

BULLYING

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Bullying is the selective, uninvited, intentional, often repetitive oppression of one person by another person or group.

Bullying can include the use of threats, teasing, name-calling, preventing others from going where they want or doing what they want, pushing or hitting, and all forms of physical abuse. It can also happen through the Internet via email, in chat rooms or instant messaging. Children can be bullied through messages via mobile phone technologies.

Whether physical or psychological, bullying is an intolerable behaviour that can cause long-term harm to children. It not only transgresses a child's fundamental right to feel safe but can affect academic performance, peer group relations and a child's self-esteem.

Boys tend to bully using physical means and girls use verbal taunts or exclusion to intimidate others.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED?

- **Look for warning signs of bullying.** These include: complaints about items being stolen, evidence of physical injury such as bruising, reluctance to go to school, feigned illnesses or headaches, or withdrawal from school activities.
- **If you suspect your child is being bullied take him or her seriously and avoid dismissing complaints as tale-telling.** Children who are bullied need someone to believe their story. Sometimes the only thing children want is the knowledge that they have their parents' full support.
- **Avoid over-reacting** and resist the temptation to confront the bullies and give them a dose of their own medicine. This only causes an escalation and invites retaliation. Children are more likely to confide in their parents if they know that they will be consulted about any subsequent action.
- **Get a clear picture of what happens,** who is involved and what your child is doing before being bullied. Help your child identify any behaviour such as playing alone or annoying others that may contribute to the bullying. (Be careful that you don't appear to accuse your child of inviting bullying. Try to ascertain if there are behaviours that may contribute to the bullying.)
- **If appropriate, provide your child with some** ideas based on the information you have gathered that will reduce the likelihood of being bullied. For instance, by avoiding certain areas at school or playing alongside others a child may get the protection he or she needs.

- **Inform your child's school of the bullying behaviour.** Present your concern to the principal or relevant teacher and explain that you are hoping to find a solution to the problem with the school's help.
- **Discuss the processes** that will be used to help your child and the bullies. Note what the school will do and what you can do to support your child.
- **Build their support networks.** Children need friends to support them when they are being bullied. Friends outside school can be great insulators to what happens inside school.
- **Build their self-esteem** and confidence by focusing on the things they do well.
- **Let them know that being bullied is not their fault,** and that something can and will be done about it.



Parenting *ideas*
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