feel upset, angry and powerless to find a child is self-harming but remember they need your understanding and support. Listen without judging them. Stay calm. This is their way of handling problems. Find ways to help them learn to deal with stress and understand the things that cause them to self-harm in the first place. If they can't talk to you, encourage them to talk to another family member, friend, Teacher, Youth Worker, Social Worker or your Doctor.

Self-harming

Understanding and support

Self-harming or hurting yourself can take many forms. This may include cutting, burning or scalding, hitting, picking skin, head banging against a wall or other object or taking an overdose. Eating disorders are a form of self-harm.

While the aim is to hurt, it is not usually to kill themselves and it may carry on for years.

People who self-harm often use it as a way of dealing with their problems, such as depression, bullying, abuse or feeling unloved. Those who self-harm usually think badly of themselves and need even more attention and support.

Self-harming is not just about getting attention, as it is most often carried out in private and kept secret. Children and young people go to great lengths to cover up their self-harming. What they are doing is a sign that they need help.



Facts

- Self-harming is a sign of deeper problems such as bullying, abuse or feeling unloved.
- Young people who self-harm say it is a way of being in control and use it to help them cope, as the physical pain takes their mind off their problems.
- Young people who self-harm often do not get help for themselves because they may be worried about what you will think of them and their self-harming.



Stop

I suspect she is hurting herself. She always wears long sleeves and seems secretive.



Think

Find out the facts. Try to understand why it is happening. Has something happened at home?



Do

Give them time to talk. Do not be cross. Ring 999 if it looks serious or they have taken an overdose.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Is it legal?

It is unlawful for a parent or carer to smack their child, except where this amounts to 'reasonable punishment' regardless of any individual, cultural or religious justification. There is a grey area in the Law as to whether a 'smack' amounts to reasonable punishment. However, physical punishment will be considered 'unreasonable' if it leaves a mark on the child or if the child is hit with an implement such as a cane or a belt*. As a result, child protection professionals will assess incidents of physical ill-treatment of children, in order that they can understand, prevent and explain the consequences of further incidents to parents.

*Source www.childrenslegalcentre.com

Smacking

The great debate

It is important that children learn how to behave. Parents have a very important job as role models for their children in helping them to learn how to do this.

Setting limits early-on and explaining reasons for these limits helps to instill self-discipline. Smacking has no long-lasting positive effect and in fact smacking usually has to increase in severity in order to have the same impact on your growing child. This is where the fine line between smacking and hitting can be crossed. Smacking does not teach self-discipline and may teach your child to hurt others.

Every parent gets frustrated at times and it is at these times that a parent may smack in the heat of the moment. However this is an outlet for the parent's frustration, rather than a helpful way of influencing the child's behaviour. Try to use different ways to teach acceptable behaviour. Praise them when they are good and try to distract them from misbehaving.



Stop

My child is being so naughty I feel like smacking them.



Think

This has happened in the past and does not seem to be working.



Do

Think about different ways of showing your child how to behave. Explain why you are angry.



How to avoid smacking

- Try not to let a situation get so bad that you feel you need to smack your child.
- Set limits early on.
- Explain why you may be unhappy with their problem behaviour and praise their good behaviour.
- If you feel so angry you are out of control take time out and walk away.
- Try to take a break, all parents get frustrated sometimes.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Starting school

Change and transition

For children, any kind of change or transition can be scary. Start thinking about your child's early learning place well in advance and research their new nursery or school. It can be a difficult time for parents too.

Nursery school. Being in a large group of children, sometimes for the first time can be a frightening experience. Try going to a Parent and Toddler Group, or attend other activities where other small children are around so they get used to mixing. Be patient if they become clingy and take it slowly.

Starting school. This is a big change in your child's life. Try to prepare them for what will happen and encourage their independence. Visit the school. Talk to their Teacher and share information about your child that may help.

Secondary school. Your child was used to being one of the oldest and now they may be one of the youngest. This can be a difficult time. Make sure your child knows they can tell you about any problems, especially bullying. Exam times can be stressful so be patient and supportive.

Stop

You are feeling anxious about your child starting school.

Think

Do not let your child know how you feel, be strong for them.

Do

Be positive about the exciting change. Talk to your child and reassure them about what's happening.



Tips

- Give your child lots of support and make sure they know what to expect.
- They may feel nervous and say they feel too ill to go to school. They may also be angry towards you or cry - this is all quite normal.
- You might worry how your child is going to cope with being in a new environment, have confidence in them and be strong for them.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Signs of stress

It is important that you know and recognise the signs of stress. This way you can support your child and get extra help if you need to.

Signs are:

- Mood swings.
- Being unable to sleep.
- Trouble concentrating on schoolwork.
- Sudden stomach aches or headaches and wanting to stay away from school.
- Overreacting and being emotional.

