

Case study Joe Aged 8

Joe's mother telephoned the clinic to speak to the school nurse. She wanted to come for a chat about her 8 year old son. When the school nurse asked for a brief idea of the concern, the mum didn't really want to give any information, as she felt unable to talk at that time. An appointment was arranged for the mother to come into clinic.

On the day of the appointment the mum arrived ten minutes late, she was very apologetic – the school nurse explained to her that this was fine but she was obviously feeling rushed, she said she had just dropped her younger child off at a nursery and he had been "playing up" about getting to the nursery, he was not usually like that, "I think he knows I am feeling stressed at the moment".

In the private room the mum began by saying she was feeling very stressed at the present time, her 8-year-old son was causing great difficulty at home with his behaviour which all appeared to be directed at her. She described him as a boy who loved school: he was very able, worked hard and had a large group of friends. At home he changed completely, he would not do anything he was asked, was uncooperative and unkind to his younger brother becoming argumentative about every little thing.

The school nurse asked the mum how this made her feel "I feel so angry with him, we waited so long to have him and I hoped that we would always be a happy

family, but at the moment when I leave the house to collect him from school I begin to feel worried because I know things will start". The school nurse was thinking of building up the story and although he was 8 years old she was interested in the antenatal history. Joes mum told of how they had tried for a baby for several years – the family were always asking when they were going to start a family, she always felt under pressure. They had two cycles of I.V.F Treatment without success, again this made her feel inadequate and then she became pregnant – she was elated but very cautious throughout the pregnancy, always worried something may go wrong. After the birth she had suffered from a period of post natal depression, she had overcome this and things had settled down until the last couple of months. At this point the mum began to cry, "Fancy a grown woman being made to cry by an 8 year old" she said. "I have never really talked to anyone about how I felt during the time before we had Joe, it was such a strain, and you can see how precious he is".

At this point the school nurse asked the mum how Joe behaved towards his father, he loves every minute of the time he spends at home with his dad. "My husband works long hours and often has to go away with his work, when he comes home he often brings presents and Joe can do no wrong". I think Joe sees me as baddy as I am the one who says no and daddy always says yes, we aren't doing Joe any favours, I think this is why he



misbehaves for me. “I feel so much better for just talking about this – having someone to listen”. The school nurse asked the mum what she would like to do next. I am going to sit down and have a chat with my husband, we both need to work together. The school nurse arranged to speak to the mother in one week’s time on the telephone.

The school nurse telephoned as arranged; as there was no reply she left a message for the mother to make contact leaving a contact number. Two days later the mum telephoned, she had a talk with her husband and they decided they were going to work together, there had no change in Joe’s behaviour but she felt so much better in herself for discussing the problems with her husband. A second meeting was arranged for one week’s time at the family home.

Only Joe’s mother was at home when the school nurse visited, Joe’s father was unable to arrange any time away from his work. Joe’s mum reported that she and her husband had taken some time when the children had gone to bed to discuss the situation. The school nurse listened as the mum explained that dad could see that his constantly saying yes to everything was causing difficulties but felt that as he wasn’t at home very often he wanted to make up for this. Joe’s mum went on to explain that she had told her husband that she felt as she was picking up the pieces after he had gone back to work. The school nurse listened as the mother recounted the discussions she had with her husband. She went on to

describe how they had sat down together and talked about Joe, something they hadn’t done for a long time. The school nurse asked how this had made her feel “I felt as if I wasn’t on my own with the children for the first time in a long time, I was able to say how I felt and let my husband know how much it was getting me down, that I was beginning to dislike my son, a feeling that was horrible”.

Just talking to my husband has helped; we have decided that he will try not to give in to Joe; if I have already said something we will stick to it. Over the weekend we have tried really hard and I have noticed that he has said no to things that before would have been yes whatever I might have said. Joe was worse than ever he really didn’t like the fact that dad was saying no, but at least my husband was able to see what Joe can be like. I think we have begun to turn a corner because this morning I said Joe couldn’t eat breakfast in the sitting room, normally he would have been very cross and his dad would have said “oh let him” but today he said no also and Joe sat at the kitchen with his brother fairly happily, stress levels in the house were much lower, we all set off for school much happier. I appreciated the support. I know its early days, but this morning showed me how things can be. The school nurse offered a further visit but Joe’s mum said could we contact if we need any further help.