



# Safe Space: Information for Local Authorities

Amity

Safe Space



[www.amityrelationshipsolutions.org](http://www.amityrelationshipsolutions.org)



# AMITY SAFE SPACE

**Safe is a relationship programme designed for families affected by child to parent violence and abuse that can also be used as a preventative strengthening family relationship programme for children using unwanted behaviours without violence and abuse. It is suitable for children aged 7 to 15.**

## What is child to parent abuse?

Child to parent abuse is defined as: ‘a pattern of behaviour...which involves using verbal, financial, physical and/or emotional means to practise power and exert control over a parent...such that a parent unhealthily adapts his/her own behaviour to accommodate the child. Commonly reported abusive behaviours include name-calling, threats to harm self or others, attempts at humiliation, damage to property, theft and physical violence’. (Holt, 2016:1).

## Prevalence of child to parent abuse

[Child to Parent Abuse - Dr Amanda Holt \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cps/cps.nsf/doc/child-to-parent-abuse-dr-amanda-holt)

“In our comprehensive UK-based study that looked at police data, we examined incidents reported to the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) over a two-year period (Jan 2018 – Dec 2020) of all cases involving offspring under the age of 25. The majority of offences reported were categorised by the police as ‘Violence Against the Person’ (60%), followed by ‘Criminal Damage’ (25%). Of the victims, 89 per cent were parents and six per cent were grandparents (Brennan et al., 2022). The same study also analysed the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) over a nine-year period (2011/12 – 2019/20) and found that child to parent abuse constitutes 1.2 per cent of all violence reported in the CSEW. This analysis also revealed that 43 per cent of cases of child to parent abuse are not reported to the police (Brennan et al., 2022)”. In recent report of the Mayor of London parents and carers affected by violence, highlighted the need for early intervention as soon as warning signs appear, rather than at crisis point.

- the majority of CAPVA cases involve boys in late adolescence and their mothers, and is most likely to be physical violence
- parents/carers interviewed said they only contacted the police at crisis points when they felt they had no other choice and were afraid for their physical safety
- all parents/carers affected said they had experienced multiple incidents of violence before reaching crisis point



## What is Safe Space and how can it help?

With the right support child to parent abuse can often be prevented when family imbalances become apparent, and a parent is struggling to manage their child's behaviour. Parent and carers of younger children who are not yet displaying violent and abusive behaviours can benefit from being supported to establish a healthy home power dynamic. Safe Space is suitable for children aged 7 and above.

This programme has been developed here at Amity by family therapy, parenting and edge of care specialists using approaches that work in private practice and in edge of care settings. Safe Space is a one-to-one keyworker approach to supporting this specific family relationship difficulty. The programme is empowering for parents and carers and supports them to feel more confident in the role. There are 6 sessions completed with each parent and child. The programme can be used with parents only if the child for whatever reason cannot participate.



## What can you expect?

- A bi-directional, systemic, solution focussed, behaviour change, one to one intervention for parents/carers and their child aged 7-15
- 6 sessions to be worked through by the same trained keyworker – 6 sessions for the child and 6 sessions for the parent/carer with a joint session at the end
- Risk assessment/full programme assessment/safety planning process takes place before the programme
- Early focussed so that the work can start as soon as the parent/child power imbalance becomes apparent/before a child uses violence at home
- Suitable for youth justice, social care, youth service, early help case workers, voluntary sector
- Suitable for all types of families including neurodiverse children. The basic principle of suitability is where abuse and violence is a choice i.e. the child is not choosing violence or abusive behaviours in other settings (such as other people's homes)

### The training and resources

The training for Safe Space is available to organisations in the UK.

The programme training consists of a ½ day virtual training session followed by a full day face to face training.

We recommend that awareness raising training is completed for wider multi-agency staff so that early identification of this family issue can be spotted sooner.



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## Safe Space



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Please do not use Safe Space unless you have been trained to do so

### WELCOME TO AMITY SAFE SPACE INTRODUCTION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

#### What is Amity Safe Space?

It is a resource that has been developed specifically for parents and carers of children aged up to the age of 15.

