



# Safeguarding Bulletin

MAY 2026

## HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Dear Parents and Carers,  
In this month's bulletin we are going to be looking at how we can help out children to navigate healthy relationships.

As children grow, friendships become a central part of their lives. While most friendships are positive and supportive, some can become unhealthy and even coercive. Coercive controlling friendships can be difficult to spot, but they can have a significant impact on a child's well-being, confidence, and self-esteem.

**What is a coercive controlling friendship?** A coercive controlling friendship is one where one child exerts power over another in a way that is manipulative, pressuring, or emotionally harmful. Unlike typical fallouts or disagreements, these friendships involve ongoing patterns of control and intimidation.

## HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT YOUR CHILD

IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD IS IN A COERCIVE CONTROLLING FRIENDSHIP, HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO HELP:

### 1 Encourage open conversations

Create a safe space for your child to talk about their friendships. Ask open-ended questions like, "How do you feel when you're with this friend?" or "Do you feel comfortable saying no?"

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### 2 Help your child recognise unhealthy behaviour

Teach them to identify red flags in friendships and reinforce that healthy friendships should be equal, respectful and supportive.

### 3 Boost their confidence

Encourage activities that foster self-esteem and friendships with different groups of children.

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### 4 Teach assertiveness skills

Role-play situations where they practice saying "no" or setting boundaries in a respectful way.

### 5 Encourage a wider social circle

Help your child form friendships with different peers to reduce reliance on one person.

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### 6 Speak to school staff if needed

If the situation is affecting your child's well-being at school, reach out to their teacher for support and guidance.

The\_Enlightened\_Parent





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## RECOGNISING COERCIVE CONTROL

### **Some common features may include:**

One friend making all the decisions and expecting the other to comply  
Threats of exclusion or withdrawal of friendship unless demands are met  
Emotional manipulation, such as making a child feel guilty for spending time with others  
Pressure to do things that make them uncomfortable  
Name-calling, teasing, or undermining self-confidence  
Making the child feel responsible for the other's emotions or actions.

## SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF COERCIVE CONTROL

### **Signs your child may be in a coercive controlling friendship**

If your child is experiencing a controlling friendship, they may show some of the following signs:  
Increased anxiety or stress about seeing a particular friend. Changes in mood or self-esteem, such as becoming withdrawn or overly worried about pleasing one person. Loss of other friendships or reluctance to spend time with different friends. Secretive behaviour or reluctance to talk about their friendship. Fear of upsetting their friend, even when the demands are unreasonable. A sense of obligation to always agree with their friend's choices