GIRLS AND BULLYING

The experiences of parents

A report by Parentline Plus
March 2006

Parentline plus

Because instructions aren't included

GIRLS AND BULLYING

"My daughter was bullied for 2 years at school and although I knew something was not right and frequently asked her and the school she refused to say because of reprisals as they threatened to get her after school. It continued with my daughter self harming, becoming clinically depressed on medication, very aggressive at home and trying to commit suicide. She kept refusing to go to school on many occasions but she is very bright and began to worry more and more about missing work. It was not until two of the boys tried to set fire to her school skirt that it all came to light."

INTRODUCTION

The issue of bullying and its destructive and dangerous impact on children and young people, both out of school and within it, is of deep concern to government, teachers, parents and society as a whole.

Schools have a specific duty to combat bullying and must have anti-bullying procedures in place; Ofsted has a duty to inspect these. Agencies such as Parentline Plus, Childline, Kidscape and the Anti-Bullying Alliance ensure that the media keeps this high on the agenda whilst working closely with schools in developing and maintaining effective anti-bullying policies. Bullying as a component of antisocial behaviour is highlighted in the Education White Paper, the Learning Behaviour report (The Steer Report) the extended schools' prospectus, the Respect Action Plan, and is a target in many local authority Children and Young People's Plans.

Yet the pain of bullying continues relentlessly and in fact - as is shown in this report - methods of bullying are becoming increasingly sophisticated and increasingly covert.

Parentline Plus has a long term commitment to supporting parents who are worried about bullying and to enable them to tackle the problem, often in partnership with their child's school. Many of the parents who contact Parentline Plus' helpline or access other face to face services delivered by the charity, are concerned about their child's bullying. Nearly a quarter of calls to our helpline in the last year were from parents worried about bullying.

In response to these concerns, Parentline Plus has produced a range of information materials, in partnership with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), developed a special section on our website Parentlineplus.org.uk/bullying and continues to offer a listening ear to parents needing to talk about bullying.

We continue to look in depth at specific bullying concerns and this paper examines both the research and what parents are saying about bullying and the effect on their daughters. The findings make painful reading as parents speak of what their daughters go through and the huge effect it has had on the whole family. Most talk about their daughters' 'difference' being the trigger for sustained and brutal bullying.

Many say they are in despair about how withdrawn and isolated their daughters have become.

"She is 'different', she possibly has ASD or dyspraxia and isn't skilled in how to be around people. She is very loving and trusting and this makes her vulnerable. Other children see they can torment her. She doesn't complain - in fact she goes back for more because she is desperate to make friends. Other children think this is funny. I have tried to teach her not to trust so easily, tried to build up her self-esteem, but it isn't easy when she is treated this way."

KEY FINDINGS

For this paper, we wanted to explore with parents:

- The issues that parents and their children face when they either bully or are bullied.

- The issues around girls' bullying, which is usually more emotional than physical.

- The influence of peer pressure, body image etc on girls who bully or are bullied.

- Also, to explore the role of modern day media in bullying, such as text and Instant Messaging and whether girls use them in bullying situations.

- To assess what information, advice or other courses of action could be helpful to both parents and their children.

Research sample

By definition this research was among parents who had recognised the problem of bullying and faced up to it.

4 focus groups with parents on household incomes of £20k or below in 3 contrasting areas of the UK:
- 2 groups for parents of girls aged 12-15 who had been bullied at school or outside the home. (6 parents per group)
- 2 groups for parents of girls aged 12-15 who had shown bullying behaviour at school or outside the home. (6 parents per group)

Website/postal survey:
36 parents returned our in-depth survey, with the age of girls given ranging from 5 - 17 years of age.

A snapshot of calls to Parentline Plus' helpline (Oct-Dec 2005) about bullying shows a range of bullying types:

Calls recd re bullying: type	no. of calls	as % of total calls for period
Physical	689	6%
Verbal	971	9%
Perpetrator	266	3%
Racial	41	0%
Extortion	19	0%
New to school	46	0%
Other	104	1%

The consultations, research and web surveys were consistent. They all showed that:

