

---

NOVEMBER 2023 | ISSUE NO. 76

# BMC JOURNAL

The monthly newsletter of  
Behavior Management Consultants

## Is Your ASD Child Being Bullied? Five Ways to Take Action



---

When your child is the target of bullying, your first response is often an emotional one, followed by wanting to act in the most effective, action-oriented way.

When you discover your child is being bullied, you may be angry, fearful, or sad. These emotional responses are natural for parents who want their child to feel valued, protected, and loved. To become an effective advocate for your child, it is important to acknowledge your feelings, then focus on how to help your child.

Here are ideas with initial steps to guide parents to healthy and safe responses:

### **Support and empower your child**

When you first talk with your child about bullying, be prepared to listen without judgment; provide a safe and supportive place where your child can work out their feelings. Children may not be ready to open up right away as they, too, are dealing with the emotional effects of bullying and may be feeling insecure, frightened, vulnerable, angry, or sad.

When your child begins to tell his/her story, listen and avoid making judgmental comments. It's important to learn as much as possible about the situation, including how long the behavior has been happening, who has been involved, and what steps have been taken.

Make sure your child knows:

- It is NOT their fault. He/She is not to blame
- They are NOT alone. You are here to help
- It is the adults' responsibility to make the bullying stop
- Bullying is never okay, and they have the right to be safe
- No one deserves to be bullied
- They deserve to be treated with respect
- They have the right to feel safe at school

**Evidence shows over 60% of children and young adults with autism experience bullying. Among them, high schoolers are most likely to be bullied.**

---

## Learn your rights

It's important to know children and guardians have legal rights when a child is the target of bullying or disability harassment. There are three areas to research:

- Local: Find out your child's school's policy on bullying
- State: Check your state's bullying laws. Each state has different laws and policies on bullying, along with requirements on how schools should respond. Check in with your local or state parent training and information center, [StopBullying.gov](http://StopBullying.gov), or email PACER at [bullying411@pacer.org](mailto:bullying411@pacer.org) to find out your state's laws. Also, check your state's Department of Education website for a state Safe Schools Office, which can be a great local resource to learn more about your state and school's policy
- Federal: The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) have stated bullying may also be considered harassment when it is based on a student's race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or religion. Parents have legal rights when their child with a disability is the target of bullying or disability harassment.

## Report the bullying to the school

Speak with an adult at school who knows your child well and report what is happening. He/She may redirect you to the appropriate person. In some schools, the dean of students or a vice principal is responsible for bullying and discipline issues. The information on who to contact and how the process will be addressed should be available on your school's website, from school administration, or in your parent handbook.

## Keep records and written information

When your child is a target of bullying, it is important to document the events and record what is happening to your child. This record is useful when talking with educators or other individuals who may need to assist you in intervening against bullying. As the most invested party, you should do your best to keep track of events. In this way, emotions alone do not drive the discussion.



**1 in 36 children in the U.S. have autism, up from the previous rate of 1 in 44. In the U.S., about 4 in 100 boys and 1 in 100 girls have autism. Boys are nearly 4 times more likely to be diagnosed with autism than girls.**

---

Records can help you keep a concise, accurate timeline of events as they occur. You may think you will remember the details, but it is easier to use a written record when trying to recall the specifics later. The record can also help in determining if the bullying behavior has increased or decreased in frequency or duration. The record should be factual and based on actual events. Do not add opinions or emotional statements.

The following tips are useful for recording your child's experiences:

- Create a paper file to hold hard copies of everything
- Document and create a timeline for what your child has told you with dates, times, and all people involved in the bullying. Include accounts of face-to-face incidents or any screenshots, texts, or URLs of bullying directed at your child
- Note who you spoke to at the school
- Ask about the timing of the follow-up process, and who will be getting back to you
- Include documentation of all communication with the school, including emails, calls, and letters
- Keep a thorough history of any bullying behavior with details

### **Create a plan that includes and involves your child**

When a child experiences or witnesses bullying, he/she is often left feeling powerless. While it's never up to a child to stop the bullying, helping children understand and respond to it gives children:

- The self-advocacy skills to speak up on their own behalf—an important tool in any bullying scenario and in life
- The ability to express themselves and be heard, knowing they are an important part of the solution
- An increased likelihood that the proposed solutions will fit the skills and needs of those involved

The "Student Action Plan Against Bullying," developed by PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center and available in four languages, can help guide youth through the communication process, providing them with a structure to share their ideas and opinions about potential solutions to bullying. It can also help them feel more in control of the situation. Because most bullying will not stop unless a supportive and caring adult is involved, it's important to use the Parent and Educator Guide also developed by PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center to support your child while working through the Student Action Plan. For students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), this can be a helpful tool as part of a bullying prevention plan. Remember, every child receiving special education is entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE), and bullying can become an obstacle to that education.