It is a strengthening relationship resource that will help you and your child think about and reflect on your relationship. It will strengthen your role as a parent or carer and provide you with tools, strategies and reflections as to how you can build a stronger relationship together.

It is written in a solution focused, simple format with language that most parents can easily relate to and understand. It uses self-goal setting and action planning which has been shown to be very helpful in any behaviour change process.

It is common in any process for us to want to change everything at once, but this can be daunting, unsustainable and may be setting us up for failure. Instead, we want to try and change one or two small things at a time, and work on them on a daily basis to turn those changes into habits. It is so much better to make a few small changes and keep them up, than try and change everything and end up changing nothing at all. It is also very important that we ultimately decide what goals we want to set for ourselves rather than have someone tell us what needs to change.

Each session will help you reflect on what you find stressful as a parent so you can manage your feelings and emotions, be assertive, but nurturing at the same time. The programme will support you to be the best parent you can be, reflect on your unique role raising children, and find ways to remain calm yet feeling in control of your family life.

Family life is stressful and fraught with challenges therefore the purpose of the sessions is to



through, doing what we say we are going to do, being consistent, listening to our children, but still having the final say when feel that is reasonable and appropriate. It means being available both physically and emotionally to our children, but also being confident to say no when we need to.

Assertive parents make practical and age-appropriate rules, but they also listen to their child, and show that they understand how their child is feeling about those rules. There is a healthy balance of nurture and structure with clear guidance and high expectations. Assertive parents show a genuine interest in their children, they want the very best for them. The parent and child will have a warm relationship. Children feel safe with an assertive parent because there is consistency and predictability.

You will also think about how to be **nurturing** in your parenting role.

Warmth and love are the key ingredients of a nurturing parent/child relationship. Spending quality time with each child, maintaining a good family routine, keeping children safe from harm and danger, making sure they know that they are loved. It means treating them as an individual, appreciating them for who they are and their differences to other siblings, wanting what is best for them, encouraging them to be the very best person they can be given the skills and attributes they have.

#### Questions you might have

##### What does practitioner guided mean?

You are being supported by someone who has been trained by the people who created Safe Space to guide you through these sessions. Your support person will explain everything step by step guide as you work through these sessions and ensure that you understand the content. Don't worry if you don't understand why you are being asked to work through certain things, just ask.

You and your support person will work through the sessions at a pace that works best for you. How long is each session and how many will I do? This resource has been designed for maximum flexibility. It is written in sections with activities in each section. Your support worker will work at your pace.

You will work through each session and the activities in it with your support person who will help decide which parts to do together and which bits you will do at home. If you are not sure about anything you just need to ask for further clarification. Your support person will ask you to do some activities outside of the session. Any work you do outside of the session will be useful to you and more than likely make positive difference to your family life.

#### Who should use this resource?

This resource has been created for parents and carers of children up to 15 years of age. The person supporting the parent will be a trained parenting practitioner or someone in a similar role. They will have been trained in a variety of evidence-based parenting interventions using locally agreed resources, tools and strategies that are appropriate for the age and stage of the child. What recognised parenting strategies will I be using?

There are many evidence based positive parenting programmes available to all local authorities. Safe Space provides a flexible framework that is suitable for use alongside many of the parenting programmes recognised in the UK and elsewhere. Your support person will be using Safe Space in combination with other parenting strategies that they feel are appropriate to your family's individual circumstances, including the age of your child/ren and their level of understanding.

#### What are the benefits of this programme?

Once you have completed the Safe Space sessions you will feel more in control and assertive as a parent/carer. You will also recognise the importance of finding the balance between assertive and nurturing parenting, because we all know that children need both. Hopefully you will recognise the importance of self-care, reminding yourself that you are important and have to be in the best place possible, both physically and mentally in order to look after dependants.

### Good luck and stick with it.

#### Do you have any questions for your support worker?

to give you some dedicated time with a trained practitioner to talk about your own family circumstances and feelings about being a parent. This is time specifically set aside just for you.