- Girls who are bullied may be at increased risk of internalising their responses, in the form of depression, anxiety, self harm or withdrawal.
- Where girls perceive that they are not accepted as part of the peer group, they may be more at risk of internalising and withdrawal, including self excluding from school.
- Withdrawn children may be increasingly likely to be victims of bullying, and bullying may cause withdrawn behaviour.
- Physical and emotional withdrawal problems among girls, including anxiety and depression, are more easily overlooked than 'acting out' behaviour among boys.
- Most parents did not know exactly what to do when they uncovered the problem and tended to follow their instinct.
- Where children had been bullied, parents were initially in a frame of mind where 'they could kill' the bully and some knew they could have done something very stupid at the time.
- All parents tried to talk to their children and then generally went to the school for help. However several felt frustrated by lack of action and understanding within the school.
- Parents want greater resources given to the issue of bullying, greater discipline in schools and more publicity about what constitutes bullying today.
- Parents felt that information and advice that would help them to develop a rational plan of action, and remind them they were not alone, would be useful; as would help with what to do if they felt the school was not acting on their concerns.

BULLYING DEFINITIONS

A simple guide to bullying has been produced by the Metropolitan Police:

'Bullying can be obvious - someone hitting you or threatening you - but it can also be harder to pin down. Bullies will often claim that what they are doing is a joke or a game. If in doubt ask yourself:

If it is a joke, is everyone laughing?

If it is a game, is everyone enjoying it?

If it was an accident, is anyone trying to help?

Having fun at someone else's expense is bullying.'

Characteristics by gender

In Parentline Plus' consultations, parents identified the following specific behaviours used by boys and girls when they were bullying:

Boys
- Taunting, name calling, rumour spreading
- Threats/intimidation
- Extortion (money)
- Taking possessions
- Flicking, throwing, shoving
- Hitting, fighting

Girls
- Taunting, name calling, rumour spreading
- Graffiti in, for example, toilets
- Blanking ('skanking'), exclusion, alienation of friends
- Use of SMS (text messaging), email, instant messaging, defamatory websites, phone calls
- Taking possessions
- Extortion (money)
- Threats/intimidation
- Hair pulling, pushing
- Fighting or other physical aggression

How parents found out

- Parents found out about the bullying in a variety of ways, but most usually from the children themselves:
  - sometimes because children were open about it
  - sometimes obvious because of injury
  - but mostly because they had tackled children over their behaviour and the children had come out with the problem, often in tears.
- Classically, the behaviour that led to the most suspicion were:
  - reluctance to go to school/requests for sick notes
  - staying in more
  - becoming quieter, more withdrawn.
- Where parents did not learn of the bullying from their children, they usually learnt from other parents or children.
- Sometimes this was because the children feared that their parents would simply make matters worse.
- When asked if they could see a reason for their children being picked on, there was no obvious pattern to the response.
- It could be because the child was different in some way, by dint of race, learning difficulties or some other problem e.g. psoriasis.
- It could be because the child was quiet or studious or small.
- But there were also many examples of children being picked on who were outgoing, popular, vivacious or tall.
- And some instances where a child had, for no obvious reason, simply taken a dislike to another.
- This inability to typecast the bullied led parents to wonder if jealousy was a part of the problem.
- When they realised that their child was being bullied, parents were angry and upset:
  - "Sick."
  - "Angry."
  - "I felt gutted. I couldn't sleep, I really

felt for her."
- Although parents didn't think the bullying was their fault, they did feel that they had let their children down in some way.
- Most parents admitted that an instinctive response kicked in, and they wanted to find and hurt the perpetrators:
  - "You just want to go on the attack."
  - "I went looking for the girl."
  - "I wanted to kill!"

GIRLS AND BULLYING

"My daughter left a distressing note on our bed one night telling us that she was being bullied at school. We approached her next morning to find out what had been happening. She told us that a few girls had deliberately excluded her in playground gatherings and would taunt her and make fun of her. A survey had been done in her class by one of the girls to find out 'who hated her'. Then they gave her the finished survey, which devastated her."

Both academic research and the experiences of parents we have consulted emphasise that it is often very difficult to recognise bullying when done by girls. The more obvious physical nature of the way boys bully is much easier to see and to develop actions to tackle the problem.

Girls on the other hand make use of equally damaging tactics based on mental and emotional attacks. The written word is used to effect, with girls making greater use of phone, text, email and instant messaging in their bullying behaviour.

Because girls and bullying are difficult to identify, the 'invisibility' of girls' difficulties has serious consequences in terms of their ability to access help. It is not only a lack of resources targeted at girls that constitutes a barrier to accessing help; the nature of what is on offer, and girls' responses when in

difficulty, can also lead to them not receiving help.

