

Bullying advice for Parents

Bullying is when a person hurts someone else on purpose, time and again. The hurt can be physical or emotional. Bullying can be physical, verbal (also can be via the mobile and computer), social, racial or sexual. It happens at any age (and is not just limited to children). Its effects can be lifelong and may contribute to depression, low self-esteem, shyness, poor academic achievement, isolation, and even threatened or attempted suicide.

What can parents do?

Look for the possible signs of bullying

Is your child:

- frightened of walking to or from school, or going on public transport, or going to a certain place that didn't disturb them previously
- Feeling ill in the mornings – tummy ache, headache, nausea
- Becoming withdrawn
- Having possessions 'go missing' or regularly having their possessions/clothes destroyed
- Becoming aggressive and unreasonable and may begin to bully others
- Having nightmares
- Getting hurt or bruised regularly with no given explanation
- Putting themselves down, unhappy
- Beginning doing poorly in their school work

(NB: Some of these signs may also be the signs of an unwell child)

If you are worried:

- Ask your child directly and encourage them by saying you are concerned and want to support him/her. Make time to listen – encourage your child to describe what happened, how often, when, where
- Avoid passing judgement, interrogation, over-reacting or offering advice too soon – it may backfire, and they clam up and don't want your involvement
- Ask you child what they have tried already to deal with the problem – did it work, what happened when they tried a particular strategy
- Acknowledge that a problem exists – Let them know that bullying is not acceptable and that you both will figure out a constructive way of sorting out the problem (brainstorm ideas). Get them to give one of the ideas ago. Review the outcome. Praise your child for trying new strategies and evaluate if things are improving
- If the problem persist or escalates, if it is happening at school arrange a conference with the child's teacher, Principal, Guidance Officer and at some stage the bully's parent. If bullying is occurring outside school consider meeting with the child's parents, or have a discussion with the police about your child's rights.

You are the best advocate for your child. Keep pushing until the matter is resolved.

Adapted form Relationships Australia Info Sheet #18 December 2000