# HOW TO TELL IF YOUR AUTISTIC CHILD OR TEEN IS BEING BULLIED



“  
If your child is being bullied, they need your complete love and support to get past it.  
”

---

According to [stopbullying.gov](http://stopbullying.gov), children with autism spectrum disorder are three times more likely to be bullied. The study included students aged 8 - 17, and bullying was defined as being picked on or left out of group activities, meetups, etc.

We know it's not very easy to read about, but autism bullying exists. There's even a chance that your own child is subject to it. If it persists without help, they're at a higher chance of being bullied as an adult too, even at their workplace.

In fact, 1 out of 6 adults get bullied at work (according to the Autism Society).

It's oftentimes hard to tell if your child is being bullied too, since many autistic kids can have communication difficulties. What's more, their interpretation can be inaccurate too. They could see actual bullying as friendly teasing, or harmless playfulness. Here are a few signs to watch out for.

### **Emotional & Sentimental Signs**

Unexpected outbursts and irregular patterns are often indicative signs that something's off about how your child's feeling. For example:

- Sudden crying for no apparent reason
- Constant mood swings
- Expressing feelings of anxiousness (or seeing them "on edge")
- Troubling nightmares
- Being unusually angry or aggressive
- Preferring being alone more than usual
- Stammering during conversations (or a stammer reappearing if they previously got past it)
- Not wanting to open up about their day



**There's no excuse for bullying, no matter the context, and it's not your child's fault.**

---

## **Physical Signs**

This can refer to outright signs of violent behavior from their peers.

- Bruise or scratch marks (or even cuts in more severe cases)
- Being very hungry at home because their lunch wasn't eaten
- Damaged clothes
- Inexplicably missing items
- Having stomach aches
- Disturbed and/or disrupted sleep

## **Behavioral Signs**

### **Unusual patterns, such as:**

- Skipping school or insisting they don't want to go
- Not wanting to get into the school bus
- Not wanting to make friends
- A drop in grades for no apparent reason
- Start bullying others themselves
- Get meaner or rougher towards siblings
- More frequent autism meltdowns and repetitive behaviors

## **How Bullying Affects Autistic Children and Teens**

Autistic children are particularly susceptible to bullying because of the social and communication difficulties that they may have. If their peers notice that they're different, they could become a target of teasing until it turns into bullying.

Since an autistic person can have a harder time managing their emotions (and self-regulating overall), they can also be affected to a greater degree by a bully. Lowered self-esteem, worsened mental health, social skills regressions, all of these are direct effects of bullying (and more).

Bullying includes:

- Purposefully excluding others from activities
- Calling people names
- Telling lies about others
- Physically assaulting people (hitting, pushing)
- Making fun of disabilities or physical features
- Badmouthing people

If these are happening to your child, you must talk about it with them and show you fully support them. Call your child's school that very day and request you speak to the teachers or the principal about the situation. Your child has to see you're committed to fixing the problem.



---

## Talking to Your Autistic Child About Being Bullied

One of the best ways to determine if your child's being bullied is talking with them. If you notice irregularities, just start asking questions. The more you know, the better actions you can take together with the child's teachers.

Always remain logical and collected in these conversations. The last thing an autistic child needs if they're bullied is to see you get angry or anxious too. You must put forward calmness, care and love.

Even if your child is nonverbal, you can still tackle the issue. Create a "calendar" of their day, and give them pictures representing "happy" and "sad". Ask them how they felt during each step of the day so you can pinpoint the problem.

It's also possible they see bullying as making friends, even if it makes them feel bad. Make sure to clarify what friendship means.

## Supporting Bullied Autistic Children and Teenagers

Autistic teens are an easier target for bullies because they have struggles that neurotypical teenagers don't. For example, communication difficulties or difficulty understanding social cues. These are traits that make your child stand out among others from a group.

They're aspects that a bully can use to pick on them, simply because they're not like the rest. If your child also tends to prefer being alone, they could be branded as an outcast by less benevolent people.

