



Psychosocial and Emotional Issues for Individuals with Vascular Birthmarks

Individuals with vascular birthmarks may experience some emotional or social difficulties related to their condition and living with a visible difference.

- Teasing and bullying
- Anxiety and feeling self conscious around peers
- Concerns about being unattractive
- Feelings of being "different"
- Lower self esteem
- Loneliness, isolation, avoidant behaviors
- Concerns about their condition

Parents, families, and caregivers may also be impacted by the child's medical condition

- Additional caregiving resources (emotional, financial, and time demands)
- Resolving personal worries and expectations
- Feeling others can't relate
- Dealing with comments
- Concerns regarding treatment and burden of decision making

There are many things you can do to help support your child or friend.

- Provide opportunities for self expression (art, music, writing , play)
- Foster strong emotional health and resiliency
- Facilitate greater understanding within their social network - school, teachers, peers
- Help to embrace individuality and differences
- Celebrate their strengths and abilities
- Provide opportunities for them to feel confident and successful
- Connect with other families and individuals with similar experiences
- Create a strong support network that promotes competency and positive potential

Mental health professionals, child life specialists, social workers, and psychologists can provide valuable services to help children and families cope better with the situations unique to their medical condition. They can provide services in a number of ways.

- Therapeutic play activities
- Talk therapy
- Identify stresses, anxieties, and fears and plan coping strategies
- Prepare in advance for challenging situations
- Help find ways to improve relationships with peers
- Feel a greater sense of personal worth, well being and control
- Support groups and forums for discussion

The VBF Psychosocial and Developmental Experts present on psychosocial issues and provide support groups for teens and families at the annual conference. They are available to address individual family concerns through the expert panel on the VBF website.