

Bullying: How Parents Can Help



Bullying: What is it?

Bullying is not always easy to define

Bullying is when individuals or groups seek to harm, intimidate or coerce someone who is perceived to be vulnerable.

(Oxford English Dictionary, 2018).

Bullying is behaviour:

- That repetitively and intentionally hurts someone else
- Is deliberate hostility and aggression
- Is directed at a target who may appear vulnerable
- Has an outcome which is painful and distressing to the target

It can involve people of any age, and can happen anywhere – at home, school or using digital technologies (cyberbullying). This means it can happen at any time.

Bullying: What is it?

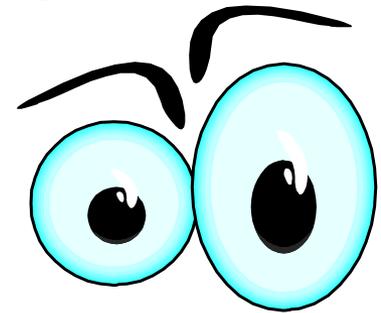
Bullying encompasses a range of behaviours which are often combined and can take different forms. It could include:

- * **physical bullying:** hitting, slapping or pushing someone
- * **verbal bullying:** name calling, gossiping or threatening someone, undermining, constant criticism or spreading rumours
- * **non-verbal abuse:** controlling or manipulating someone, hand signs or text messages
- * **emotional abuse:** threatening, intimidating or humiliating someone, making silent, hoax or abusive calls, making threats
- * **Exclusion:** ignoring or isolating someone, excluding a child from a friendship group or activities.
- * Racial, sexual or homophobic bullying
- * Bullying someone because they have a disability
- * Cyberbullying/online bullying

Signs of bullying

No single sign will indicate for certain that a child is being bullied, however signs may include:

- * belongings getting 'lost' or damaged
- * physical injuries, such as unexplained cuts or bruises or torn clothing
- * being afraid to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school
- * not doing as well at school
- * asking for, or stealing, money (to give to whoever's bullying them)
- * being nervous, losing confidence, low self esteem or becoming distressed and withdrawn
- * problems with eating or sleeping
- * bullying others
- * falling out with friends
- * aggressive behaviour towards brothers and sisters



Who's at risk?

Any child can be bullied for any reason. If a child is seen as different in some way, or seen as an easy target they can be more at risk.

This might be because of their:

- race or ethnic background
- gender
- sexual orientation

Or it could be because they:

- appear anxious or have low self-esteem
- lack assertiveness
- are shy or introverted.



Impact of bullying

The emotional effects of being bullied include:

- * sadness, depression and anxiety
- * low self-esteem
- * social isolation
- * self-harm
- * suicidal thoughts and feelings
- * depression
- * shyness
- * poor academic achievement
- * isolation



Bullying also damages bullies, who learn that they can get away with violence, and that aggression and threats can be an effective way to control people.

Myths vs. Facts



Myth: Girls don't bully.

Fact: Girls can and do bully, but often in a different way. Girls often use verbal and social bullying.

Myth: Words will never hurt you.

Fact: Even though words don't leave bruises or broken bones, they can leave deep emotional scars.

Myth: It was only teasing.

Fact: Teasing in which a child is not hurt is not considered bullying. Teasing becomes bullying when the intent of the action is to hurt or harm.

Myth vs. Facts



Myth: Bullying will make children tougher.

Fact: Bullying does NOT make someone tougher. It often has the opposite effect—lowering a child's sense of self-esteem and self-worth. Bullying creates fear and increases anxiety for a child.

Myth: Bullying is a normal part of childhood.

Fact: Bullying may be a common experience, but this type of aggression toward others should not be tolerated.

Myth: Children and youth who are bullied will almost always tell an adult.

Fact: Most studies find that only 25%-50% of bullied children report to an adult. They may fear retaliation or that adults won't take their concerns seriously.

Myth vs. Facts



Myth: Children and youth who bully are mostly loners with few social skills.