Girls tend to internalise feelings, to suffer from low self-esteem, depression, and anxiety and this makes the risks for suicide and self-harm amongst girls even greater. Kaltiala-Heino and colleagues (1999)[1] found that teenagers who are bullied, as well as those who are the bullies, are at an increased risk of depression and suicidal thoughts, and among girls, severe suicidal thoughts are associated with being frequently bullied or being a bully. It has been estimated that at least 16 school children in the UK commit suicide each year as a result of bullying, with the true total possibly as high as 80 or more. [2]

"She kept feelings to herself, about the bullying verbal and physical. She became suicidal, felt sick everyday, didn't want to go. We think it's because she is shy, quiet, pretty and an easy target. We had meetings with school, police, educational welfare officer and school counsellor. We eventually took her out of school because nothing was getting better, and she didn't feel safe. She was home tutored for a while and then went to a special unit for children with medical needs."

Who is bullied and why?

Those girls on the receiving end of bullying have many similar characteristics, often perceived as making them seem different; those who bully often say that they are only teasing and may not see themselves as bullies. Therefore, they may not perceive the harm as the victim becomes withdrawn and may even appear to cooperate, and this - combined with the victim's low visibility - can mean the misery continues throughout the school years. There is a worrying connection between those who are isolated with low self-esteem as a result of bullying becoming in turn bullies as a way to increase their standing within their social group.[3]

Peers and difference

Peer problems and bullying take many forms, and are not always obvious from an adult perspective. For example, bullying can be as simple as not including someone in a game. Many children experience peer problems and socialisation difficulties when beginning nursery or playgroup for the first time.

Even seemingly unimportant details such as the way a child or teenager dresses emphasise difference: simply being different in some way (such as the way you look) was regarded by some as reason enough to bully.

Peers have an important role in bullying. In one study, 85% of bullying episodes were found to occur in the context of a peer group.[4] Peers can give positive attention to the bully, and reinforce bullying behaviour. Peers can also intervene to prevent bullying.[5] Research on peer groups has led to interventions such as 'buddy schemes'/'peer mentoring' and 'pairing schemes'.

A study of bullying in 19 English schools (primary and secondary) revealed that girls were more likely than boys to deliberately exclude someone from a group.[6] Similarly, a study by Rigby found that girls were more likely than boys to be deliberately and unkindly left out of things. Whereas boys were less likely to admit to being bothered by it and if they did, they said that they felt angry about it, girls said that it made them feel sad and miserable.[7]

Difference identified in peer groups as reasons to bully

Child factors

- 'Difference' from peers, such as being of a different ethnic group, looking different,

disability, shyness or being new to a school can cause children to be isolated and targets for bullying.

- Reputation: a child may overcome the initial causes of peer problems, but research shows that peer attitudes can remain negative across school years.[8]

- Sexuality - early puberty, looks and image can trigger bullying.

"My daughter is harassed by one boy in particular at school. He makes comments about her body (nice tits etc), and stands behind her in the queue to leave the classroom etc, and presses himself against her, he also makes a lot of sexual comments around her. She feels very uncomfortable about it, and has become very shy about her developing body. It is all done very secretly - the boy is careful to make sure that adults don't hear or overlook."

Family Factors

Problems at home can lead to difficulties with peers. For example, divorce and separation can lead to emotional and behavioural problems[9], and children may be unwilling to invite friends home where there is domestic violence or substance abuse.

Race

Relatively little is known about gender differences in racist bullying, with more research needed in this area. However this form of bullying is widespread. In a study of bullying in England in 2003, a fifth of pupils in Year 5 reported that they had been called racist names.[10] A study by the NSPCC[11] suggests that children from ethnic minorities are more likely to experience bullying than their white counterparts.

The common characteristic is that racist

bullying was likely to hurt not only the victim but also other pupils from the same ethnic minority group who perceived that a particular child was being bullied who had similar characteristics to themselves.

The most common expression of racism is through racist name-calling, which is often viewed by adults as trivial, although its impact on children can be profound, and that racial bullying frequently involves the use of violence.

Racist bullying is not only white on minority ethnic, but - as Eslea and Mukhtar note (2000)[12] - it is at least as likely to be by other minority ethnic children of a different ethnic group as by white children, and it is likely to relate to some religious or cultural difference such as the animal forms of some Hindu Gods, the clothing worn by Indian Muslims or the language spoken by Pakistanis. Bullying between members of the same ethnic group was found to be comparatively rare, although a number of Hindu children reported insults relating to the caste system.

