



Making a Difference in Bullying

**What parents of
young children need to know**



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WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is a relationship problem.

Bullying is a form of abuse at the hands of peers that can take different forms at different ages. Bullying is defined as repeated aggression in which there is an imbalance of power between the child who bullies and the child who is victimized (Juvonen & Graham, 2001; Olweus, 1991; Pepler & Craig, 2000). Through our research, we understand bullying as a disrespectful relationship problem:

- Children who bully are learning to use power and aggression to control and distress others
- Children who are victimized become increasingly powerless and find themselves trapped in relationships in which they are being abused.

Read on to learn about how you can make a difference in bullying.

Is your child being bullied?

Sharing these tips with him/her may help

- ♦ If it's hard to stand up for yourself, ignore the bullying and walk away...then tell an adult who can help
- ♦ Talk to an adult who can help, like a teacher or a parent.
- ♦ If you're scared to talk to an adult, ask a friend to go with you.
- ♦ Practice with your parents or teachers what to say and do the next time you are bullied.
- ♦ Go to areas where you feel safe.
- ♦ Stay close to students who will stick up for you.
- ♦ Look brave and tell the child who bullies to back off...Bullying is NOT cool!
- ♦ Stay calm...try not to show that you are getting sad or mad.
- ♦ Be safe...fighting back can make things worse.
- ♦ Don't blame yourself...it's not your fault.

10 THINGS PARENTS CAN DO TO ADDRESS BULLYING. . .

CONSIDER YOUR OWN BEHAVIOUR

Parents set the tone for family relationships and children learn relationship skills by watching their parents' behaviour. Think about how you use power in your life. Model the use of positive power by respecting and supporting others. Avoid the use of negative power, such as bullying, yelling, and manipulating. Think carefully about the words you choose and the way you behave. Remember, you always have an audience

ESTABLISH A CODE OF CONDUCT

Work with your children to develop guidelines, limits, and consequences for acceptable and unacceptable aggressive and bullying behaviour both in and outside of the home. Monitor bullying behaviour between siblings and consistently implement the established consequences. Provide examples of how to solve conflict and express anger or frustration in the future. Ensure that all of the caregivers in your child's life follow your guidelines.

USE CONSEQUENCES THAT TEACH

When children misbehave, you want them to learn different positive ways of behaving. Consequences for misbehaviour should send the message that bullying is unacceptable but also provide support for children to learn the skills they are lacking. For example, if you learn your child has bullied a classmate, he/she may have to spend the weekend at home but uses that time to write a letter of apology or draw a picture of what it feels like to be bullied. All children need to understand their own feelings and the feelings of others.

ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO REPORT

Parents are frequently unaware of bullying situations because children are usually afraid to come forward. Let your children know that you want to hear about every incident of bullying and encourage them to talk to you or another adult they trust. Explain the difference between *tattling* and *telling*: *tattling* is what you do to get someone into trouble, *telling* is what you do to get someone out of trouble.

CATCH CHILDREN BEING GOOD

As a parent, you can encourage positive relationships among children by praising respectful and inclusive behaviour whenever you see it. Children love praise and they will work hard to get it from you. Try and focus on the positives of your child, even when they need correcting. Remember, children are works in progress - they can't always get it right. But you can help them, by giving your children 10 positives for every negative they receive.

Does your child watch bullying?

Sharing these tips with him/her may help

- ◆ Talk to an adult who can help, like a teacher or a parent.
- ◆ Stand up for kids who are bullied...they need your help.
- ◆ Invite kids who are bullied to play with you somewhere else.
- ◆ Comfort kids who are bullied and tell them they didn't deserve to be treated like that.
- ◆ The best thing you can do for kids who are bullied is to be their friend.
- ◆ Tell kids who bully to back off...Bullying is NOT cool!
- ◆ If it's hard for you to speak up on your own, ask a friend to do it with you.
- ◆ Let other kids know that you don't like what you see by turning around and walking away.
- ◆ Help kids who bully, don't hurt them...speaking out helps, bullying back doesn't help.
- ◆ Be aware...if you see bullying, do something about it. Bullying can stop if we all get involved.

Does your child bully others?

Sharing these tips with him/her may help

- ◆ Talk to an adult who can help, like a teacher or a parent. They can help you get along with others.
- ◆ Ask a friend to help you stop if you start to bully other kids.
- ◆ Set goals each day to make it easier not to bully, like "Today I'll help other kids and not hurt them"
- ◆ If you start to bully, walk away and find something else to do.
- ◆ Remember that you don't have to like everyone around you, but you do have to treat them with respect.
- ◆ Remember that everyone is different. Different doesn't mean worse or better than you.
- ◆ Think about what it feels like to be bullied...would you want to be treated that way?
- ◆ Say sorry to the kids you have bullied.
- ◆ Know that if other kids watch and laugh, it doesn't mean they like it when you bully.
- ◆ Think before you speak...are your words going to help or hurt another student?

