

Bullying Prevention

Bullying is an intentional and repeated behaviour. It is not accidental.

Bullying can be physical, verbal, and/or psychological and there is intent to cause fear, distress, or harm to another. It is done by a more powerful person or group against a less powerful person or group of people who is/are unable to stop this from happening. Children who socialise in smaller groups and have fewer close friends are typically more vulnerable.

Key messages

- Bullying involves more than the students who are bullied and those who bully others. Other children are often present during bullying incidents at school or online. Bullying can continue because people who are involved do not talk about it and seek help. This includes bystanders.
- Parents can help their child to work out ways to respond if they are being bullied or are bystanders to bullying.

While bullying is often talked about and can be really hurtful and upsetting, it is important to understand that most young people don't bully others.

Some reasons why most young people do not bully others include:

- They have good social skills and can make friends and be happy without bullying.
- They think bullying is wrong. Most people believe they would feel ashamed of themselves and their parents and families would be really upset with them if they bullied.
- They don't feel they need to bully. Students who feel good about themselves and enjoy school say they don't feel the need to bully.
- They are too busy to think about it. Students who are involved in activities and are enjoying what they are doing are usually not interested in bullying.
- They have strong, supportive friendships groups. Students who have positive and supportive friends are far less likely to bully or to be bullied.
- They believe bullying isn't worth it. Some students may sometimes feel like bullying but don't because of the consequences.

Why does bullying happen?

There are many reasons why children may bully others:

- They feel they can get power from bullying others
- To try to be popular and become well known at school
- They are scared and try to scare others to hide these feelings
- They are unhappy and take it out on others
- They are being bullied themselves or have significant family or friends who bully

Types of bullying

Bullying can happen in different ways including direct and covert or hidden behaviours. A person might bully using:

Direct: Face-to-face bullying

- Young people tell us this is:
 - Verbal actions such as name-calling, teasing and insulting others
 - Physical actions like punching or kicking

Or

Covert: 'Hidden' bullying

Cyber bullying: is also hidden bullying

Young people tell us this:

- Happens through electronic communication including mobile phones and the Internet, like text messages, websites, social networking sites and apps, emails, chat rooms or forums and instant messages
- Can be anonymous, reach a wide audience, and sent or uploaded material can be difficult to remove

How children who are Deaf or hard of hearing may experience bullying?

Young people who are Deaf or hard of hearing tell us that other children whispering and not telling them what has been said is the most common bullying behaviour they experience, followed by having hurtful lies told about them. Some circumstances make a child who is Deaf or hard of hearing more vulnerable to bullying, such as missing out on social cues like a sarcastic tone or not understanding what is happening in the classroom.

For further reading please refer to

http://www.ndcs.org.uk/family_support/education_for_deaf_children/education_during_school_years/bullying_and_deaf.html

Do different people bully online to those who bully offline?

Most people who cyberbully also bully offline. People who decide to bully others will use different ways to get the power they want over another person.

Adapted from Friendly Schools – Friendly Schools and Families communication sheets

How to communicate with your child about bullying

It can be helpful to start a conversation about bullying with your child by asking questions such as:

- What are recess and lunchtime like at school? What do you do?
- Have you ever noticed others at school calling each other names or hitting or pushing each other?
- Do you ever feel lonely at school or left out of groups or activities? What happens and how does this make you feel?
- Have you ever been teased or pushed around? Has anyone said things about you online that you don't like? What happens and what is that like?

Remember to be respectful of your child and understand that they may not want to answer questions about bullying. Encourage your child to seek help from another trusted adult and try not to take it personally if they don't want to speak with you, they may feel ashamed.

How to respond if your child is being bullied

If your child does tell you about being bullied, here are some ways you can respond:

- Show your child that you believe them. It is important for your child to feel confident in confiding their experiences.
- Take your child's concerns seriously without panicking.
- Listen to your child without judgement. Show you understand that he/she is upset by the bullying.
- Encourage your child to talk about the situation.
- Tell your child that bullying is wrong and remind them they have the right to feel safe and happy.
- Be aware of your own responses and react in a calm, helpful and supportive manner.
- Make sure your child knows how to get help and support at school. If they are being cyberbullied, this can be reported to website moderators, mobile and/or internet service providers.
- Support your child to maintain the existing positive relationships in their life and/or to make new friends. Encourage your child to participate in activities other than those

related to the school so they have other friendship groups (e.g. sport, arts/creative interests and hobbies?).

- Help your child reflect on what has been done to resolve the situation and how to approach similar situations in the future. This can help to discourage strategies unlikely to help a bullying situation such as revenge tactics or starting a fight.
- Let them know they are not alone – it may help your child to know that other children experience similar difficulties.