Cyclical causes

Being bullied can hamper the development of friendships, which makes the child more vulnerable to further bullying.

GIRLS, BULLYING AND SCHOOLS

"It takes over your every waking moment...every conversation revolved around it...she couldn't even step outside our door without them waiting for her, the police had to get involved, but no-one has the powers to stop children from causing pain to another. The school needs to learn how to help bullies to change their behaviour patterns and to take more seriously accusations made towards bullies. It's not easy for one child to blab on another, and to get

punished for coming forward and say I am being bullied is very very wrong!"

In 1999 the then Department for Education and Employment wrote:

'The emotional distress caused by bullying in whatever form - be it racial, or a result of a child's appearance, behaviour or special educational needs, or related to sexual orientation - can prejudice school achievement, lead to lateness or truancy and, in extreme cases, end with suicide. A third of girls and a quarter of boys are at some time afraid of going to school because of bullying.' [13]

Much work has been done in subsequent years to deal with bullying in schools. However research indicates that anti-bullying support services and policies which aim to prevent exclusion and stop antisocial behaviour within the school, tend to be dominated by boys. This not only makes girls less willing to take up help, but also means that schools and support services are less likely to refer girls in the first place. Even when girls' behaviour problems were recognised by schools, they were often overshadowed by the difficulties of managing greater numbers of boys with challenging behaviour.

Parents consulted by Parentline Plus felt very strongly about the role of the school. Most of those consulted had gone to the school and those who did not go did so because they felt the bullying was not related to the school environment. Many said that where the school was involved, and especially where it worked in partnership with parents, bullying could be resolved more quickly and satisfactorily.

"My daughter has been bullied in 2 schools now. She has been verbally abused, physically hit and taunted and harassed. I removed her from the first

school as their answer was to exclude her from the normal activities for her protection, which I believe was unacceptable.

The school she is now in has a very caring ethos and they do sort out any problems - but she is still being bullied. Mainly verbally but also physically but it is always made out to be an accident. We, together, have been through so many emotions."

"The school have been fantastic and they have all talked about what should be done. Of course the other children denied the threats etc and are now verbally abusing her for going to see the teacher. But the school are helping in any way they can."

The parents identified three different stances taken by schools

Schools:
1. Recognised the problem and sought to work in partnership with parents to tackle it.
2. Recognised the problem, but placed the responsibility on parents to solve it.
3. Refused to recognise the problem, either because 'bullying didn't exist in the school' or because it had not been 'officially' reported, or because it was not deemed to be serious enough to warrant intervention.

1. Where the schools took a partnership approach, parents believed that the school had tackled the problem well. This usually meant that the school did what it could to separate children and monitor behaviour, while parents were asked to talk to the children and communicate back.

Parents who took this view felt it was important to establish direct lines of communication with the school, ideally lines that could not be intercepted by the

children. They wanted the school to keep them informed of progress and to be contacted once the problem was resolved.

"They rang me to say it was settling down and it was really good to hear that."

2. Where the onus was placed on parents to sort the bullying out, there was a stronger sense of frustration. Parents felt they had a limited set of tools and that some of the school's expectations were unrealistic.

"They said that I've got to keep a closer eye on him, but I can't keep track of him all the time!"

Perhaps more importantly, they identified some fundamentals that they, as parents, couldn't tackle:
- The general lack of discipline and punishment at school.
- The need to tackle bullying as a group issue.

"I kept him in, but it had limited effect. I think it's more of a global problem - the school has to get to the group."

3. The greatest sense of frustration and disappointment occurred where parents thought the school was refusing to acknowledge there was a problem. Although in the minority amongst those being consulted, these parents thought that whatever they might or might not be able to achieve at home, they had absolutely no control over the environment in which the bullying occurred.

Some clearly believed that the behavioural problem resided largely at school, where their child had the security of the group and the ability to intimidate others.

"She's a prisoner in her own home and she must be having a crap time, but the minute she steps back into school everything changes."

Where schools didn't acknowledge the problem, despite evidence to the contrary, parents felt they had no 'official' recognition that the problem existed, which made their task so much harder.

Worse than being unsupported, these parents felt actively undermined. Some had been blamed by the school for their children's behaviour whilst others felt they were being patronised. Not surprisingly, they were extremely cynical about school bullying policies and the school's real agenda.

"He refused to deal with it, and I was incandescent with rage. So he said, 'now I can see where she gets it from'!"