There are also separate sessions for your child to work through with a support worker. These sessions will focus on what it's like to be a young person and how sometimes it's difficult to manage intense feelings and the behaviours that come with that.

You will have the opportunity to talk to someone about the journey you have been on so far as a parent, the challenges you face, and how you will move forward so that you and your children grow up healthy, happy and full of positive family memories together. Building a stronger relationship with the child you care for is a positive experience and there are many benefits to having a strong connection. Children who have a solid and positive relationship with their parents are more likely to have the skills to build strong and positive relationships with other people such as their friends, teachers, people in the community and, of course, future relationships with a partner.

As our children grow, they become less dependent, the relationship naturally changes, and, as a result, we have to adapt, grow and change together, in order to keep the bond strong.

The difference with the parent child relationship is that we, as the parent, often have to put in more effort than the child as they grow older and develop.

This resource has been written by specialists in family relationships difficulties. They have extensive professional experience in couple therapy, children's services, family mediation, child to parent violence and abuse, domestic abuse and separated family conflict. The people who have created Safe Space firmly believe that quality relationships for all are a right, not a privilege. They also believe that relationship difficulties can be improved if everyone tries people try.

This resource has been written based on their professional experiences over many years working with and supporting hundreds of families. It is first and foremost about exploring the parent-child relationship and what you can do to strengthen those already strong existing bonds. In doing so we can actually make home life a little easier because we build on the trust that we already established when our baby was born (or whenever it was that we started to the care for them) We fed, loved, clothed, re-assured when they were upset etc - consistently, and this is how they learnt that we were reliable as their caregiver. This is how good attachment is formed. This resource will help to build on the attachment you already have.

### Things are tricky right now

You might be working through Safe Space because right now things feel really tricky, and they might have been difficult for a long time. You may also feel that nothing will work. That is totally understandable. You may have tried other programmes. Safe Space is a little different to other things you might have tried. It has been created specifically for families where the relationship between the child and the parent feels lop sided or imbalanced in some way. The purpose of Safe Space is to help you both understand your important roles and responsibilities as family members who want things to change.

#### How can Safe Space help me as a parent?

Safe Space is a behaviour change intervention. It is not going to be easy, and sometimes things can get worse before they get better. This is normal in any behaviour change process. Have a think about if you ever tried to do something before and felt like it was the most difficult thing in the world? Did you get there in the end? How did you get there? What did you need to do differently?

You are going to learn some new strategies that will help you feel **more in control**. As parents we have a big responsibility to ensure that our children grow into healthy, thriving humans. This may seem like a really daunting task, and at times feels like an unmanageable job. All parents get stressed and overwhelmed. This is perfectly normal. When we get stressed, it is easy to feel like we have no choice but to use more drastic measures, such as shouting, swearing, throwing things, or feel like there is no other option but to use physical chastisement. On other hand, we might feel as if our parenting style not 'tough enough'. Sometimes it is hard or confusing to know what 'style' to use.

It doesn't have to be this way. There are many ways to be an assertive and nurturing parent without being loud or angry, or the total opposite, where we feel not assertive enough! We can be in control in many other ways - new ways that we might not have thought about before. We can remain in control of our feelings and emotions, our actions, the decisions we make, and the steps we take as a parent to take care of our children. When we remain in control of our emotions and our feelings, it shows our children what we expect of them. It is good role modelling for them, and shows that we can set a good example.

You are going to learn strategies that will help you be **more assertive**.

Assertive parenting is about making fair (but firm) family decisions. It is about seeing things

### ACTIVITY: You, Never, Always

Is this familiar? These are common things we might say to our children.

What are you trying to say? Is it out of frustration? How does it come across?

You never tidy your room, it's always a tip	You never listen	You're always in your room, you never sit with us!
You're always on your laptop / Xbox / phone	Why can't you think about anyone else but yourself?	Why is it always me that cleans the house / washes up?
You don't back me up when I'm trying to discipline the kids!	Why is it always me that has to say sorry?	You don't care about me!

