



WINGS FOR LIFE

Emotional Wellness for Families

ESS406.3S | Third Grade

Series II

This is an informational fact sheet. The purpose of the publication is to provide basic information. It is not intended to be used for assessment or treatment of mental health. If you suspect your child or teen needs help in the emotional wellness and mental health areas, please contact a mental health professional immediately.

An online directory of mental health services in South Dakota, searchable by town, is available at www.sdkidsmentalhealth.org. Other mental health resources are at this site as well. Information can also be obtained by calling 211 in Rapid City or Sioux Falls or calling toll-free 1-877-377-0941 from other areas of South Dakota.

We would appreciate your feedback on this "Wing For Life" newsletter. Please take three minutes to complete the on-line survey: www.seuw.org/wings.aspx

Emotional abuse can range from a simple verbal insult to an extreme form of punishment. The following are examples of emotional child abuse:

- Continuous and prolonged ignoring, withdrawal of attention, or rejection
- Lack of physical affection, such as hugs
- Lack of positive reinforcement, such as praise or saying "I love you"
- Yelling or screaming
- Threatening or frightening
- Negative comparisons to others
- Belittling; telling the child that s/he is "no good," "worthless," "bad," or "a mistake"
- Shaming, humiliating, or name-calling
- Habitual blaming
- Using extreme forms of punishment, such as confinement to a closet or dark room, tying to a chair for long periods of time, or terrorizing a child

IN THIS NEWSLETTER:

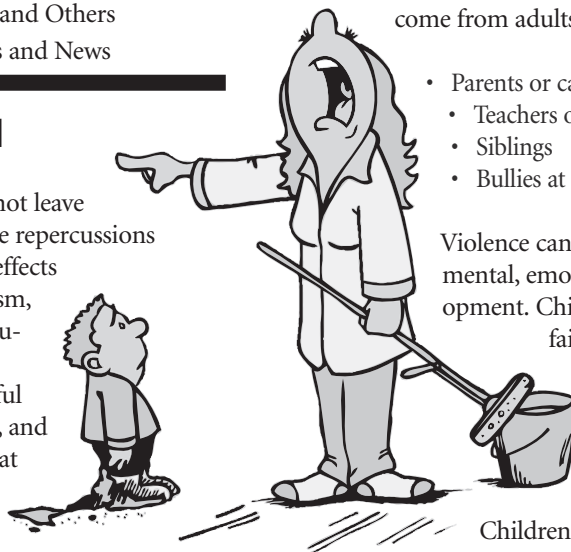
- Recognizing Emotional Abuse
- Perfectionism
- Building Character: Respect Yourself and Others
- Talking to Your Child about Disasters and News

Emotional abuse is almost always present when another form of abuse is found, but realize that this abuse can come from adults or from other children:

- Parents or caregivers
- Teachers or athletic coaches
- Siblings
- Bullies at school or elsewhere

Recognizing Emotional Abuse

Emotional and/or verbal abuse may not leave visible marks on a child's skin, but the repercussions can have more long-lasting negative effects than physical abuse. Constant criticism, degrading remarks, name calling, accusations, and threats can be forms of emotional abuse. These can be harmful to a child's feelings, erode self esteem, and even produce fear and uncertainty that can lead to feelings of hatred.



Violence can wreak havoc with a child's mental, emotional, and physical development. Children who are abused may fail to thrive physically or may have speech and hearing problems. They often suffer from stress-related illness, such as headaches and stomachaches.

Children in violent homes may be aggressive or extremely passive. They often experience problems in school. There is a higher rate of juvenile delinquency and substance abuse among these youngsters.

According to helpguide.org, emotional child abuse is another person's attitude, behavior, or failure to act that interferes with a child's mental health or social development.

These parenting guides are a gift to you from the Sioux Empire United Way. They were adapted and written by the South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service. We hope the information is helpful and gives you additional resources to assist in your efforts to raise healthy and successful children.

For additional resources on children's mental health, visit www.sdkidsmentalhealth.org.

This is a United Way partner program that connects you to all available services for your family.