Bullying by daughters - parents' views

The bully

During our consultations with parents about girls and bullying we asked about what they did when they found out that their daughter was bullying. The parents were all shocked to find out that their daughters were bullying. Those with other children worried about the effect on them and that they might try to emulate their sibling.

Some told us that where the problem had been tackled quickly and effectively, parents hoped that this was a one-off that wouldn't recur and some thought that their children were now maturing beyond this phase. They did worry that their children might at some point be the subject of retaliation, but had generally put the issue behind them and felt they had moved on.

Where the problem had not been resolved, parents were mostly worried that when the security of the bullying group or behaviour

was lost, their children would not know where they stood within the peer group dynamic - and this could echo the research which points to the fact that girls who are withdrawn and with low self-esteem can become bullies to position themselves within their peer group.

One parent said,

"They live in their own, unreal world. They're lost outside of their circle."

Parents felt that that they would not be welcomed if they sought help, since their children were the ones causing the problem, so, for example, they did not feel entitled to call helplines.

"You try things, they don't work and you think, then what? I'd have tried anything."

Some had looked for information through the internet or books, but had not found much targeted at their situation. Many of the parents voiced what they felt would have helped them tackle the problem and asked for specific information on, 'what to do if your child bullies'; the general assumption was that most literature was for parents/children who were being bullied.

The parents agreed that there should be information specifically for them on this issue and that careful thought should be given as to where such information was distributed. The topics covered should:

- Tell them how to approach the problem in a rational and reasoned way.
- Give them new ideas on how to tackle it.
- Explain how/where to seek further help if the school is unresponsive.
- Make them feel they are not alone.
- Look at the short and long term impact of bullying behaviour on the bully - not just the way jobs or careers might be compromised, but the poor quality of life

some led and the psychological impact on later life.

There was a primary need for information for their children as well. This should enable them to understand that their behaviour was bullying, especially when not physical, and to see the impact on children who have been bullied. Such literature should be in a format that appeals to young people.

THE DAMAGE DONE - THE IMPACT OF BULLYING

"My daughter is now too scared to go to school and is rapidly losing confidence, especially in crowded or unfamiliar places. She is refusing to go to school and is showing symptoms of stress i.e. dizzyness, feeling sick, clammy, sore tummy. She finds it very difficult to explain her feelings or exactly what has been going on. She has in the past witnessed this girl attack another girl and now admits that it's not what is happening now that scares her but what could happen. I have tried to reassure her that probably the worst is over but she remains convinced that this girl will harm her. She admits also that this is all she thinks about."

Research shows that peer victimisation is associated with depression.[14] There is also good evidence for peer rejection or bullying as predictive of problems leading into adulthood. Cowen et al (1973) followed children for more than a decade and found that unpopularity in the early school years was the strongest predictor of adult psychiatric treatment.[15] A retrospective study by Kidscape in 1998, with 1000+ adults, found that 46% of people bullied as children had considered suicide, compared to 7% of those who were not bullied.[16]

Victims of bullying experience various forms of distress and disruption to their lives. The

effects on mental health of being bullied are serious - young people who are bullied more are more likely to be depressed. Popular concepts of bullied children are that they are anxious, scared and have low self-esteem. However, meta-analysis shows that the largest effect on children is depression, and the smallest is anxiety.[17]

"She would often hide around a corner of the playground or go to where the younger children played. She became very distressed at home and changed from being a bright bubbly girl to being quiet, intolerant and verbally aggressive sometimes. She didn't want to go to school most mornings. It was not only distressing for our daughter but for us as parents too as we watched her change from a very mature well-balanced, funny and confident individual to a quivering wreck in front of our eyes in a matter of weeks. We sought help eventually from the school psychology department."

Children who are depressed may become part of a negative reinforcing cycle. Young people who are more introverted, less assertive and over-involved with their families are particularly vulnerable to bullies.[18] Or, because a young person is depressed, he/she may also attract more negative attention from their peers. Victims of bullying are likely to be lonely. Bullied children have lower self-esteem, and a more negative view of their social competence.[19] All these negative consequences occur amongst both boys and girls, in all age groups and as a result of all kinds of bullying.

Fears for the future

- Some parents were understandably concerned that their children would themselves turn into bullies, and it was clear from this research that this had happened in some cases.
- On this, they could only talk to their

children and warn them against it.
- But their more immediate worry was about how their children would be affected by the bullying, not just in terms of self-esteem and confidence but also retaliation.
- Some children had clearly 'snapped' as the bullying continued, to the point where they became 'the villain'.
- These parents were then incensed by the response of a school that had earlier refused to listen, and this caused some to take the step of moving school.
- These parents, and indeed others, were very clear that it was important to stop bullying as early as possible, for fear of where it might lead.

