

Bolton

Together

Nurturing Wellbeing

A Guide for Parents



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Being a parent

Parenting is one of the most rewarding yet challenging roles we take on in life.

There are days when it feels overwhelming, and moments when we question if we're doing enough.

It's important to remember that no parent is perfect, and it's okay to ask for help.

Acknowledging the difficulties is not a sign of failure but a strength. It is important to recognise our own emotions . . .



Overwhelmed?



Exhausted?



Frustrated?

Your Own Self-Care

Taking care of your own emotional health is just as important as caring for your child. Think of it like the airplane safety rule: put on your oxygen mask first before helping others. If you're not feeling well emotionally, it's harder to be there for your child when they need you. By looking after your own wellbeing, you're better able to support them and stay calm in stressful moments. Remember, you can't pour from an empty cup—taking care of yourself helps you be the best parent you can be

Tips for your own emotional health and wellbeing:

- Practice deep breathing exercises.
- Take short walks to clear your head.
- Find a creative outlet like reading, journaling, or listening to music.
- Focus on getting enough sleep.
- Check out our parent support on pages 19-21.



Knowing your support network

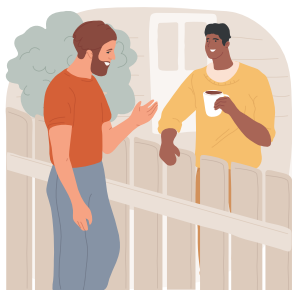
As a parent, it's important to know who can help you when things get tough. Your support network includes people like family, friends, neighbours, or other parents who understand what you're going through. Think about who you can talk to for help or just to listen. This could be a caring brother or sister, or a good friend. Write down their names so you can remember that you are not alone and that help is there when you need it.



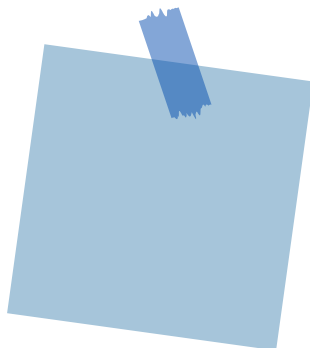
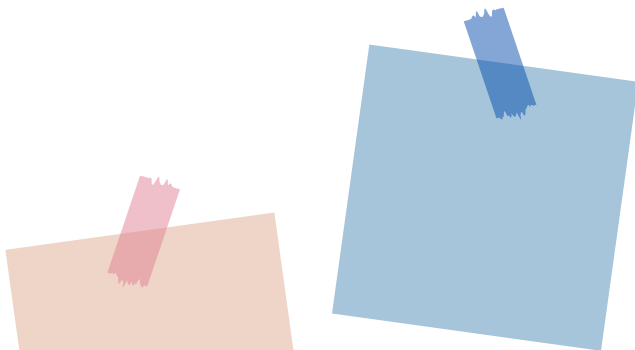
Family Members



Your Child's School or Teacher



Friends and Neighbours



If you don't currently have a support network, there are ways to build one, please see page 19 onwards for more information.

Supporting Your Child's Feelings

You may have heard the term therapeutic parenting. Therapeutic parenting means helping your child feel safe and understood. You can do this by listening to them and being patient. When your child shares their feelings, give them your full attention. Use simple words to talk about emotions, like happy, sad, or scared. Show them that it's okay to talk about what they feel. Spend time together doing fun activities, which can help them open up. Remember, your love and support make a big difference in their lives.

Therapeutic Parenting Top Tips:

- Use playfulness to connect and diffuse a situation;
- Provide acceptance of the child whilst not accepting of aggression.
- Be curious to detect your child's need.
- Focus on providing empathy.



Additional Needs and Disability

Parenting can feel challenging when you're experiencing concerns around additional needs with your child.

Top Tips:

- Be patient with your child and with yourself.
- Speak with your child's school about your concerns.
- Trust your instincts, advocate for your child's needs.
- Reach out for support from Breaking Barriers North West and Bolton IAS.