Now try and see if you can make the following statements without saying YOU, NEVER, ALWAYS.


### THE POWER OF CHANGE

Change - this is sometimes a really scary word! How does the word make you feel?

What things have you tried to change in the past?

How did it go?

What did you learn about how hard change can be?

Was there anything that made it easier?

During this programme you will be trying to make some changes to your home life. Here's the bad news first - it's going to be hard, BUT it is going to be worth it.

You might be thinking it is never going to be any better than it is now. That is how Mary felt, by the way. Things had been so hard at home for such a long time that she didn't think it would ever get any better. She thought the 'problem would go away on its own'. The truth is that problems rarely get better on their own and we have to do something about it. But why is it so hard!? Let's have a think about that for a moment. There are lots of reasons why we fail at making changes....

We give up when things don't change straight away.

We forget what we are doing and go back to the way we were before

We try and change everything at once

We don't fully commit to it

Hopefully you will by now be thinking that something has to change so let's start to have a look at that.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE ABOUT MY HOME LIFE? WHAT I WANT.

What needs to change - what do I want	Yes, No, Maybe?
I want to have a conversation without it turning into an argument	
I want my child to stop using abusive behaviours (list the behaviours)	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
I want to live in a house that is calm	
I want my other children to feel safe	
I want to improve relationship with other family members	
I want to be able to go and do normal things	
I want to feel in control of family life	
I want to be proud of my child	
I want to have fun with my child	
I want my child to have fun with me	
I want my child to confide in me	
I want my child to respect our home and its contents	

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Safe Space - PARENTS AND CARERS

PRE-CONTEMPLATION

No intention on changing behaviour

CONTEMPLATION

Aware a problem exists but with no commitment to action

PREPARATION

Intent on taking action to address the problem

ACTION

Active modification of behaviour

MAINTENANCE

Sustained change: new behaviour replaces old

RELAPSE

Fall back into old patterns of behaviour

UPWARD SPIRAL

Learn from each relapse

ACTIVITY:

Look at the above cycle of change and talk it through - where do you think you are?

I want to change because	I don't want to change because
What scares me about changing	What excites me about changing

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Children and Young People Sessions

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Safe Space - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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WELCOME TO AMITY SAFE SPACE

INTRODUCTION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

What is Amity Safe Space?

It is a resource that has been developed specifically for parents and carers of children aged up to the age of 15.

You will be supported by someone you know throughout the sessions. Each session will be completed on your own and your parent or carer will also complete similar sessions with the same support worker. The sessions will help you to think about how you and your parents/ carers can be happy, safe and secure together at home.

Each session will help you reflect on what you find stressful, and this will help you to manage your feelings and emotions. Relationship difficulties can be improved if both you and your parents/carers try to do things differently.

Things are tricky right now

You might be working through Safe Space because right now things feel really tricky, and they might have been difficult for a long time.

Safe Space is a little different to other things you might have tried before and has been created specifically for families where the relationship between the child and the parent feels lop sided or imbalanced in some way.

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Safe Space - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

THE ANGER VOLCANO

HELPLESS FEAR REJECTION  
EMBARRASSED INJUSTICE ENVY  
DISAPPOINTMENT GUILT FRUSTRATION  
SHAME OVERWHELMED

In the same way that Lava builds up before the volcano erupts, we need to identify what's going on beneath the surface. Being angry indicates that something isn't right - its important to find out what that is and address it so that it doesn't blow.

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Safe Space - PARENTS AND CARERS

Building mutual trust and respect in families

Respect

Choosing to stay non-violent

Recognising the needs of others

Thinking through how your attitude, behaviour and language affects others; being aware of other's needs and how you interact.

Being accountable

Recognising the impact of behaviour, taking responsibility for your behaviour; taking steps to make your behaviour right, communicating truthfully.

Respecting property and household items

Valuing your home; respecting other family members' property, contributing to the care of the home.

IT and social media

Agreeing with family how to and when to use and share, being aware of the impact of your abuse on others, not looking at abusive materials.