Stress & anxiety

Helping them cope

Children of all ages can get stressed and anxious. They can feel stressed for many reasons but the most common reasons are parental divorce, exam pressure and being bullied or abused. Be careful what you say, even when you don't think your child is listening to you. Children overhear parents talking about money worries or problems they are having at work and they start to feel anxious about these things themselves and take on worries beyond their years.

Many children and young people feel under pressure to do things they are not happy about because of peer pressure. This might mean wearing certain clothes or shopping in the right places. On a more serious level, this might mean being absent from school, trying alcohol or drugs, shoplifting or going further with a boyfriend or girlfriend than they feel ready to. Let them know you are there for them and that they can talk to you if they are worried. Mental health issues can affect children. If you have concerns speak out.



Stop

Your child seems stressed out.



Think

Are they under lots of pressure with school work and exams?



Do

Try to break down their workload into small easy to manage amounts. Talk to their Teacher.

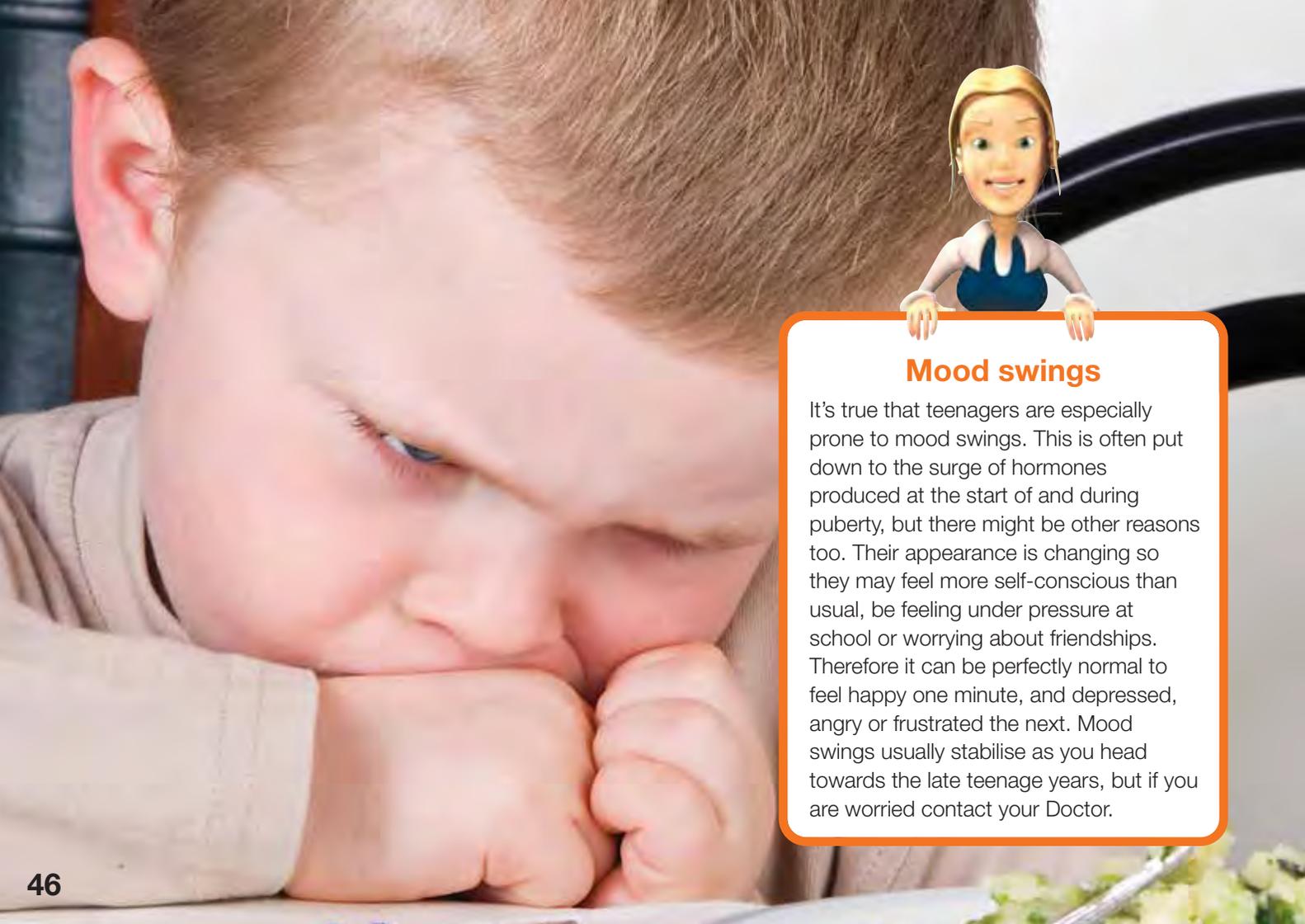


Relieving stress

There are lots of ways you can help your child overcome or cope with stress and anxiety:

- Talk to your child about what is causing their stress.
- Tell them it is normal to feel stressed now and again.
- Help them learn to relax and cope better when they're upset.
- Do not put extra pressure on your child by expecting too much from them.
- If their anxiety goes on for longer than a month, let them know you will support them in getting help.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Mood swings

It's true that teenagers are especially prone to mood swings. This is often put down to the surge of hormones produced at the start of and during puberty, but there might be other reasons too. Their appearance is changing so they may feel more self-conscious than usual, be feeling under pressure at school or worrying about friendships. Therefore it can be perfectly normal to feel happy one minute, and depressed, angry or frustrated the next. Mood swings usually stabilise as you head towards the late teenage years, but if you are worried contact your Doctor.