Adapted from headspace Understanding bullying – for family and friends fact sheet

What can I tell my child to do if he/she is bullied?

The Stop, Think and Talk about Bullying model below can be used to help your child to think through a difficult situation and decide what to do.

1. Stop – What is going on?

- What is happening?
- How do I feel?
- Is the situation really bothering me?
- Am I in danger?

2. Think – What can I do?

- Is this a bullying situation?
- Can I handle this situation myself?
- Do I need to ask for help?

3. Talk – Who can I talk to?

- Who is the best person to talk to?, e.g. Parents; Classroom teacher; Teacher on duty at recess or lunchtimes; Other school staff members; School friends; Family friends and other people they can trust
- What do I want from my support person?
- How could I talk about it?

Sometimes children want to try to handle the situation themselves and try out some strategies. It is a good idea to create an action plan with your child and try role playing some of the situations from this plan.

Action Plan

When I have a problem I can...

- Try to stand up for myself in a positive way.
- Walk away and ignore the person completely.
- Try to communicate with the person I am having a problem with.
- Get help from someone in my support group.
- Try negotiating with the other person.
- Ignore the situation and keep playing or working.
- Talk to a friend to get some ideas to help me make a decision.

What if my child is doing the bullying?

Your child may have found themselves involved in bullying. Perhaps they are upset with someone or feeling strong emotions.

If you feel that your child may have been bullying others, encourage them to think about the following:

- Are my actions or words hurting someone else's feelings?
- Are my actions hurting someone else physically?
- Are my actions or words making someone else feel afraid?
- Am I trying to control someone else?
- Am I unfairly taking out my feelings of anger or frustration on someone else?
- Would I feel bad if someone did this to me again and again?

You can also encourage them to:

- Ask an adult they can trust, like a parent or teacher, for help. They can take a friend with them for support if it will make them feel better.
- Think about why they are behaving like this. If they are experiencing problems at school, ask for help from someone they trust.
- Apologise to the people they have upset.
- Join out-of-school clubs where they can meet some other friends and widen their friendship circle.

Adapted from Erceg, E., Papageorgiou, A., & Cross, D. (2017). Bullying. So not ok. Supre Foundation, headspace & Telethon Kids Institute.

This video provides advice on how to respond if your child is being bullied.
Telethon Kids Institute Video – How to respond if your child is being bullied:
<https://youtu.be/xRQduL8TsOw>

Advice on cyberbullying

The e-safety website have some tips you can give your child to help them deal with cyberbullying.

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources/iparent/online-risks/cyberbullying/a-parents-guide-to-responding>

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources/iparent/online-risks/cyberbullying/talking-with-your-child>

Help your child to develop a group of people they feel comfortable to talk with and seek help from. At school children are encouraged to identify and talk with people in their support group. This generally includes the following people:

- Parents
- Classroom teacher
- Teacher on duty at recess or lunchtimes
- Other school staff members
- School friends
- Family friends and
- Other people they can trust

How to support your children if they are being cyber bullied

What can you do to help?^[1; 2]

- Stay calm so your child does not get more upset.
- Listen to your child – encourage them to talk with you about how they feel and be as supportive as possible.
- Remind them they are not in trouble (don't take away access to technology).
- Develop a plan together.
- Ask them what they have done to try to stop the bullying and what happened.
- Ask them what they have seen other students do when they are bullied and if any of the positive actions are something they have tried or would do.
- Ask them how they would like you to help.
- Ask them if they have talked to anyone else about this, such as a friend or teacher.
- Ask them to show you the messages, e-mails or anything else they have kept.
- Make an appointment for both of you with your child's school to discuss the problem.
- Develop a plan with the school and your child.
- Follow-up with the school and your child at regular intervals to find out if anything else is needed to help him or her.

How to support your children if they are cyber bullying others

Parents are usually shocked and upset to find out their child has been involved in bullying. Don't panic, it doesn't mean your child is 'bad' or that you have done something to invoke this in your child. **It does however mean that your child needs your help right now.** S/he needs you to listen, love, support and offer suggestions to help them to change their behaviour.

You can help your child by ^[1; 2]:

- Talking about what they think might help them to stop bullying. Ask them what they have tried and how successful it was. Ask if they want you to offer some suggestions.
- Discussing with them how they were feeling when they sent the message (or whatever form the bullying took). Try to understand from your child's perspective. Ask them how they feel about it now.
- Asking questions such as: Did sending the nasty message make you feel better? Could you have tried to communicate your message or feelings in another more friendly manner?
- If your child is having trouble with a friendship group at school, consider helping him/her to join an activity outside of school to broaden friendship groups and make a fresh start with other children.
- Explaining what bullying is and why it is not acceptable.
- Talking with your child about the impact of bullying on others. Try to help them to understand what it is like for the person being bullied.
- Asking how they would feel if they were being bullied.
- Making clear rules and consequences, and being consistent in addressing inappropriate behaviour.
- Praising your child when he/she uses technology appropriately and doesn't engage in negative interactions.
- Increasing supervision of your child's use of technology.
- Discussing with your child why it is important not to laugh at anyone being bullied, not to join in bullying, not to give a person who is bullying lots of attention and to be conscious of their own behaviour towards other students.