However, it's very important to let your child know that there's nothing wrong with them. The problem is in the way others are choosing to treat them.





---

## Offering Support at Home

Make it clear that what's happening isn't their fault. They have no blame to bear.

Next, you should try and help them understand what bullying is, and why they're being bullied. If you notice they're not quite getting it, create parallels with their favorite characters or cartoons. Maybe even just make up a story to get your point across.



Then, you should give them pointers about what they're supposed to do when bullying happens. For example, create rules, since autistic people usually react well to structure. If someone's picking on them, teach them to say "Stop doing that, I don't like it.", or to go and inform the teachers about it.

If the child is nonverbal, you can give them an item that when shown to teachers it would mean that they're being bullied. Also helpful is establishing a few "safe spots" around the school together with your child. If they're feeling overwhelmed, they could momentarily withdraw there.



Friends are a great thing to have in these situations as well. Try to get some playdates going or have your child take part in group activities. Their friends could also then jump to their aid if they see them getting bullied.

Overall, one of the best tools your child can have are improved social skills, which are attainable through specialized therapy.

---

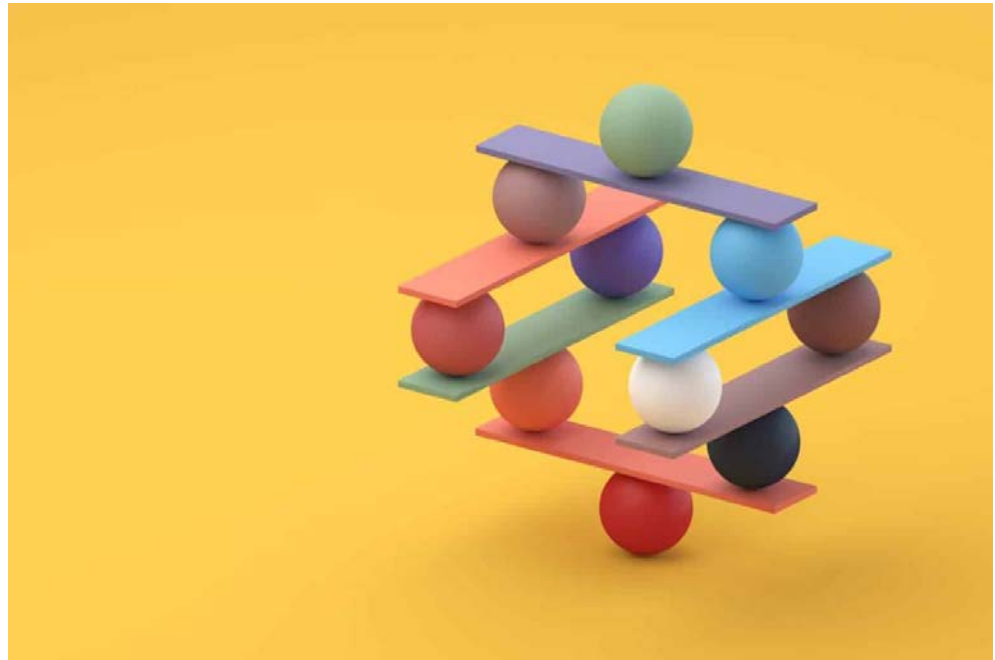
## Assuring Support at School

Most schools take bullying as a serious problem nowadays. Make it a priority to speak to your child's teachers and the school administration, as they should be trained in spotting and handling bullying. If there is specialist staff at the school as well, they should be a part of the meeting.

Try to gather as much information as possible from your son or daughter before the meeting. It is important to present all details calmly to the school's personnel, so that they clearly understand the severity of the issue.

If you feel that you aren't getting listened to, put your concerns in writing and keep written records of all conversations. Bullying people with disabilities violates federal law, so you have the high ground automatically in dealing with the situation.

Once you've established which activities and people are most likely to place your child at risk of bullying, you can create a preventative strategy together with the school's board.



