



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES

Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol  
Betsi Cadwaladr  
University Health Board

## NEURODEVELOPMENTAL TEAM

### NEURODEVELOPMENT AND HOW THIS MAY IMPACT ON A YOUNG PERSONS MENTAL HEALTH.

Young people who are accessing the neurodevelopmental team for further assessment may also experience issues with regards to their mental health. There is evidence to suggest that young people with neurodevelopmental profiles can also experience things such as: anxiety, low mood, suicidal ideation and self-harming behaviour to name a few. Even those young people who do not necessarily get a formal diagnosis may well experience issues with regards to their mental health. Please be mindful that not all young people will experience mental health difficulties.

Below are some summaries of common mental health difficulties that young people may experience, what they mean, how to look out for early warning signs and how to manage them. Please see links to other websites, which provide further information and recommendations at the bottom of this document.

#### Anxiety



#### What is it?

A simple definition of anxiety is 'a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease about something with an uncertain outcome'. It is an emotion characterised by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and physical changes to the body.

Early warning signs include: feeling scared/worried, churning stomach, feeling sick or like you are going to faint, breathing faster with a racing heart and feeling hot/sweaty.

#### Why does it happen?

Different things can set this off and a few examples include: worries about going somewhere new, meeting people, busy/noisy places, scared of not knowing what to say or do or what is going to happen, frightened of making a mistake and getting it wrong and not being able to do things. Sometimes young people may not be able to say why they are feeling this way.

#### What can I do?

It is really important to know that anxiety is really common and lots and lots of people will experience it at some time in their life, adults as well as young people. The good thing is you can do something to reduce this, manage it better, and in some cases stop it altogether. This can be done on your own by understanding, reading up on, and learning how to manage it. In some cases, you may need help from your parents or carers or professionals such as CAMHS or school based councillors. Try and talk to someone you feel comfortable with, about how you are feeling.

The video below is Kem Cetinay talking about anxiety and how he manages it:

[Talking about anxiety](#)

This short video below describes three ways to help overcome anxiety.

[Ways to help anxiety](#)

## Low mood/depression

### What is it?

Lots of people, young and old may at some time in their life experience low mood or depression. There are times where we may feel unhappy or sad for a variety of reasons. Sometimes we may not know why we feel like this, but are able to get over this quite quickly. However, for some people, it can be more difficult. Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and a loss of interest. It can affect how you feel, think and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems.

### Why does it happen?

Sometimes we can identify what may cause this such as something bad happening to us, losing someone close or really struggling to fit in with our friendship group. Sometimes not being able to concentrate or do what is asked of us can be frustrating and lead to feeling sad or unhappy.

### What can I do?

It is important to know that these feelings are really common and there's loads of help out there. Sometimes just recognising you are feeling like this and sharing it with others you can trust, can be really helpful in trying to feel better. It's good to tell someone how you are feeling so they can help and support you in getting better and help you learn ways of managing how you are feeling. On occasions, some young people may need help from professionals on how best to manage how they are feeling. Below are some links to resources relating to low mood/depression.

The video below talks about feeling sad and unhappy.

[Feeling sad and happy](#)



You can call the services stated below for support and advice:

**Child line:** 0800 1111

**MEIC:** 08088023456 or for further information click the link: [Meic website](#)

MEIC is a helpline service for children and young people up to the age of 25 in Wales. MEIC signpost and refer to professional advocacy service, local services and national helplines including Samaritans, Childline and NHS Direct.

## Suicidal ideation and self-harm

### What is it?

There are times where some young people can be so overwhelmed by what is going on for them that they may experience thoughts to harm themselves or have thoughts to end their life.

### Why does it happen?

This is usually experienced at that given time of stress and usually stops after a while.

### What can I do?

If you do feel like this, there are lots of things you can do to help yourself. You can speak to someone about how you are feeling. You can also distract yourself and do something that you really enjoy such as listen to music or play a favourite game that you like. Spend time with friends.

If these feelings continue, it is really important you tell someone as there is lots of help out there to manage these thoughts. If you are struggling, speak to someone you can trust such as a friend, a parent or grandparent, a teacher you trust, your doctor or child line.



The video below is about how to cope with suicidal feelings

[Suicidal feelings video](#)

The video below discusses dealing with self-harm

[Dealing with self-harm](#)

The video below talks about moving on from self-harm

[Moving on from Self harm](#)

## Challenging behaviour



### What is it?

It can be difficult for all of us to manage our big emotions; it can be particularly tricky for children and young people with neurodevelopmental profiles. They can become distressed or frustrated by the difficulties they experience on a day-to-day basis and communicate this through behaviours that challenge us. This behaviour can look like: being moody, saying hurtful things, hitting someone, breaking or throwing things, or refusing to do something they have been asked to do.

## **Why does it happen?**

We can all feel overwhelmed at times and children and young people are no different. Some young people may be aware of how they are feeling and notice when they are starting to become frustrated. Others may find this more difficult and not yet know what their 'triggers' are. There are many strategies which young people can be supported to use to help them to manage their emotions.

## **What can I do?**

### **Help your young person to recognise what makes them feel this way**

- It can be really helpful to support your young person to identify the things that trigger them to feel a big emotion.
- Encouraging a young person to share this information with the people they trust is also important. This means that the young person can then be supported to learn ways of managing that emotion.
- The information and helpful strategies can then be shared with the important people in their life e.g. teachers, caregivers etc."

### **Remember not to take everything personally**

- It is important for parents and carers to remember that the young person is not always behaving in a challenging way deliberately.
- It is often because they are struggling to understand, process and manage some big emotions.
- Some children/young people with neurodevelopmental profiles may find it difficult to describe how they are feeling and may not show how they are feeling until things have built up.
- It can be helpful for parents/carers to support the young person to understand their emotions/feelings and how to manage them in a positive way.

### **Establishing potential triggers for challenging behaviour**

- This can be helpful but can also take time to unpick.
- Encourage the young person to find alternative ways to communicate how they're feeling e.g. writing it down, drawing it out, texting etc

**Further helpful information can be found in other sections of this webpage such as managing change and understanding feelings.**

This video below contains information about parenting courses and how they can be helpful for families with children who may display some challenging behaviour.

[Parenting course](#)

**Mike Edwards**

**Advanced Nurse Practitioner**

**May 2020**

## Please see links below for further support and advice

### Anxiety

[Young minds anxiety video](#)

[Barnardos what is anxiety](#)

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/anxiety-stress-panic/managing-your-anxiety/>

### Low Mood

Child line: 0800 1111

MEIC:

- 080880 23456 (phone) **84001 (text)**
- [Meic website](#) (instant message, contact form) [help@meic.cymru](mailto:help@meic.cymru)

What is Meic +

- Signposting / referral to local independent professional advocacy services, local services (subject to issue / need), national helplines
- Transfer to Samaritans, Childline, NHS Direct Wales (when busy, out of hours)

Interventions

- Stop / start / change model, explore, challenge, action, brief, solution – focused, information, signposting, self-efficacy and self-care, advocacy incorporating: self-advocacy, informal advocacy, formal advocacy, direct representation.

### Self-Harm

This is a link to helpful tips in looking after yourself:

[Young minds looking after yourself](#)

### Challenging Behaviour

[Family action support](#)

[family lives website](#)