It's normal to worry when a child processes the world differently or faces challenges. Understanding their needs and finding support can be overwhelming. However, it's important to recognise that children with additional needs also have unique strengths. Below are some useful organisations who might be able to help:

 <https://www.breakingbarriersnw.com/index.html>

 <https://iasbolton.com/home>

 <https://www.blgc.co.uk/welcome/connect-club/>

 <https://www.annafreud.org/resources/under-fives-wellbeing/a-guide-to-neurodiversity-in-the-early-years/>

 <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/neurodiversity-schools>

Parenting the teenage years

For more info visit
<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/children-and-young-adults/advice-for-parents/cope-with-your-teenager/>

Parenting a teenager presents unique challenges as they seek independence and navigate adolescence. Striking a balance between granting space and providing guidance can be difficult, as teenagers may test limits or appear distant. These behaviours are normal developmental stages.

While this phase can be tough, it also offers a chance to strengthen your relationship and prepare them for adulthood.

Top Tips:

- Maintain patience.
- Practice open communication.
- Offer support without being overbearing.
- Check out this useful guide - https://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/media/1437/teens2018_tips.pdf



Helping Your Child Talk About Their Feelings

Talking with your child about their thoughts and feelings is important. Start by asking simple questions like, “How was your day?” or “What made you happy today?” Listen carefully to their answers without interrupting. Share your own feelings too, so they see it’s okay to talk about emotions. Use everyday moments, like during meals or bedtime, to encourage conversation. Let them know that all feelings are okay and that you are there to support them. This helps build their confidence and strengthens your connection.



Top Tips:

- Be present for your child.
- Listen to hear and not just to respond.
- Validate and name your child's feelings.
- Use age-appropriate language.
- Repeat back what they say to you using different words.

Helping with Fears and Worries

Helping your child with their fears and worries is important. Start by talking with them about what makes them scared or worried. Use simple questions to understand their feelings. Let them know it's okay to feel this way and that you are there to help. Encourage them to share their thoughts and listen without judgment. You can also offer comfort by spending time together in safe spaces or doing relaxing activities. Show them ways to cope, like deep breathing or talking about their fears. Your support will help them feel braver and more secure.

If your child is struggling with fears or worries, try this:

- Encourage gradual exposure to fears.
- Practice calming techniques.
- Reinforce positive coping efforts.
- Create a worry journal.

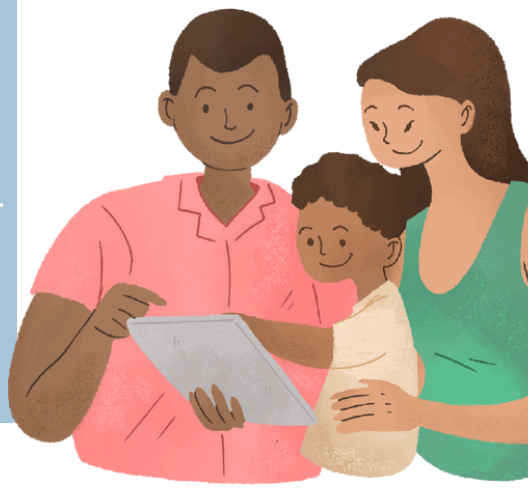


When a child struggles with their behaviour

Managing your child's behaviour can be challenging, but there are simple steps you can take. Start by staying calm when your child acts out. Use clear and simple words to explain what behaviour is okay and what isn't. Set clear rules and be consistent with them. Praise your child when they behave well, and gently remind them of the rules when they don't. Try to understand what might be causing their behaviour, like feeling tired or hungry. Spending time together and showing love can help your child feel secure, which can improve their behaviour over time.

When struggling with your child's behaviour, try this:

- Use "time-ins" instead of time-outs to connect with your child.
- Create a routine to provide stability.
- Use a reward chart for positive behaviour.
- Encourage open conversations about feelings.



Guiding Your Child Through Strong Emotions

Supporting your child when they have strong feelings is essential. When your child is upset, try to stay calm and let them know you are there for them. Help them name their feelings, like anger or sadness, so they can understand what they're experiencing. Create a safe space where they can express themselves without judgment. Encourage them to take deep breaths or use calming activities, like drawing or listening to music. Your patience and understanding will help them learn to manage their feelings better over time. Remember, it's okay to ask for help if you need it too.

When your child feels dysregulated, try this:

- Give them your full attention and check in on their feelings.
- Practice deep breathing together.
- Spend quality time on a shared enjoyable activity.



