

Year 5 Problem Page - Parental Advice

I guess the the key thing to mention is that there are no 'set 'answers for the Problem Page letters - in this activity the children are asked to give advice based on what they have learnt so far. I think we should be encouraging the children to take into account the age of the person asking for advice and accept advice that seems helpful and appropriate.

Generally, there are some values and principles that can be useful when parents are giving advice, relating to self-esteem and keeping safe and healthy.

- Remind the child that they are not alone
- Encourage the child to talk to someone they feel they can trust.
- In the right circumstances and with the right person anything can be discussed.
- All children have a right to feel safe (UNCRC).

Below is some Suggested Advice by Mr Vanson that may be helpful for the problem page letters, bearing in mind that the children may come up with their own, very good suggestions.

If parents would like any further advice please do contact Mr Eggleton and Mr Vanson. We would be happy to talk to you.

Problem 1: A Spot of Bother

Dear Problem Page,

I used to think I was nice looking, but now I have huge spots everywhere. They are on my face and on my shoulders and I hate them. I don't like going to school anymore because I feel so ugly. Why is this happening to me and what can I do about it? P, age 13

Suggested Advice:

Emphasise that this is happening because of puberty and it's very common. Oil glands in the skin are stimulated by hormones during puberty. Lots of teenagers get spots at this time. Keeping the skin clean, drinking water and eating healthy food can help, but some people just do get lots of spots, whatever they do – it doesn't mean they have dirty skin. If someone has a lot of spots, this may be acne. A doctor or chemist may help - suggesting treatments for this. This person is feeling very low and doesn't like going to school, so talking to someone they feel they can trust and sharing their problem may be helpful. They could talk to a friend, family member, carer, teacher or support worker, or use support services such as ChildLine 0800 1111.

Problem 2: Hold The Phone

Dear Problem Page,

All of my friends have a mobile phone and I don't. They all text each other and I feel really left out. My Mum says I can't have one because they are expensive and dangerous. I don't understand what she means. Why is she being like this? How can I make her change her mind? R, age 11

Suggested Advice:

Explain the potential risks of having a phone and why the mum might think they are dangerous, for example there is the risk of having them stolen, or of being mugged. Also, some people think there may be health risks for young people, if they use mobile phones a lot. Suggest talking to their Mum about how phones can be used responsibly and safely. Encourage this person to consider how much someone of their age needs a phone, what are the advantages/disadvantages?

Problem 3: Bed Bug

Dear Problem Page,

Sometimes when I wake up in the morning there is a wet patch in my bed, but it isn't wee. It makes a stain so I've tried washing the sheets in the sink but there is nowhere to dry them without my dad seeing. Why is this happening and what should I do? S, age 14

Suggested Advice:

Explain that this is happening because the boy has started to have wet dreams. This is when semen comes out of a boys' penis while he is asleep. Reassure him that this is a natural part of puberty, a biological process that happens to most boys at this time. It means that the male body has started to produce sperm. Suggest that he could talk to his dad about it, or perhaps someone he feels more comfortable talking to – another relative, friend, sibling, carer, support worker.

Problem 4: Sleepover Stress

Dear Problem Page,

I started my periods last summer. I told my carer and she helped me to deal with it and it was ok. Now I've been invited to a sleep-over. I really want to go but I'm worried I'll have my period when I'm there. I don't know if my friends have started yet and I'm too embarrassed to talk to them about it. What can I do? P, age 11

Suggested Advice:

Suggest trying to talk to someone about this. It may be that one of this person's friends would be sympathetic, and may have started their periods themselves. This person or their carer could talk to the parent/carer of the person having the sleepover. Ask them to keep it confidential and explain how they are feeling. Perhaps suggest she tries to remember the date when her last period started. She could then work out whether her period is due. Be prepared – go to the sleepover with some sanitary protection.

Problem 5: Mood Swings

Dear Problem Page,

I used to be a really happy person. Now I'm 13 and I sometimes feel really miserable. I go up and down and people are beginning to notice. At home they keep calling me moody and tell me to snap out of it. Is this normal and how can I stop it happening? I, age 13

Suggested Advice:

This is normal for many teenagers and it's important for this person to know that they are not alone. Mood changes are often a part of puberty, because hormones are very active during this time. Suggest the person talks to someone they feel they can trust – they may

be able to suggest ways of coping with and managing these moods. Exercise, or physical activity can sometimes help to relieve stress and anxiety.

Problem 6: Are My Bodily Changes Normal?

Dear Problem Page,

I learnt about puberty in primary school but now I'm 12 and I feel really confused about things and have lots of questions. I haven't got my period but I get this white stuff in my knickers. I don't wear a bra but my nipples hurt. I don't know if these things are normal. I'm really worried. What should I do? C, age 12

Suggested Advice:

These things are usually perfectly normal and are part of puberty. Girls' nipples and breasts often get tender or sensitive while they are growing. The 'white stuff' is a vaginal discharge which helps to keep the vagina clean and healthy. The body can start to produce this before a girl gets her periods. However, if a discharge is a different colour or smells unpleasant she may need to see a doctor.