CONCLUSIONS

Bullying is a hugely complex and very distressing issue. Bullying on any level can have serious consequences for the individual being bullied and the person doing the bullying. The stories parents have told us demonstrate how pernicious bullying by girls can be - and how so many girls hide what is happening to them. Sometimes the fact that the bullying goes unnoticed and therefore unsupported threatens to have a long term impact on a girl's self-esteem and emotional well-being.

Throughout the research, there were a series of recurrent influencing themes:
- o The impact of peer pressure.
- o The lack of discipline in schools.
- o The lack of things for teenagers to do.

The findings in this paper point to clear actions which need to be in place if we are to tackle girls' experiences of bullying - not only for schools and other agencies in contact with families, but within the family as a whole.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Anti-bullying policies and programmes must reflect gender differences around bullying. Currently there is a tendency to focus on boys and their more overt bullying behaviour.
- Those working with young people, particularly girls, need more training on how to spot the symptoms of bullying and be more aware of how girls tend to internalise their feelings and to have strategies to break down this barrier.
- Schools need to be more proactive in making children and young people aware that bullying is not merely a physical activity, but also consists of excluding people, teasing or spreading rumours.
- Because of the interconnected and cyclical nature of bullying by girls, work to prevent bullying should include addressing children's difficulties outside the confines of school - looking at circumstances within the home, and in the community.
- Headteachers, teachers and other school support staff should be trained in signposting and referral, and should have access to relevant information to refer or signpost vulnerable families to other sources of specialist help for their family problems.
- Schools must build good home school communications outside any difficulties of bullying or behaviour, so that parents are able to trust the school, and communicate openly about their worries for their child with headteachers, teachers and other professionals.
- When bullying becomes an issue, the lines of communication between parent/ child and school or community need to be kept open, built on and, in many cases, improved. This would enable parents to trust and want to share their concerns with headteachers, teachers and other professionals.
- There needs to be much more work done on raising awareness of definitions of bullying and what is being done to tackle bullying in schools and in the wider community. Parents feel that work on what to look out for and where to go is key.
- As a preventive measure, schools need to work in partnership with appropriate independent organisations to equip parents with strategies aimed at identifying and tackling bullying. The core offer in extended schools is a welcome opportunity to deliver this information and advice for families.
- Where the lines of communication between parent and school have broken down, the family must have appropriate advocacy or mediation based support.

Parentline Plus tips if your child says that they are being bullied

- Listen and talk to them. They may feel out of control and ashamed - whether they are being bullied or bullying. Let them know you love them and want to help.
- Be clear that it is important for the bullying to stop and that the school will need to be involved.
- If your child is bullying others, think about what might be behind it - are they trying to get attention or fit in with the crowd, or are they unaware of how they are hurting others?
- Talk to the school as soon as possible.
- If you think things are not getting better, ask to see the school's anti-bullying policy and make an appointment to see the headteacher.
- And if still no better you may decide to keep your child out of school until the matter is resolved. For more help contact the Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) helpline: 0808 800 5793 www.ace-ed.org.uk
- Encourage your child to keep a journal in which they can draw pictures or write about the bullying - this can help to release painful feelings and will be a record of what happened and when it happened.
- Take care of yourself. Coping with your child's bullying may be very stressful, especially if it brings back memories of your own experiences. Try to take time for yourself or talk over what you feel with a friend or another family member.

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PARENTLINE PLUS

Parentline Plus, the largest independent provider of parenting support in the country, is a national charity that works for and with parents. We know that parents want to do the best they can for their children, but we also know that family life can sometimes be challenging and difficult. After all, there is no one right way to parent. We encourage parents to see that asking for help is a sign of strength, offer practical solutions and suggest ways to manage their particular situations and difficulties. This support is delivered through a range of free, flexible and responsive services - shaped by parents for parents.

SERVICES

- A free confidential, 24-hour helpline
  0808 800 22 22
- A free textphone for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or with a speech impairment
  0800 783 6783
- Email helpline
  parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk
- Parents Together groups and workshops
- Information leaflets
- A helpful website
  www.parentlineplus.org.uk
- Individual parent support services
- Training for professionals
- Volunteer opportunities