School Avoidance

For more info visit

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/parents-a-z-mental-health-guide/school-anxiety-and-refusal/>

If your child is avoiding school due to emotional reasons, it's important to approach the situation with patience and understanding. Start by talking to your child about their feelings and listen without judgment. Let them know it's okay to feel anxious or scared. Try to create a routine that includes small steps towards going back to school, like visiting the school together or meeting a teacher. Consider reaching out to school staff for support, as they can help your child feel more comfortable. Encouragement and reassurance from you can make a big difference in helping them feel safe and supported.

When addressing school avoidance, consider these tips:

- Stay calm and model positive behaviour.
- Encourage open discussions about feelings.
- Establish a routine that includes fun activities and schoolwork.
- Break the return to school into manageable steps, like short visits or meetings with a teacher.
- Celebrate small successes to boost confidence like getting ready for school.



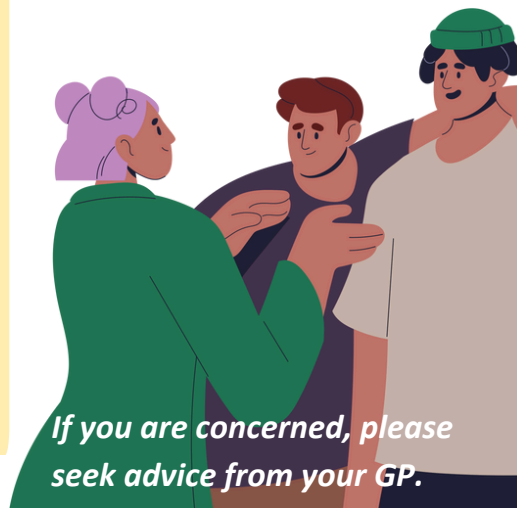
Concerns Around Eating

Many parents worry about their children's eating habits and the possibility of eating disorders. Children might develop these issues due to various factors, such as pressure to look a certain way, stress, or changes in their environment. They may struggle with self-esteem or feel anxious about food and body image.

It's important to create a supportive atmosphere at home, where children feel safe to talk about their feelings and are encouraged to enjoy a balanced diet without fear or judgment.

When worried about eating habits, consider these tips:

- Talk openly about food preferences.
- Encourage your child to share worries.
- Offer a variety of healthy foods.
- Lessen any pressure on eating.



If you are concerned, please seek advice from your GP.

Recognising & Supporting A Child Through Self-Harm

Self-harm is when someone hurts themselves on purpose, often by cutting or scratching their skin. Children may self-harm to cope with strong feelings like sadness, anger, or anxiety. It can feel like a way to release their emotions when they don't know how to express them. Sometimes, they might feel overwhelmed and think hurting themselves is the only way to feel better.

It's important to understand that self-harm is a sign that a child is struggling and needs help. Being supportive and encouraging them to talk about their feelings can make a big difference.

You can find crisis information at the end of this resource!

When dealing with self-harm, consider these tips:

- Stay calm and create a safe space for them to share their emotions.
- Encourage an open conversation and offer reassurance it's okay to seek help.
- Avoid dismissing their feelings.
- Access professional medical or mental health support and guidance.



Understanding & Addressing A Child's Thoughts of Suicide

Some children may feel overwhelmed by stress, sadness, or pressure from school and friends, which can lead to feelings of hopelessness. It's crucial to foster an open and trusting environment, where children feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and emotions. Being attentive, listening without judgment, and encouraging them to seek help if needed can make a big difference in their well-being.

When concerned about suicide, consider these tips:

- Pay attention to changes in behaviour, mood, or eating habits.
- Encourage your child to share their feelings by creating a safe space for honest conversations.
- Help your child find healthy ways to cope with stress.
- Don't hesitate to reach out for professional help.

You can find crisis information at the end of this resource!



Safety Planning

For more info visit

https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/docs/default-source/improving-care/nccmh/suicide-prevention/wave-1-resources/young-people-who-self-harm-a-guide-for-school-staff.pdf?sfvrsn=e6ebf7ca_2

Making your situation safer

It is important to look at how to keep your child safe. Think about the following:

- Identify any potential harmful items and secure these.
- Provide close supervision.
- Be aware of your child's coping strategies and key contacts.
- Identify the triggers for your child.

Recognising the warning signs

How do you recognize your child is feeling unsafe?

- Consider thoughts and feelings such as hopelessness or feeling trapped.
- Are suicidal thoughts becoming more frequent or intense?
- Have you noticed changes in behaviour like increased drinking, isolation, self-harm, or recklessness?