A few examples:

- A buddy system with a peer
- Supervised lunches in safe spaces
- A dedicated staff member to whom the child can report bullying
- A general autism awareness program in the school
- Activities focused on cooperation and teamwork to develop social skills

**Do not leave the meeting until a clear plan is in place!**

---

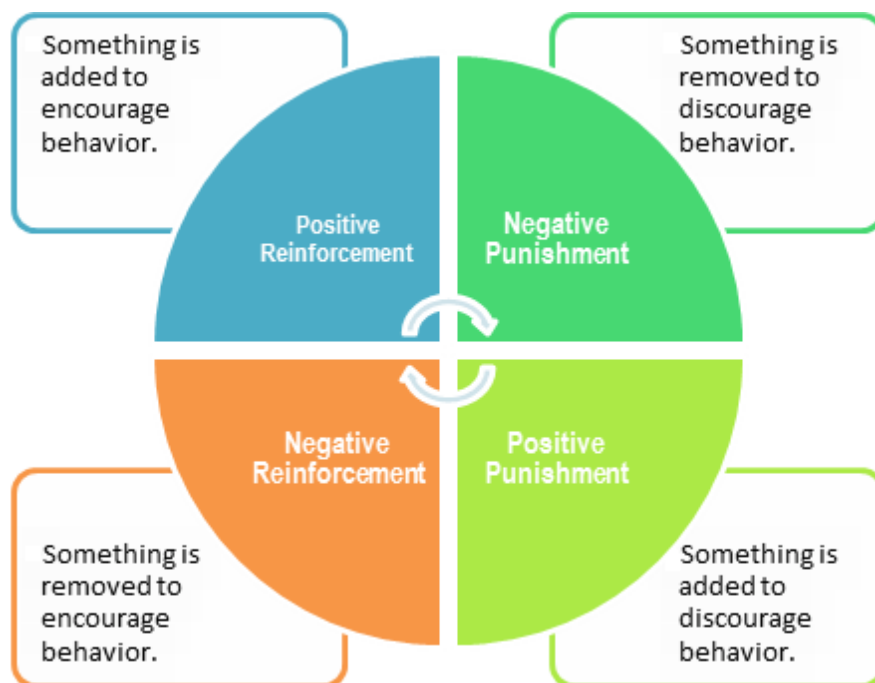
## How to Handle Autistic Children Bullying Their Peers

It is highly unlikely that an autistic kid will engage in bullying. Since they have social and communication challenges, it's oftentimes difficult for them just to interact with their peers, let alone bully them.

However, some children can end up as bullies because they've been bullied themselves. Or, they could perceive it as socially desirable behavior, since that's how others acted towards them.

If you see your child acting inappropriately towards others, you can try these strategies:

- Explain that other children feel bad when they're called names or pushed around, just like they do.
- Talk with your child to determine the root cause of their behavior. If it's unrelated to them having been bullied as well, consult an autism specialist about it.
- If your child isn't behaving well at school, keep an open communication with their teachers. Ask at what times does this behavior happen, and if they're showing any signs of being overwhelmed prior to it.
- **Always use positive reinforcement.** Every time the child does a behavior that's desirable, reward them (with a cupcake, extra video game time, a favorite activity, etc).



# Tips for navigating your ADHD when working



---

Navigating the challenges of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is difficult for many, especially in the workplace. Whether remote or in-person, office settings can have many distractions, making it hard to focus regardless of whether you have ADHD or not. In today's work environment, it's harder than ever to focus attention when needed.


According to a recent study from Skynova, just 47% of workers with ADHD feel that their work environment suits their unique needs. This speaks to the need for a broader understanding of ADHD and organizational changes within companies to better accommodate employees with ADHD, and this is something that needs addressing across industries.

Until then, if you're struggling with ADHD at work (as are 2 in 3 American employees, according to Skynova's study), there are some simple ways to manage it that can be very impactful.

One suggestion that may be useful is to create a private space for yourself whenever possible. If you work in an office and have a private office space to yourself, close the door to block noise and keep out any distractions that could come up. If you work remotely, try working in a quiet room at home rather than a coffee shop or co-working space so that you can be free of any distractions.

As for the common ADHD symptom of hyperactivity, making sure you take breaks is extremely important. Taking time throughout your day for breaks is the best way to manage the feeling of being unsettled or unable to relax in a work or meeting environment. Taking a walk can help to relieve tension, but when that's not possible, even just occasionally stepping away from your workspace has its benefits.