Violence is a learned behavior. Children who grow up in violent homes learn that violence is an acceptable way to handle conflict. They learn by example that it is all right to hurt someone you love. What children do not learn is equally devastating. They don't learn about healthy relationships, about managing feelings, or about solving problems in a positive way.

Family violence can be prevented. Try coping techniques to deal with your frustration and anger using "cooling down" techniques (e.g., counting to ten, calling a friend, listening to music, taking a walk, going into another room). Words cannot be taken back once they are spoken, but apologizing to children after an outburst can reduce the sting of verbal blows.

If these techniques do not seem sufficient, particularly if underlying problems such as depression, substance abuse, or a history of childhood abuse exists, parents should contact a mental health professional.

If you are worried about your child during this time or feel your child is overly anxious or depressed, please contact your physician, school counselor, or local mental health professional.

Perfectionism

It's a perfect day! That's the perfect car! We just came back from a perfect vacation! The word "perfect" is used com-

monly in conversation and overused in ads and commercials. You may not give much thought to it unless you know someone who is a "perfectionist." Estimates are that about half the population has perfectionist tendencies, which aren't bad in moderation but may lead to emotional and even physical illness when a person lives in a constant state of anxiety about making mistakes.

Children between the ages of 6 and 12 are at the age for perfectionist tendencies to begin appearing. They may take on workaholic-like characteristics if they are rewarded only for the things they do rather than for their personal qualities. Do you only praise your child for an A or outstanding schoolwork? Or do you also praise him for being friendly, having a good sense of humor, taking risks, or for showing kindness to others? If you only praise or reward academic achievement or success in sports, a child may become "hooked" on working hard to earn praise.

Who is most at risk for becoming a perfectionist? Gifted children may struggle with perfectionism because of their academic success and the attention it brings them. Author Kevin Leman suggests that firstborn children are more susceptible as first-time parents tend to overvalue their child's go-getter personality. Recent trends toward early stimulation and learning opportunities, such as baby gymnastics, music lessons for tots, or teaching a 3 month old to read, may promote perfectionist tendencies.

BUILDING CHARACTER:

Respect Yourself and Others

"R-E-S-P-E-C-T -Find out what it means to me!"

The lyrics to the classic song "Respect" are not only catchy, but also bring up a good point, what does respect mean to people? We often hear phrases such as "be respectful" or "use respectful behavior," but your child may wonder what exactly is meant by that.

Simply stated, showing respect means following the Golden Rule: Do unto others as you would have others do unto you or treat others like you want to be treated! The Golden Rule is a universal moral code. All people deserve and want to be treated politely and with dignity. They want to be appreciated and accepted. Nobody wants to be mistreated by being abused, demeaned, manipulated, or taken advantage of.

Research shows the best way your child will learn to show respect is to be treated with the same respect she or he is expected to display. Frequent criticism, disapproval, and lack of encouragement and praise or positive comments can push a child to become disrespectful.

Treating all children with respect will be a huge benefit to your family and society as a whole.

Encourage your child to stop and think creatively about a situation before acting. To do this, have her use her imagination to think of herself in the exact same situation. Next, try the two-question quiz.

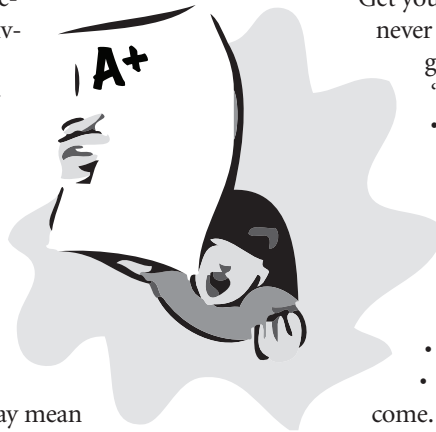
- "How would I want to be treated in this situation?"
- "How would I want people to act in this situation?"

Your child can base actions on answers instead of impulses. The two-question quiz can also be used to check behavior after a situation has passed. Your child will know she is being respectful when her actions match up with honest answers to the quiz.

