

Helping your child through the effects of bullying.

Unfortunately, bullying has been a real focus for us all of late. Between the habitual instances in schools and the new cyber-bullying we're racing to deal with – and with recent research into the development of mental illness from Warwick University and King's College London pouring a little more fuel onto the fire of concern - parents may wonder what they can do about it all.

In 2008, Warwick undertook a study that tracked nearly six and a half thousand children from birth to 13 years old. They and their parents were interviewed yearly with the children also carrying out questionnaires and tests. It noted that those who has experienced physical or emotional bullying were twice as likely to develop the symptoms and those who suffered sustained bullying were up to four times as likely. Dr. Dieter Wolke remarked that these kinds of 'adverse social relationships with peers may increase the risk of developing psychosis in adulthood'.

Another study, also carried out in 2008 by King's College London, looked at the difference between over 1,000 twin pairs when one was bullied and the other was not. They found from parental and educator reports that the bullied twin was fair more likely to internalise their problems, leading to symptoms such as stomach pains, crying and fear of being alone.

At Clover House, we've provided treatment since 1996 and have witnessed precisely these kinds of effects manifest in children. In a sample size of 16 children between the ages of 9-15, emotional instability, stomach pains, anxiety, clinginess, school phobia, rages, bedwetting and even shouting out during sleep and head-banging have all been seen in the behaviours presented to us.

Bullying is a complex subject and one that, collectively, we haven't managed to eradicate just yet. If your child is suffering, there are things you can do behind the scenes to support your child emotionally to persevere through this difficult time. At Clover House, we use a three – part system to help children with a variety of physical, mental and emotional problems; aromatherapy massage, nutritional advice and Neuro-Linguistic Programming talking therapy. Over the years, it has become apparent from our case studies that there are several things you can do to really help your child deal with their difficult situation.

Massage work for bonding and emotional support:

In many childrens' cases, regular bed-time massage really helped. During the first few sessions, we work with the children to feel sufficiently relaxed to accept massage techniques and then with their parents to learn how to give massages. Sometimes, we give the parents' a massage too to help with their stress!

Taking the time to work with your child in this way increases your relationship by emotionally bonding you together. Skin-to-skin contact is massively important for releasing bonding, happy hormones and it also creates a bubble of peace where you and your child can talk about your day and share your fears and worries.

Start off with committing to just 5 minutes of a simple bit of back-rubbing each evening. You can use a simple moisturising lotion without splashing out too much expense – you don't need to worry about aromatherapy oils at this stage. Pair it with asking how their day went and - if you've time - 5 minutes of reading to them and you'll see the results.

Imagery work for positivity:

As part of our services, children and parents spend time with our NLP therapist who works with upsetting memories and swinging confidence levels. Securing some talking therapy time for your child should really help; our therapist has seen great results in helping children to take control over their memories and fears in several ways. An important stage is to remove the feeling of victimisation to encourage positivity about their future chances and retain control in situations. For instance, therapists have used lioness and hero imageries that the child can visualise to cope better in difficult environments. Both of these also strive to reward confident behaviour and prioritise better self-esteem.

This kind of work is one for the professionals, however. Finding your child someone to talk in this manner requires someone with experience. As a parent, you can, of course, continue to be a positive influence too; just make sure you aren't projecting any of your stresses onto them, be ready and willing to hear them when they need you and stay in good contact with the relevant education, support and health contacts so you can work together to help your little one.

Nutrition revamp for stability:

Getting less processed food and more healthy, fruit-and-veg based meals into your child is a priority for most parents; if not always that possible! We find that children always benefit from improvements in diet but one tip we would certainly share is that of fizzy drinks!

In several cases, we found that eradicating fizzy drinks and replacing them with water really helped. Often, the children would have a relapse when going on holiday or visiting a relative and the results were very noticeable!

Encouraging your child to drink more water and dump the pop will help with their blood sugar levels. This is important because when your blood sugar levels go up and down, your mood is altered too. Eating and drinking foods that cause less peaks will give your child a bit more emotional stability which should make their difficult experiences more tolerable. Nearly everyone turns to the chocolate when they are stressed but, in this case, it's not the kindest thing you can do. Try them out with some fruit or nuts instead. They may not like it

(or you!) at first but, as we always repeat at Clover House, children often need to try new foods 10 – 15 times before they acquire a taste for it. A little perseverance will go a long way.

Where to get help

Tackling bullying is a very important part of making sure your child is safe and your child's school should have an appropriate and proactive policy in place to assist you in confronting this issue. You can also talk to specialised charities for help – especially if you feel the school isn't doing good enough. Young Minds recommends the [Anti- Bullying Alliance](#), [BeatBullying](#) and [Bullying UK](#). Alternatively, if you are a parent and just want to ask a few questions and get some reassurance, you can contact the [Young Minds Parent's Helpline](#) or talk to us by emailing info@cloverhouse.org to have a chat about this article.

Clover House is privileged and proud to report a sustained treatment success rate of 86% over the years; no matter your problem, we've probably helped with it before!

Moving on and moving up!

Why not pledge now to try one of these today with your child? We'd love to hear about how it goes. Try something out and report back in the comments – especially if you've any tips of your own!

Remember, if you are truly worried about your child, always visit your GP or talk to your health visitor. Never put off doing this if you're concerned.

But, if everything else is in hand, get rubbing, get talking, get 'em on the water and tell us how it goes!

Jill Gill for Clover House