Organizational habits can be hard to foster when you have ADHD, but doing so can be immensely helpful as well. That's partly because staying organized can help you improve your time management abilities. And since 86% of workers with ADHD have problems focusing or managing their time at work, organization is especially important. Here are a few tips that may make it easier:

- Create a document where you can take notes throughout your day
  - Create a to-do list and update it as you encounter new tasks and assignments
  - Schedule breaks by setting alarms
  - Specify certain times of day for certain tasks (aka time blocking)
- 



---

ADHD can feel like an impossible struggle in the workplace, but there are ways to make it easier. With small actions like organizing, finding space for breaks, and working in quiet environments, you can cultivate a productive work environment for yourself and help your colleagues better understand your access needs at the same time. It's a way to advocate for yourself and create the environment that you need at your own pace. Working looks different for everyone, regardless of how their brain works, so going at your own speed is essential. Taking these steps is a great way to start figuring out what that might look like for you.



**The ADHD Academic**  
@theADHDacademic



Having **#ADHD** does NOT mean you cannot graduate college, finish graduate school, be an honors student, or excel and achieve any other benchmarks.

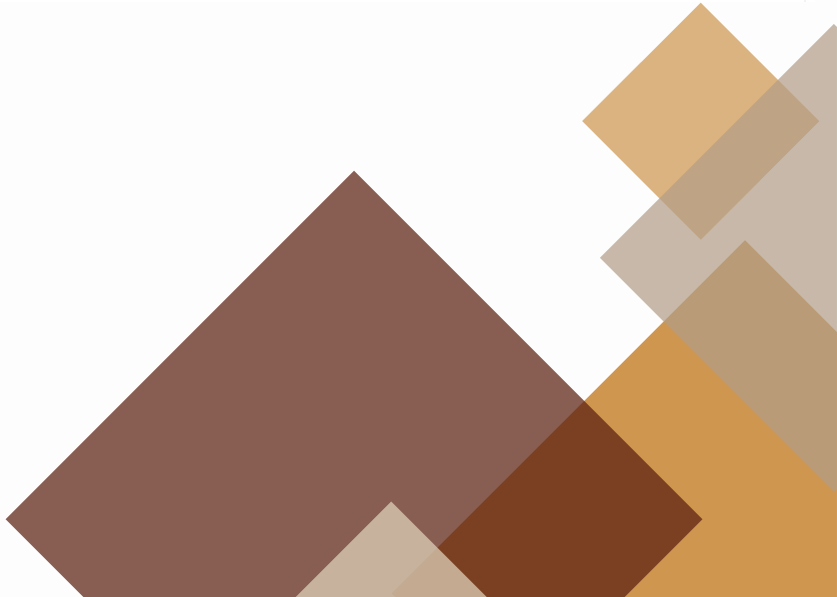
ADHD does NOT equal failure, thank you very much. It makes achieving it much, much harder.



**Brittney Bush Bollay**  
@BrittneyBush



The thing about **#ADHD** is that it's actually great. I love the way my brain works. I'm funny and flexible and creative and adventurous. My frustrations mostly stem from trying to force my ADHD brain to function in a non-ADHD world.



*Neurodiversity and*

# THE HOLIDAY SEASON



“It’s the most  
wonderful time of the  
year!” 🎵



---

While the holiday season is a time of joy and togetherness for many, it can be a period of unique challenges for neurodiverse children. Children, with conditions like autism, ADHD, or sensory processing disorders, often experience heightened struggles during this festive time. SSM Health Treffert Center psychotherapist Bryan Mischler, LCSW, reflects on some common issues neurodiverse children face, explores how experts like Dr. Darold Treffert have shed light on these challenges and some practical solutions parents can implement.

## Sensory Overload

“Blinking lights, unique flavors, loud music, and strong scents are all part of the festive experience,” notes Mischler. “But for neurodiverse kids, this can be overwhelming.”

Dr. Darold Treffert, a renowned expert in Neurodiversity, emphasized the importance of sensory awareness and sensory-friendly environments. Create safe spaces with minimal sensory stimuli, like a quiet room with soft lighting and noise-canceling headphones, where the child can retreat when feeling overwhelmed. Give your child opportunities for vigorous movement if your child is a mover or high energy.



## Routine Disruptions

One of the core aspects of life for many neurodiverse children is routine. The holidays often disrupt these routines, causing anxiety and behavioral challenges. The Treffert Approach underscores the significance of predictability.

“Parents can help by maintaining key routines, such as bedtime and meal schedules, as consistently as possible,” says Mischler. “If changes are unavoidable, prepare your child in advance by using visual schedules or social stories to explain what to expect.”