Young people who bully others can often be impulsive, insecure, experience identity problems, have higher rates of injury and substance abuse problems, report a lower overall life satisfaction and depression. Furthermore, these students are often at higher risk for self-harming behaviour and future violent behaviour. Clearly, these young people are often experiencing difficulties and are in need of support often as much as those young people who are being bullied.

Source:

1. Cross, D., Hall, M., Hamilton, G., Pintabona, Y., Erceg, E. (2004). Australia: The Friendly Schools Project, in *Bullying in Schools: Global Perspectives on Intervention*. In PK Smith, D Peplar, & K Rigby (Eds.). Ambidge UK: Cambridge. ISBN 0-521-821193.
2. Australian Psychological Society (2009). Retrieved on 11 November 2009 from: <http://www.psychology.org.au/>.

"The West Australian Foundation for Deaf Children recognises Telethon Kids Institute, Telethon Speech and Hearing and School of Special Education Needs: Sensory for their work on the Telethon Belong Project and production of these Belong Resources."

For further help and advice see:

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources/iparent/online-risks/cyberbullying/a-parents-guide-to-responding>

<https://www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources/iparent/online-risks/cyberbullying/talking-with-your-child>

Bystanders to bullying

Bullying involves more than the students who are bullied and those who bully. Other children have been observed to be present during most bullying incidents in the playground. Bullying can continue because people who are involved do not talk about it and seek help. This includes bystanders.

What is a bystander?

A bystander is someone who sees the bullying but is not the person being bullied or bullying others

Bystanders may act in many different ways. They may:

- Watch what is going on and not get involved.
- Pretend not to see and ignore the situation.
- Choose to get involved in the bullying.
- Choose to get involved and stop the bullying.
- Choose to get help.

As bystanders, children can either support bullying in the way they behave or help to stop bullying. Many children don't know how to help or get help.

What can bystanders do?

If a child sees another child being bullied he/she could:

- Let the person doing the bullying know that what they are doing is bullying.
- Refuse to join in with the bullying and walk away.
- Support the student who is being bullied.
- Ask a teacher or support person for help.
- Support his/her friends and protect them from bullying by being there for them e.g. children who are alone are more likely to be the target of bullying so encourage children to be aware of children who are left out or on their own in the playground.

How can parents help children who see bullying?

You can support your child by:

- Discussing bullying (stories in books or on television can lead to discussion about bullying situations).
- Listening to your child's point of view on the topic of bullying.
- Helping your child to problem solve by discussing solutions and consequences to social problems they see or are involved in.
- Problem solving as a whole family. This can help your child feel valued and supported as well as make the other family members aware of problems and solutions.
- Providing advice on what might happen as a result of bullying and why it is important to tell someone.
- Developing a clear family policy that 'put downs' are not OK.
- Helping your child to understand the problem of bullying and show empathy and understanding of how people might feel if they are bullied.

Approaching the school about bullying

Schools want to hear from parents if there is a problem. The focus should always be on making sure children are safe and happy at school.

If you feel there is a problem:

- Talk to and listen to your child and help them to develop some strategies to cope.
- Talk to your child's classroom teacher about the situation and decide what will be done. Arrange a follow up to discuss outcomes.
- Once you have talked to the teacher support these decisions at home.
- Keep in contact with the school even if the situation seems to have improved to ensure the changes continue.

What happens at school to manage bullying?

Schools have an individualised behaviour management plan designed to create a positive and safe school environment. These plans encourage children to take responsibility for their own actions and develop self-discipline. The behaviour management plan informs parents, teachers and students what is expected and outlines rewards and consequences of behaviour.

It is important that bullying is seen as a 'behaviour' and children are not labelled as 'bullies'. The message students receive is that bullying is a bad behaviour not that a student who bullies others is a bad person.

Supporting your school's approach to bullying prevention

Talking with your child about bullying is an important step in developing a friendly and safer environment for the children in your school.

You can:

- Encourage your child to talk about bullying both at school and at home
- Cooperate with the class teacher to share valuable information about how your child are feeling
- Talk and work with your child's school to help achieve the most positive outcome for your child
- Become familiar with the school's bullying policy, which outlines how the school deals with bullying

It is important for your child to see you and the school working together to help them feel safer and happier at school.