Identify what may lift their mood

To manage your child's emerging suicidal thoughts, it's important to lift mood and provide distractions through activities such as:

- Physical: running, walking, or gym workouts
- Creative: drawing, colouring, making playlists, or baking
- Productive: making lists, decluttering, gardening, or writing letters
- Relaxation: meditating, taking baths, listening to music, or watching favourite movies
- Social: catching up with friends, playing sports, or visiting museums and faith centres.

Also consider:

- Distraction techniques such as breathing techniques and games on their phone.
- Identify safe and trusted people they feel comfortable to talk to.
- Know the professional support available (see page 22).

Reaching Out

Reaching out for support as a parent is crucial, especially when navigating the challenges of supporting your child's emotional health.

Parenting can be overwhelming at times, and it's important to remember that you don't have to do it alone. Seeking support not only benefits your own wellbeing but also helps you be the best support for your child.

Connecting with others who understand your experiences can provide reassurance, practical advice, and a sense of community.

Using the activity from page 3 and the information from page 17, who are 4 people you could reach out to if you are struggling?

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Being Active

Being active with your child enhances their wellbeing and emotional health by improving fitness and mood through the release of feel-good chemicals. Shared activities like walking or playing games foster bonding and open communication, strengthening your connection and providing support.

Physical activity promotes healthy habits, emotional regulation and helps manage stress, leading to better sleep and resilience. Most importantly, it models positive behaviours, reinforcing the value of staying active for overall health.



To get active, try this:

- Go for a walk outside.
- Play an active game in the local park or your garden.
- Set yourselves daily challenges like walking a certain amount of steps before the end of each day.

Knowing About Available Support



Bolton Together provides [Parent Peer Support](#) for parents of children with mental health challenges. It facilitates connections, group support (like mindfulness and positive psychology), strategy discussions, and access to additional resources.

Time 2 Talk offers family mediation for Bolton families in conflict, facilitating communication between young people and their parents or carers. More information can be found at their [website](#).



As a parent or caregiver, it's natural to worry about your child's online safety. Understanding the risks and discussing them with your child can help. Enhance your awareness of online safety by exploring our [guide](#).



If you are facing challenges with your emotional health and well-being, Bolton Talking Therapies offers free, confidential counselling for adults aged 16 and older. They are here to support you in addressing a variety of issues you may be experiencing. Find out more at <https://www.gmmh.nhs.uk/bolton-talking-therapies/>



QWELL provides complimentary digital mental wellbeing support for adults throughout the UK. It features professional assistance, peer-to-peer forums, and self-help tools, allowing users to create journals, monitor their mood, and establish goals.

Early Help unites workers to support children and families needing extra assistance in areas like health, education, and emotional well-being, for those up to age 18. It aims to address issues early to prevent escalation. Parents or children can request help, or existing workers may recommend it. Further information can be found at www.boltonsafeguardingchildren.org.uk.




BeKindToMyMind

BeKindToMyMind offers a variety of advice, resources, and guidance to help you support your child in managing their emotions and behaviours, as well as dealing with mental health challenges and significant life events. Additionally, you can easily access Bolton's service directory, enabling you to filter and find available services for yourself or your child - www.bekindtomymind.co.uk/parents/



Bolton Together's Early Years program offers:

- Diverse Stay and Play sessions for socialising and development support.
- Access to the 10-week Solihull Approach Parenting Programme.
- Drop-ins for perinatal mental health and infant feeding support.

For more information, visit www.bolton-together.org.uk/early-years/.

Feeling in crisis?



Self-harm is a term used when someone injures or harms themselves on purpose rather than by accident. Some young people use self-harm as a way of trying to deal with very difficult feelings that build up inside. Caring for young people who self-harm can be challenging. It's crucial to seek understanding and support.

For risk advice please call 0800 953 0285 for 24/7 crisis support. In an emergency, please ring 999.

Young Minds
Parents'
Helpline at 0808
802 5544.

Papyrus
HOPEline UK -
0800 068 41 41

Self Harm UK
<https://www.selfharm.co.uk/>

Harmless
<https://harmless.org.uk/>

Worried about a child's safety or wellbeing? Bolton's Integrated Front Door (IFD) serves as the contact point for enquiries and referrals about children and young people. In an emergency call 999 or if a child is at significant risk of immediate harm and it is not safe to wait for the online referral form to be assessed call 01204 331500.

