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# Etone Mental Health

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## Parent's Guide to Bullying & Racism

### Bullying

Bullying is any persistent behaviour that is intended to hurt someone. It can happen anywhere – including at school, at work, online or at home. Examples of bullying include name-calling, making threats, being violent or aggressive, spreading rumours and undermining, humiliating, excluding or pressuring someone.

While lots of young people experience bullying, it is an incredibly difficult thing to go through and can have a huge effect on your child's mental health and wellbeing. As a parent, it can also feel very challenging and worrying.

The important thing to remember is that it is possible for your child to get through it and feel okay again, and that there are practical steps you can take to address the bullying and its consequences.

What are the signs that a young person is being bullied?

While everyone is different, a young person who is being bullied may:

- seem low or anxious
- seem less confident in themselves
- show signs of distress such as feeling upset, teary or panicky
- avoid school or refuse to go altogether
- often complain of feeling physically unwell
- have outbursts of unexplained anger at home
- seem withdrawn, isolated and wary of others
- have few friendships
- make changes in their behaviour, for example dressing very differently or suddenly doing new activities to meet peer pressure
- act in a bullying way towards others
- have unexplained physical injuries such as bruises or scratches
- do less well at school
- eat and/or sleep more or less than usual
- use things like self-harm or drugs and alcohol to cope with difficult feelings

Underneath these behaviours, a child who is being bullied may be frightened or anxious, lonely, isolated, worthless, on-edge or desperate about the situation they're facing



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## Racism

Racism can happen anywhere. It can happen at school, at work or at home; it can happen online or in-person; it can even happen within families and relationships.

Sometimes racist abuse is obvious – for example, verbal abuse about the way someone looks, stereotypes about how someone might behave, or physical violence and bullying. Sometimes racism is part of the structures and systems that we live in. And sometimes it is 'subtle' and difficult for other people to notice.

Your child may also experience racism 'indirectly' - as the things going on around us, to people just like us, can feel like they have happened to us and make us feel personally attacked, helpless, or like our lives don't matter.

## How to support your child with their experiences of racism

- Talk to your child about their experiences, reassure them they are not alone and validate their feelings
- Try to make conversations about racism age appropriate
- Have open conversations about race and racism regularly as part of your family life
- Listen to and encourage your child
- Think with them about their exposure to the media and social media
- Teach your child about their rights and how they can report abuse
- Check in with how your child is feeling, understanding that it's normal for there to be good days and bad days

## Signs that racism is affecting your child's mental health

It is normal if your child's experiences of racism – whether big or small, constant or one-off, direct or indirect – affect their self-esteem or make them feel angry, low or hopeless. When they're going through this, validate just how difficult it is, reassure them they're not alone and remind them that while it might feel difficult to believe, things can get better.

If your child is struggling with their mental health over a longer period of time, they may need some more support – from you and from professionals if needed. If experiences of racism are more seriously affecting your child's mental health, they may:

- have a continuously low mood, depression or low self-esteem
- feel numb or empty inside
- experience changes to their sleeping or eating habits
- show changes to their mood and behaviour that feel out of the ordinary
- feel worried or anxious a lot of the time
- have a negative attitude towards their body image or ethnic identity relating to skin tone, hair texture, or the size and shape of facial and bodily features
- experience flashbacks or intrusive thoughts about a traumatic incident