Neuroinclusivity  
works for  
everyone

---

## Varied Social Engagements

Holiday gatherings mean a variety of social interactions with different expectations. Neurodiverse children may struggle to navigate these social waters. Experts like Michelle Garcia Winner, who developed the Social Thinking® curriculum, provide strategies to help children understand social contexts. Parents can use these strategies to teach their children social thinking skills. For instance, they can create "expected" and "unexpected" behavior lists together, helping their child understand what's appropriate in different situations.

## Finding Solutions

Creating a harmonious holiday experience for neurodiverse children involves proactive planning and empathy. Mischler suggests parents consider these practical solutions:

### Prepare in Advance

Discuss holiday plans with your child. Use visual aids like calendars and schedules to help them understand the upcoming events and changes in routine. Have a recovery and an exit strategy. Discuss this with your child ahead of time. This lets them know a plan is in place and they don't need to worry about "What are we going to do?" Recognize the signs that your child is becoming overwhelmed and initiate the recovery plan as early as possible to reduce the likelihood of an emotional overload.

### Sensory Preparations

Designate a quiet area in your home or places you may visit, like relatives' houses. A place where your child can retreat if sensory overload occurs. Provide sensory-friendly items like fidget toys or weighted blankets. Increase the child's sensory diet. Providing increased calming sensory activities between events and during down times.

### Clear Communication

The social expectations can vary drastically from one Holiday event to another. A school party with peers has rules very different from seeing the Nutcracker at a performing arts center. Talking about what the event will be and what the child's role is will be important. Clearly communicate social expectations. Use social stories or role-play to help your child practice appropriate behaviors for different situations. Show videos of similar events and point out the behaviors that will be expected.

---

## Inclusive Activities

Plan inclusive holiday activities that cater to your child's interests and sensory needs. For example, you can create a sensory-friendly holiday craft station or bake together using simple recipes.

## Support Network

Seek support from local autism or neurodiversity organizations. The SSM Health Treffert Center and SSM Health Treffert Studios are great resources if you have questions. Reach out and see if they can help. They often offer resources, workshops, and support groups for kids and parents.

## Self-Care

Remember to take care of yourself too. The holidays can be demanding, so ensure you have the support and rest you need to provide the best support for your child.

As we celebrate the holidays, let's remember that inclusivity and understanding are the greatest gifts we can offer neurodiverse children. By acknowledging their unique challenges and striving to create an environment that supports their needs, we can ensure that everyone, regardless of their neurodiversity, can enjoy the magic of the holiday season.

“Neurodiversity describes the idea that people experience and interact with the world around them in many different ways; there is no one “right” way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not viewed as deficits.”

Nicole Baumer, MD, Julia Frueh, MD

IMPORTANT  
NUMBERS



IF YOU NEED  
HELP, PLEASE  
MAKE THE CALL



GET THE SUPPORT  
YOU NEED



YOU ARE NOT  
ALONE



National Suicide  
Prevention Hotline:  
1-800-273-8255

National Domestic  
Violence Hotline:  
1-800-799-7233

Runaway and  
Homeless Teen  
Hotline Help:  
1-800-246-4646



Coalition for the  
Homeless:  
212-776-2000

Drug and Alcohol  
Hotline:  
800-622-2255

Food and Hunger  
Hotline:  
866-888-8777

Homeless Services  
Hotline:  
212-533-5151

Rape Crisis Hotline:  
212-227-3000

National Child  
Abuse Hotline:  
1-800-422-4453

National Teen  
Dating Abuse  
Helpline: 1-866-  
331-9474

Crisis Lifeline for  
LGBTQ Youth:  
1-866-488-7386

Boys Town National  
Hotline:  
800-448-3000

American  
Pregnancy Helpline:  
866-942-6466

---

Behavior Management Consultants believes that, “No Child is Born Bad”. Our mission is to educate, mentor, and assist parents, caregivers, and professionals to cope with, socialize, and identify values important to today’s youth.

The goal is to serve public and private social service organizations including, but not limited to:

- Residential Treatment Facilities (RTFs)
- Juvenile Detention Centers
- Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs)
- Public Schools
- Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

We are confident that we will meet our goals thereby ensuring that our clients are being kept abreast in the ever-changing landscape of Human/Social Services.

## **Quote of the Month**

“It’s not the load that breaks you down, it’s the way you carry it.”

Lena Horne



If you'd like to buy some ad space for your upcoming events or business ventures, please reach out directly to Artemus X. Smith for details and pricing. All proceeds go to helping fund Behavior Management Consultants.

Email: [Smith@bmcofnyc.org](mailto:Smith@bmcofnyc.org)