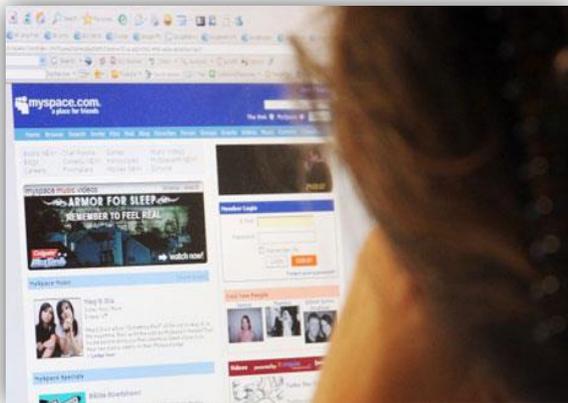
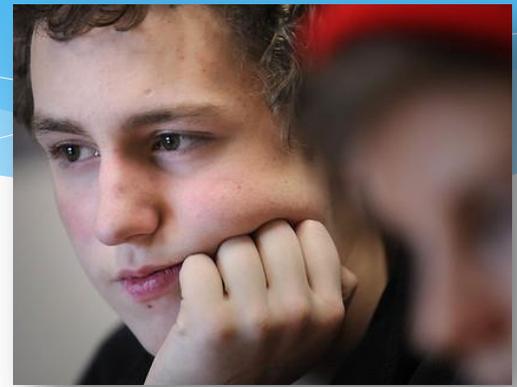
Fact: Many bullies are often the “cool” or popular children. These children often have friends who provide support for their actions.

Myth: Bullied children need to learn how to deal with bullying on their own.

Fact: Some children have the confidence and skills to stop bullying when it happens, but many do not. Adults have critical roles to play in helping to stop bullying, as do other children who witness or observe bullying.



Bullying Today



Cyberbullying

What is cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online. Unlike bullying in the real world, online bullying can follow the child wherever they go, via social networks, gaming and mobile phone.

Cyberbullying can include:

- sending threatening or abusive text messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- trolling – the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- shaming someone online
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- encouraging young people to self-harm
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name
- sending explicit messages, also known as sexting
- pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations.

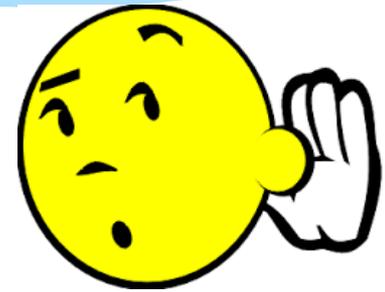
What can parents do to help?

If you are worried that your child is being bullied, ask him or her if there is anything wrong. Children who are being bullied are often frightened to tell about what is happening, either because they have been threatened, or because they fear adult interference will make things worse. Be prepared for your child to deny that there is anything wrong.



What can parents do to help?

- * Gently encourage your child to talk, even if they become upset
- * Stay calm and listen – this will reassure your child
- * Focus on facts – what, where, who and how often
- * Ask how they felt/feel
- * Show you take it seriously
- * Make clear it is not their fault
- * Tell your child you want to help, but be guided by them in deciding what to do
- * If they won't talk with you, suggest they speak to someone else in confidence, such as school, Childline
- * Document bullying incidents
- * Print out copies of inappropriate emails, facebook posts, online communications
- * **Inform the school and arrange a meeting**



An Important Note...

The list of solutions to bullying DOES NOT include telling your child to 'fight back.'

This can be *MORE* dangerous for your child (especially if the bully is older and stronger). This could also get your child into trouble with the school, because your child may be seen as the instigator of a fight, as opposed to the victim.



What if my child is the bully?

- * Calmly talk to your child
- * Explain that the bullying must stop – there is no compromise on this
- * Explain how frightening this is for the victim and encourage empathy
- * Criticise the behavior, not the child
- * Arrange a meeting with the school

Bousfield and bullying

Bousfield has a clear, published policy on bullying. Which is available on the school website for you to view. Bullying of any sort is not tolerated.

They ensure that this message is clear to the children through assemblies, class work and posters. The whole school – teachers, pupils, parents and non-teaching staff – work together to combat bullying.

It is made clear to the children that ‘telling on’ a bully is not wrong and that when they do speak out, action will be taken.

Dealing with bullying

- * When talking to school staff about your child's experiences of being bullied, try not to be aggressive, or lose your temper. A good working relationship between you and the school is crucial.
- * Trust the school to deal with the situation
- * Try not to discuss the situation in the playground, outside the school gate or in corridors

Who Else Can Help?



- * **Kidscape:** Kidscape's website has useful information for young people, parents, carers and professionals www.kidscape.org.uk
- * **The Parents' Anti-bullying Helpline** gives advice to parents of bullied children. The helpline number is 08451 205 204
- * **Anti-Bullying Network** www.antibullying.net
- * **Family Lives helpline** 24 hour confidential parent line - 0808 800 2222 www.familylives.org.uk
- * **Childline** Sometimes your child may want to talk to someone not connected with the family or school. Freephone: 0800 11 11 www.childline.org.uk
- * **Anti-Bullying Alliance** Website provides information and advice for parents, children and schools on tackling bullying. www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
- * **Childnet International** Information, advice and resources on the safe and responsible use of new technology. www.childnet-int.org

Questions?



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