

## What Parents Should Know About Bullying

Bullying is aggressive behaviour. It occurs when a child or teen is targeted with repeated negative actions over a period of time.

- ▶ Bullying is meant to cause discomfort or injury, and it can include name-calling, obscene gesturing, malicious teasing, exclusion, threats, rumors, physical hitting, kicking, pushing and choking.
- ▶ Cyber-bullying is also a real and growing problem today. Cyberbullying is the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target another person. Online threats and mean, aggressive, or rude texts, tweets, posts, or messages all count. So does posting personal information, pictures, or videos designed to hurt or embarrass someone else.

**Bullying of any kind is a form of violence that should not be tolerated.**

Many students experience bullying, either as a target or a perpetrator, and most teachers and students have witnessed bullying in their schools.

And not all children who are bullied report it. Too many students are concerned that no one will help them.

**If your child tells you about a situation and you aren't sure if it's bullying, use this checklist:**

- ☐ Does your child feel hurt, either emotionally or physically, by the other child's behaviour?
- ☐ Has your child been the target of the negative behaviour more than once?
- ☐ Does your child want the behaviour to stop?
- ☐ Is your child unable to make the behaviour stop on their own?
- ☐ If the response to one or more of these questions is "yes," it is likely that the behaviour would be considered bullying.

Both boys and girls bully. Boys bully more often and are more likely to experience physical bullying. Girls are more likely to experience emotional bullying and sexual harassment.

Bullies often pick on others out of frustration with their own lives. They may have low self-esteem and feel bad about themselves.

While they may feel uneasy about it, many children tease their peers simply to go along with the crowd.

## How can I tell if my child is being bullied?

As a parent, it's important to be aware of the signs that your child may be experiencing bullying. Some signs include:

- ▶ Unexplained injuries
- ▶ Loss of personal belongings
- ▶ Signs of anxiety and depression
- ▶ Lower academic performance
- ▶ Avoiding social situations / becoming isolated
- ▶ Changes in eating habits – loss of appetite or over-eating as a sign of distress

If you notice any of these signs, talk to your child to find out what's going on. Let your child know that you are there to support them, and talk to the school about ways to intervene.

## What can parents do about bullying?

- ▶ Start talking to children about this issue early.
  - Families can help teach kids to respect others before they start school, and continue talking about this topic as their children progress through school.
  - Even small acts of teasing should be addressed.
  - Encouraging positive behaviour early can help prevent challenges later.
- ▶ If your child or teen is being bullied, start by asking how they are feeling and what's been going on at school. Give your child the opportunity to talk openly and honestly about what they have been experiencing. Let your child know that you understand how they are feeling and that you are there to support them. Tell them it's not their fault, and you will work together to find a solution.
- ▶ Teach your children how to be assertive – but not aggressive. Fighting back can make bullying worse. Instead, tell children and teens ...
  - It is best to try to ignore a bully, so walking away and going to a place of safety is a good strategy. If that isn't enough, young people should tell the bully to stop in a loud and firm voice, and then leave to find safety.

- Encourage children to express their feelings clearly, stand up for themselves, and speak out if they are being bullied.
  - Let your children know that they don't have to put up with bullying and they need to tell an adult if they feel threatened or unsafe.
- Stop bullying when you see it . Adults must speak up when we see bullying occur.

“Within our household, we have an “open-door” policy. Bullying has been a problem for some of the children in our community, so we invite families over when kids are involved in conflicts. We talk together about how we can all get along as community members. We discuss how we don't need to resort to bullying.”

**Input from a parent at a November 2024 First Nations Parents Workshop**

- Listen and support children who speak up. Telling an adult about bullying is not easy. If a child seeks assistance with bullying, or if they have observed bullying, listen to them. Provide them with support before taking action.
- Recognize the signs of depression. Youth who experience persistent bullying can develop signs of depression like sadness, poor concentration, isolation, and sleeping problems. These symptoms can affect their relationships and school performance. It isn't always easy for children to recognize or talk about their emotional needs. If you have concerns, reach out and get help if you need it.
- Tell your children to take action when they see bullying behavior. They should inform an adult about what is happening.
- Work with the school to ensure there are clear anti-bullying policies and consequences. Bullying is less likely in schools where adults are involved and firm about stopping bullying behaviors.
- Team up . Work with others to support students who are being bullied, who witness bullying, and who are showing bullying behaviours themselves. If the bullying is happening at school or the bully is a fellow student, talk to your child's teacher, principal or school counsellor about what's been happening and work with them to address the situation. They may be able to provide additional support or interventions to help your child feel safer at school.

“Communications between parents and school staff, and with other parents, can help to resolve a lot of bullying issues. Communication is where solutions are.”

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- Help your child recover. Being bullied can lessen a young person's self-confidence and self-esteem. Seeing bullying can make students feel confused and anxious. Bullying can make students feel guilty or upset. Affected students should be encouraged to participate in activities they enjoy and spend time with friends and family members who love and support them.

**Most importantly, show your child that you care and that you are there to support them no matter what.**

**BullyingCanada has expertise in bullying intervention, and has professional counsellors to help kids who have been pushed past the point of being able to cope with bullying. Reach out if you need more information! [www.stopbullying.ca](http://www.stopbullying.ca)**

**Sources:**

[www.pacer.org](http://www.pacer.org)

<https://www.preynet.ca/bullying/for-parents-and-caregivers/>

[www.stopbullying.ca](http://www.stopbullying.ca)