It may take courage and practice for your child to follow the Golden Rule. Courage may be needed to act differently from a child's peers when they are not being respectful. Continual practice of respectful behavior will make following the Golden Rule a natural for your child.

Monitor your child's behavior for signs of an unhealthy pursuit of excellence.

- Number of achievements is more important than the quality.
- Cannot enjoy the moment. Rather than focusing on how well something turned out, all he can think about is what he didn't do or say.
- Goes back over things that went wrong and asks, "Why didn't I . . . ?"
- Child's mood is dependent on successes. A 98% is exciting but receiving an 89% feels awful.
- Successes are minimized and failures are maximized.
- Always puts achievement goals ahead of fun and friends.
- Not satisfied with anything but the best, repeating the same thing again and again until he gets it right.



Keep in mind that procrastination can be a sign of perfectionism. It may mean putting something off, fearing that it might not be perfect. When the deadline approaches, panic sets in and the perfectionist works frantically to get it done.

- Starting too many projects. "If only I didn't have so much to do, I'd do a great job."
- Not handing in a finished project. "It's kind of done but it's not good enough."
- Overly critical of others — friends, family members, teammates.

In the extreme, children may develop an obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD). Symptoms of OCD include repetitive hand washing, checking and counting rituals, repeating words silently, hoarding, and arranging objects so that they are "just right."

Parents can monitor their own behavior and help their child relax and enjoy life.

- Don't make comparisons between siblings.
- Get your child to do something he's never done before and is likely not to be very good at the first time. Try to find fun in the "doing," not the outcome.
- Help your child see that the consequences of failure weren't as bad as he thought.
- Teach your child that some new things are learned through failure.
- Help your child realize that success often includes taking risks.
- Use humor to help your child relax.
- Encourage the effort to try, not the outcome.
- Use encouragement more often than praise.
- Take time to have fun!

If you are worried about your child during this time or feel your child is overly anxious, depressed, or suffering from obsessive compulsive disorder, please contact your physician, school counselor, or local mental health professional.

TODAY'S ISSUE

Talking to Your Child about Disasters and News

Children react to a disaster in different ways. Some may show reactions right away while others may seem fine for weeks or months. A child may be affected by the disaster even if the family was not directly impacted. Your child could be affected simply by hearing about the event and seeing the images on TV. It is important for parents to know how their child might respond to a disaster and how to talk to him/her about it.

Children of early elementary age may have a hard time adjusting to the changes that a disaster may cause. They may go back to an earlier behavior, such as thumb sucking or being afraid of strangers. They may cling to their parents or teachers and want to stay where they feel safe. It is normal to see changes in their sleeping and eating patterns, along with unexplainable aches and pains. They may withdraw from their play groups or friends, fear going to school, and find it hard to concentrate.

When talking to your child after a disaster here are some tips to follow:

- Provide your child with the opportunity to talk about what is in the media and to ask questions.
- Tell your child your feelings and fears about the situation.
- Tell your child the truth about what occurred but do not create a sense of panic.
- Don't be afraid to admit that you can't answer all questions.
- Answer the questions at a level your child can understand. Don't use big words that will confuse your child.
- Provide opportunities for your child to talk about the event more than once because he will probably have more questions as time goes on.
- Use this as an opportunity to create a family emergency plan. This may be very comforting to you and your child.
- Allow your child to discuss other fears and questions since the communication lines are open.

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- If your child does not want to talk about what happened, suggest other ways of expression such as drawing pictures or playing with toys.
- Monitor your child's exposure to the media. Some parents may wish to limit how many graphic and troubling scenes their child views. If possible, watch the news reports with your child as this is when questions arise.
- Talk with your child about the difference between the news and real life.
- In addition to the tragic views, help your child see the heroic actions and assistance offered by people to the disaster victims.
- You may want to help your child find a way to help others to make him feel like he is doing something to help those affected by the disaster. Younger children can send drawings and cards to the victims.

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For information on children's mental health services in South Dakota, www.sdkidsmentalhealth.org.

The term "parent" is used throughout this newsletter. It is intended to encompass guardians and primary caregivers as well.