Temper tantrums

Managing behaviour

Tantrums may start around 18 months and become less common at four. However, tantrums may later be replaced by mood swings once your child reaches puberty. It's not all bad news, just part of growing up and will pass.

Toddler tantrums often happen when a child is not able to express themselves as much as they want to and their frustration may come out as a tantrum. Tantrums are especially likely to happen if a child is tired, hungry or uncomfortable. They often happen in busy, public places, which can be highly embarrassing and add to the parents' stress.

Mood swings during puberty normally pass with growing age and confidence, but can often be difficult to live with at the time. Hormones and changes in physical appearance are often to blame and they may go from being happy one minute to angry and depressed the next.



Toddler tantrums

Keep calm and consider whether your child needs food or rest. Give your child attention and if possible, find a quiet place or some way of distracting their attention. Don't give in, but do try to understand your child's feelings. Praise your child for calming down afterwards.



Stop

My ten year old has become moody, rude and seems depressed.



Think

They are probably going through the onset of puberty.



Do

Talk to them about how they feel. Help them understand the changes their body is going through.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.



Young carers

Who cares? You care. They care.

Many people need special care in their homes. They may be ill, disabled or elderly, or they may have drug or alcohol problems. Caring for a member of the family can be a big help. When the carer is a child or a young adult it is very important to make sure that they are getting everything they need too.

If your child has any caring role, for yourself or another member of their family, it is most important that they do not suffer because of their caring. It can be difficult for a child to take on the responsibilities of an adult and find themselves supporting a parent as well as younger brothers or sisters.

They can be so busy looking after others that they forget to look after themselves and their health, schoolwork and friendships may suffer. You don't have to cope alone, there are organisations that can help you and your child get the support and advice you both need.



Stop

Your child is missing school, feeling tired all the time and acting unusually.



Think

They may be finding their caring role difficult to cope with. Are they doing too much?



Do

Find out about support. Tell the relevant authorities. Talk about relieving their pressure.



Extra support

Sometimes caring for others can have a negative effect on a child carer's education and health. We can give extra support to young carers. This may include special breaks and extra support services for particular needs. Your child may just need to be able to step away from their responsibilities from time to time and meet with other young carers like them. Let them know they are not alone.

If you are worried, get help. See contact details at the back of this handbook.

Useful contacts

National contacts

- **Alateen AI-Anon for young people**
020 7403 0888
www.al-anonuk.org.uk
- **Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)**
0808 800 5793
www.ace-ed.org.uk
- **British Association for Adoption & Fostering**
020 7421 2600
www.baaf.org.uk
- **Bully Busters**
0800 169 6928
- **Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre (CEOP)**
0870 000 3344
www.ceop.police.uk
- **Cruse Bereavement Care Helpline**
0844 477 9400
www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
- **Cry-sis**
08451 228 669
www.cry-sis.org.uk
- **Education & Resources for Improving Childhood Continence (ERIC)**
0845 370 8008
www.eric.org.uk
- **Family Lives**
0808 800 2222
www.familylives.org.uk
- **FRANK (24hrs)**
0800 77 66 00
www.talktofrank.com
- **Kidscape**
08451 205 204
www.kidscape.org.uk
- **National Domestic Violence Helpline**
0808 2000 247
www.womensaid.org.uk
- **NSPCC**
0808 800 5000
www.nspcc.org.uk
- **The Samaritans**
08457 90 90 90
www.samaritans.org
- **www.actionforchildren.org.uk**
- **www.justice.gov.uk**

Local contacts

- **Children & Young People's Partnership**
01639 873041
- **Flying Start**
01639 873026
- **Early Years Development & Childcare**
01639 873018
- **Family Information Service**
01639 873018
- **Child Disability Team**
01639 686850
- **South Wales Police**
01792 456999
- **Abertawe Bro Morgannwg**
01639 862000
- **Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council**
01639 686868
- **Neath Port Talbot Childcare Disability Team**
01639 765400
- **Neath Port Talbot SEN**
01639 686868

Every effort has been made to keep the information in this booklet up-to-date and accurate. However, we cannot guarantee that inaccuracies will not occur. We will not be held responsible for any loss, damage or inconvenience caused as a result of reliance on such information.