

Supporting a Young Person with Behaviours of Concern

All behaviour is communication. Behaviours of concern, such as being very angry, aggressive, argumentative, uncooperative or defiant, is often the young person struggling with a lack of control, difficulty or distress. Sometimes the young person may appear to lack empathy for others, seek out risky experiences, lie, steal and/or bully others.

Longer term risks:

Severe and persistent behaviours of concern can lead to fewer educational qualifications, misuse of drugs and alcohol, unemployment, criminality and poor mental health.

10 TOP TIPS supporting a young person with behaviours of concern

- 1 Separate who they are from what they do.** Show you care for them although you don't like the behaviour. Try not to take their behaviour personally, they might be upset and/or angry due to a range of factors.
- 2 Understand the feeling.** The feelings the young person evokes in you may give you a clue about how they are feeling. If you are feeling overwhelmed they probably are too.
- 3 Validate the feeling.** Help the young person to identify how they are feeling. Naming the emotion can show understanding and help to calm a situation.
- 4 Encourage calming strategies.** Defuse situations by speaking calmly and trying to relax your body language. Find calming activities that help them to feel in control.
- 5 Talk when everyone is calm.** Reassure that difficult feelings and behaviours can be managed. Help them to problem solve what might help.
- 6 Be calm, kind and consistent.** Maintain clear, consistent boundaries and reasonable consequences for unhelpful and unkind behaviour. Praise and reward helpful behaviour.
- 7 Complete a behaviour diary.** Keep track of where, when and what occurred before, during and after the behaviour to help identify any triggers and patterns.
- 8 Investigate underlying causes.** Difficult life events, transitions and/or trauma can trigger behaviours of concern. It may also help to discuss possible learning disabilities, speech and communication issues or developmental disorders with a GP.
- 9 Work as a team.** Try to work with the young person and the others who support them to understand the behaviour and put together a plan.
- 10 Look after yourself.** If you are feeling angry, tired or overwhelmed, try to get some support for yourself – perhaps a relative, friend or colleague could help.

Self-help links:

- www.minded.org.uk/Component/Details/449155 (The aggressive/difficult child)
- www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/parents-and-young-people/information-for-parents-and-carers/behavioural-problems-and-conduct-disorder-for-parents-carers-and-anyone-who-works-with-young-people
- www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/mental-health-needs/challenging-behaviours
- www.familylives.org.uk/advice/primary/behaviour/challenging-behaviour
- <https://childmind.org/topics/concerns/behavior>