Problem solving respectfully

Being willing to listen, to value each other's position and to work towards compromise.

Communication

Expressing needs and feelings directly, clearly and calmly. Being assertive; being willing to compromise; talking to family members the way you would want to be talked to.

Being trustworthy

Being open and honest when negotiating family agreements, doing what you say you will do; being reliable and honest.

Non threatening behaviour

Acting so that all family members feel safe and comfortable expressing themselves and doing things.

Images used with thanks to Rise, Brighton

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Safe Space - PARENTS AND CARERS

ACTIVITY: WHO AM I

Circle all of the statements that describe how you feel about yourself and talk to your worker about it.

Mostly happy

Good at following rules

Likeable

Friendly

I am happy with the way I look

I don't like the way I look

I don't like school

I like school

I get lonely

I am not a happy person

I don't talk about how I feel

I think rules are boring

I am easily annoyed

I can control my anger

I can't control my anger

I want to be better at controlling my feelings

My friends like me

My friends don't like me

I feel safe

I am loved by my family

I worry a lot

I don't worry about things

I feel like people don't understand me

I like my life as it is

I don't like my life as it is

Time for Action

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Safe Space - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

MY ANIMAL FAMILY

Let's have a look at some animals and think about the various qualities the animals in the pictures have (for example dolphins are clever, a butterfly can be free or feel trapped, bears can be scary or strong, dogs can be vicious or friendly).

Which animal best describes you? You don't have to stick to one animal you might feel different on different days.

Now think about the people you talked about in the relationships map. What animal do you think describes them best? Again you can choose more than one animal for each person.

Who is this and why?

Who is this and why?

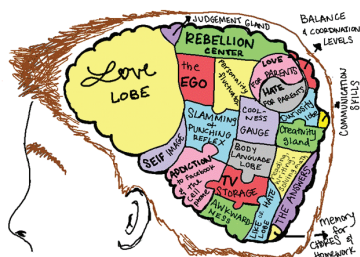
Who is this and why?

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Safe Space - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

## THE TEENAGE BRAIN

### THE AVERAGE TEENAGE BRAIN



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The human brain reaches adult size at about 11 years of age, but it has one of its biggest periods of change and development during adolescence and does not reach full 'maturity' until the mid-twenties.

Adolescents can be 'tricky' to be around at times. Supporting teenagers invariably falls to parents, carers and professionals.

The teenage brain brings great opportunity as well as challenge. During puberty the brain begins its second biggest period of development since infancy. The brain begins 'pruning' neurons - unused neurons wither and those used are 'myelinated' (coated), allowing for more efficient information processing. This prepares us for the more complex problem solving needed in adulthood.

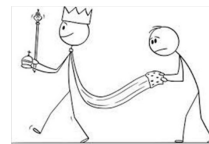
The brain's limbic system, which manages emotions, is one of the first to mature. The frontal lobes, necessary for 'executive thinking', are the last. This explains the impulsive, pleasure seeking, risk taking nature typically seen in teens.

Due to the mismatch in brain growth, psychologist Laurence Steinberg suggested that a teenager's brain "has a well-developed accelerator but only a partly developed brake." Young people can make 'sensible', thought out, decisions, but are prone to acting on 'gut feeling' and making decisions 'in the moment'.

**ACTIVITY:** Now that your support worker has talked to you about Maslow's triangle (which is what you need to grow and thrive), let's make a list of all the things you need, for example: having your uniform ready; brushing, washing cleaning reminders; making your supper...

Now think about the things your parents/carers do for you that you might not need but would like, that maybe could make them sometimes feel like a butler for example: being a taxi service; buying you the latest video games/gadgets; giving you money to go out with friends

### PARENT/CARER OR BUTLER?



Lets make a list of all the things that you think our parents/carers need to do for you that meets your very basic needs (think back to Maslow's triangle).....

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Now let's make a list of all the things they do for you that they don't really need to, but do them anyway...

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To find out more email:

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[www.amityrelationshipsolutions.org](http://www.amityrelationshipsolutions.org)