

# MENTAL HEALTH TIDBIT (BETTER INFORMED TOGETHER)

## HELPING CHILDREN DEAL WITH EMBARRASSMENT

DAUPHIN COUNTY MH/A/DP  
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With a new school year, comes new social situations for your child to navigate. Embarrassing moments are a part of everyday life for children and adolescents. While minor embarrassments for adults like getting food caught in your teeth or walking around with toilet paper stuck to your shoe can be trivial for adults, being embarrassed can be very upsetting for a child. In this edition of MH TidBIT, we discuss how to help your child build resilience and confidence to assure they are able to deal with embarrassment.

**Model Behavior-** Children look to parents for cues on how to manage emotions like embarrassment. Look at how you deal with embarrassing behavior. Do you dwell on your mistakes? Do you lose your cool during an embarrassing situation? If you react by becoming angry or upset when something embarrassing happens to you, your children will learn that it is a big deal when something embarrassing happens to them.

**Do Not Dismiss Your Child's Feelings-** While the incident that is causing your child's embarrassment may seem minor to you, it may feel huge to them. Something such as giving a wrong answer in class could feel like the end of the world to your child. While it might feel like saying something like "it's not as bad as you think" is helping the situation, it can often make your children feel like you are brushing them off.

**Do Not Overreact-** While it is important not to dismiss your child, it is also important not to overreact. Getting angry on your child's behalf can make the situation worse and make them reluctant to share their feelings in the future.

**Praise Positive Skills-** Reframing an embarrassing moment can build confidence. For example, if they made a mistake during their solo in the school musical, you could praise them for continuing to remain focused and continuing through the song. For instance, saying "I am sorry that happened, but I am proud of how you handled that. It takes a brave person to keep performing when things get hard."

**Create Perspective-** Children can be very egocentric. In other words, they believe they are the center of everyone's attention. If they tripped and fell in a crowded hallway at school, it is likely they believe everyone in the hallway saw them when in reality we know that is not likely. Learning to put feelings and experiences into context will help build resilience. Ask your child how they felt a time they saw another child fall in the hallway. Share a time when you experienced a similar moment. Allow your child to take the lead by asking questions or allowing them space if they would rather not talk about the situation. Leave the door open to talk later.

Embarrassing situations happen to everyone at some point in their lives, but if your child comes home from school upset daily it may signal there is a bigger issue going on. It is important to be mindful if your child is reporting constant teasing or bullying by peers. If this occurs, you should contact your child's school to discuss concerns further. Additionally, if your child seems to obsess or struggles to move past embarrassing moments, or if they are avoidant of certain activities due to fear of embarrassment, it may signal that they are struggling with anxiety. If you are concerned that your child is struggling with anxiety, you should speak with your child's pediatrician or contact the mental health/behavioral health number on the back of your child's insurance card for information on outpatient mental health providers.