

## Our Voice webinar notes

03/12/2020

### Anger & aggression at home

Examples of behaviours of concern given:

- Verbal - shouting, screaming
- Physical - fighting, spitting
- Frustrating - stubborn, not listening, throwing self on ground, constant talking
- Running away

### How to manage

You have to be a bit of a detective about this. Write notes on the points below to analyse your child's behaviour and think of some ways to reduce or prevent them from escalating to a really distressing level.

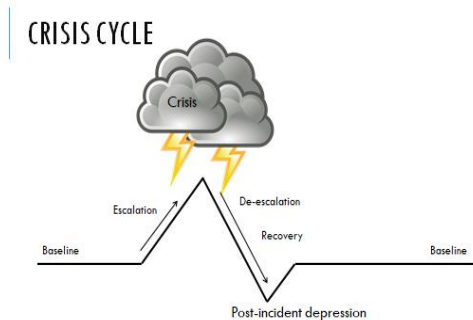
- Anger is a secondary emotion and often masks fear. Frequently the case for angry outbursts or meltdowns.
- Think about environment where things are happening - who's there, sensory aspects, what is happening, what is said.
- Is this a situation (setting event) that your child generally cannot/finds hard to cope with?
- Early warning signs that your child is struggling – facial expression, tone of voice/vocalisations, body language
- Any specific triggers?
- Describe behaviour of concern in detail: hitting/kicking/hair pulling rather than 'violence' or 'aggression'
- What happens afterwards?

ALSO

- What makes your child feel good?
- What can they learn to communicate or do instead of their angry/aggressive behaviours? What help do they need to do this?

### Impact on person

#### Crisis/distress cycle



### Impact on family

- Crisis/distress cycle
- Put your seatbelt on first
- Mindfulness

[https://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Managing\\_Stress\\_For\\_Parents\\_August\\_2020.pdf](https://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Managing_Stress_For_Parents_August_2020.pdf)

### Anxiety & phobias

#### General strategies

- Active listening.
- Finding ways to soothe and help your child to relax.
- Distraction techniques (but not avoidance of problems that could be resolved).
- Problem solving.
- For repetitive questions or statements, limit the repetition, e.g. listen twice and then either ignore the repetition and try to move the conversation onto something else, or ask your child to tell you the answer that you gave them. Be nice but firm that you can only listen twice and don't explain this at length (as they usually stop listening!!).
- Have a look at "What to do if you worry too much" by Dawn Huebner or "The huge bag of worries" by Virginia Ironside for more ideas about dealing with worry together with your child.

[https://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Managing\\_Stress\\_For\\_Autistic\\_People\\_January\\_2020.pdf](https://www.autismwestmidlands.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Managing_Stress_For_Autistic_People_January_2020.pdf)

### Fear of failure in schoolwork

- Discuss with school if the work is at the right level. Obtain support in amending this if needed.
- Help your child to start to think "I can't do this... YET" (even if they can do it when calm)

- Start with work that is easier than they are able to do to work up to work at the right level.
- Help them to get started...then step back but remain present – e.g. have a small chore to do in the same room so that you are both being busy together. You are available for them but not all the time they are doing the work.
- Big praise and rewards even for small achievements. Use a reward chart to earn larger rewards if your child needs a big goal to be broken down into smaller steps.

#### COVID phobia or pre-COVID germ phobia?

- Resources for COVID that can explain helpfully (lots online)
- Try to model positive risk taking with germs/COVID – maintaining the rules but not with high anxiety.
- If they can discuss, find out what is going to enable them to do the ordinary, everyday tasks that they need to do, in a way that they can manage and put into place.
- Use of exposure to the feared thing; help them to get used to the idea of germs even though they feel worried.

#### When your child says they hate you, themselves or that they want to die

- More often than not they are expressing their emotions, saying how painful or distressing they are finding things in the immediate present. This is especially true of pre-teenaged children and those with LD/autism.

#### *Strategies*

- Respond to the emotion not the content, to calm them down. Use ‘active listening’ and help them to problem solve the situation. Try not to ask them too many questions, let them explain in their own time and way, as it can feel pressurising (but is hard not to do when you’re worried).
- If your child stops saying/feeling this when calm, this confirms that they were really, really upset and do not feel those things all the time. For them, feeling reassured and supported by you will be the most helpful thing.
- If your child still feels like this when calm, this could be a sign of low self-esteem and they might benefit from some counselling or therapy. It *could* also be a more worrying sign and you should talk to your GP about referral to CAMHS, or talk to your clinician in CAMHS if you feel that your child has changed, withdrawn or become very different in themselves.

#### School refusal

- “It takes a village...”. This problem needs the network around your child and your family to resolve it and longstanding difficulties will take time to improve.
- What are the factors about school that CYP struggles with? Can they explain?
- Are there changes that can be made to facilitate the child going in? Half days to build back up? Not eating in dining hall?

- See the handout “A guide to supporting a child who is struggling to attend school” for more information from a parent who has been through this experience.

Dr. Bethanne Willingham  
Principal Clinical Psychologist & Team Leader  
Enfield CAMHS SCAN  
Enfield CDT Psychology