

## Shrinking problems with children and families

### Case study – Ava

Ava is 11 years old and lives with her mother, Monica. Ava's parents separated when she was young. Recently, Ava has been experiencing bullying at school, mostly by two classmates; Erin and Courtney. They have been following her around, using put downs, intimidating her and making her feel uncomfortable. This bullying has also been carried out online, where Erin and Courtney have posted images of animals and 'ugly' people and tagged them as Ava. Ava has been feeling less and less inclined to go to school, and has anxious, sick feelings in the morning when she has to prepare for school. These are feelings she has had before, notably when her parents split up.

Ava wanted to stay home from school for the last couple of weeks of term, but both her mother and GP said that wasn't a good idea. Her mother suggested she change class but Ava said she would miss her friends, Sophia and Em. She doesn't talk to her friends about the bullying, although they are aware that it goes on. Ava just wants things to be 'normal' at school.

Monica feels that Ava is very kind and tends to underplay what has been going on with the bullies, when Monica knows it has been very significant and worrying for her. Monica has coached Ava to take a 'positive mindset' to school to show the bullies that they are not getting to her. Ava doesn't think that this works. Monica thinks it might be helpful for her to get a more realistic perspective about what has been going on. She hopes that the counsellor will give Ava some strategies for dealing with the bullies.