CREATE FRIENDSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Having friends and experiencing positive peer interactions in different settings can minimize the impact of bullying. Consider enrolling your child in organized sports, lessons, scouts or guides, and other activities in and out of school so they can experience many different friendships. Make connections with other parents so that children's peer interactions can be monitored.

GIVE YOUR CHILDREN SCRIPTS

Children who are bullied find it hard to stand up for themselves. Parents can help by practicing with them what they should say and do in a situation. Children who bully need help learning different problem-solving skills, managing frustration, and resisting peer pressure to bully. Give children examples of words they should use to ask for things they want or need, as well as how to express their feelings. It's important to solve problems with your children rather than for them.

BUILD ON CHILDREN'S STRENGTHS

Children who are bullied often have low self-esteem. Encourage them to participate in activities they enjoy so they can start to feel good about themselves. Promote these types of activities with you, other family members, and other children. For children who bully, provide opportunities for them to use their natural leadership skills in a positive way (e.g., teaching siblings and younger children a new sport or skill).

BE READY TO LISTEN

If your child reports being bullied, be ready to listen right away. Don't put it off. Thank your child for being brave enough to come forward and explain that it is his/her right to feel safe. Ask for details about the incident and convey your concern. Be willing to respond to all reports, even the seemingly trivial ones such as name-calling. Consistency matters! If your child tells you they have hurt another child, help him/her find a way to make amends and repair the relationship.

BE YOUR CHILD'S CHAMPION

Once your child has come forward, it's your turn to take action. Make connections with the significant adults in your child's life (e.g., teachers, coaches, other parents) to find out if they were aware of the problem and determine what supports your child needs to have healthy relationships. Keep the lines of communication open and encourage your child to talk to you or any other adult who can help about continuing bullying.

THE MANY FORMS OF BULLYING IN CHILDHOOD:

Physical bullying

- ◆ Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, beating up, stealing, or damaging property

Verbal bullying

- ◆ Name-calling, mocking, hurtful teasing, humiliating or threatening someone, racist or sexist comments

Social bullying

- ◆ Excluding others from the group, gossiping or spreading rumours, setting others up to look foolish, and damaging friendships.

Cyberbullying

- ◆ Using email, cell phones, text messages, and internet sites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, or damage reputations and friendships

HOW DO PARENTS KNOW IF THEIR CHILD IS INVOLVED IN BULLYING?

Bullying is a covert behaviour and is usually hidden from adults. Look for the following clues:

SIGNS OF BEING BULLIED

- ☑ Afraid to go to school or other activities
- ☑ Appear anxious or fearful
- ☑ Low self-esteem and make negative comments
- ☑ Complain of feeling unwell
- ☑ Lower interest in activities and performance
- ☑ Lose things, need money, report being hungry
- ☑ Injuries, bruising, damaged clothing or articles
- ☑ Appear unhappy, irritable
- ☑ Trouble sleeping, nightmares
- ☑ Threats to hurt themselves or others
- ☑ May appear isolated from the peer group

SIGNS OF BULLYING OTHERS

- ☑ Aggressive with parents, siblings, pets, and friends
- ☑ Low concern for others' feelings
- ☑ Bossy and manipulative behaviour
- ☑ Unexplained objects or money
- ☑ Secretive about possessions and activities
- ☑ Holds a positive view of aggression
- ☑ Easily frustrated and quick to anger
- ☑ Does not recognize impact of his/her behaviour
- ☑ Has friends who bully and are aggressive
- ☑ Child has trouble standing up to peer pressure

WHY PARENTS SHOULD CARE ABOUT BULLYING

Many people feel that bullying is "*just kids being kids*" and that it's "*harmless*." In fact, bullying is anything but harmless.

RISKS FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE BULLIED:

- ☑ Depression (low mood, a sense of hopelessness)
- ☑ Social anxiety, loneliness, isolation
- ☑ Poor health (e.g., headaches, stomach aches)
- ☑ Low self esteem
- ☑ School absenteeism and academic problems
- ☑ Aggressive behaviours
- ☑ Contemplating, attempting, or committing

RISKS FOR CHILDREN WHO BULLY OTHERS:

- ☑ Not knowing the difference between right and wrong
- ☑ Delinquency and substance use
- ☑ Academic problems and school drop out
- ☑ Adult criminality
- ☑ Difficulties in their relationships with others
- ☑ Being bullied at the hands of others