SEVENOAKS
PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Tourette's Support

Supporting Children with Tourette's

It is important to be aware that most people with Tourette's syndrome experience a strong urge before a tic, which has been compared to the feeling you get before needing to itch or sneeze. This may mean you might spot a child trying hard to conceal this behaviour as well as the actual tics themselves.

Children with Tourette's syndrome may also be at risk of bullying because their tics might single them out.

Some people can control their tics for a short while in certain social situations, like in a classroom. It requires concentration, but gets easier with practice.

Controlling tics can be tiring. A person may have a sudden release of tics after a day trying to control them, like after returning home from school.

Tics may be less noticeable during activities involving a high level of concentration, such as reading an interesting book or playing sports.

What we can do to help/support?

- Ignore the tics as much as possible. Avoid commenting or reacting to the tics publicly, as this may worsen the tics. Punishment for tics is not appropriate.
- Discuss with the student collaboratively using problem solving approaches as to what can be done to be considerate of their peers and teachers.
- Ask parents/carers what strategies have worked in the past.
- Consult with the student to see if there is a comfortable seating arrangement in the classroom.
- Some may need to exit frequently; hence seating near the door might be helpful.
- Allow larger 'personal space' if student has touching tic or large motor tics involving limbs.
- Let the student work in the position that he/she feels comfortable with.

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Supporting Children with Tourette's (continued)

- Allow extended time to complete tasks and tests. Break projects into shorter manageable tasks with opportunities to deal with tics.
- If written work has limitations due to tics – allow use of alternative means of production such as computer programs, keyboarding, oral reports, tape recording, voice dictaphone and/or longer assignments times; sometimes a scribe may be needed.
- Direct contact with the teacher nearby, reducing distractions and break up of tasks into small discrete sections could help attention problems.
- Evaluate a child who is struggling for associated learning difficulties and provide help for identified needs.
- Increase self-esteem, praise for even minor accomplishments, encourage student to talk about feelings on one to one, help student develop coping strategies and encourage participation in group activities.
- Make use of learning mentors if available.
- Developing circle time in PSHE lessons has also proved useful
- Detect and deal with teasing, taunting, bullying or peer rejection is an issue.
- Stress may increase tics. Learning coping skills to handle stress is helpful.
- Involving in enjoyable activities (such as music or sports) decreases tics and stress.
- Provide opportunity for physical movement and encourage relaxation and body control techniques
- In cases of explosive anger, ensure students' and others' safety
- Explain to other colleagues that the student has very limited control over his or her disorder and that the tics are associated with symptoms that are involuntary as well as ever changing.
- Induct new staff to tic management techniques. Ensuring that the Individual Education Plan is up to date is vital.
- Establish consistent behavioural management plan for both school and home and set reasonable expectations. Homework diaries or home-school books can be a useful way of communicating with parents.

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- Reward schemes have proved useful. Compulsive behaviours/ Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Liaise with the mental health team for further advice. Try not to get involved with a child's compulsions, but understand that the child will be anxious.
- Small group instruction with individualised attention could be helpful.

Tics can be worse on some days than others.

They may be worse during periods of:

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Tiredness

People with Tourette's syndrome can have mood and behavioural problems, such as:

- ADHD
- OCD
- Depression
- Anxiety