



Schoolyard Bullying

Bullying is a common experience for many children and adolescents. It is estimated that 1 in 6 Australian children are bullied on a weekly basis.

Bullying behaviour can be physical or verbal. Boys tend to use physical intimidation or threats, regardless of the gender of their victim. Bullying by girls is more often verbal, usually with another girl as the target. Recently, bullying has extended beyond school hours due to advances in technology, allowing children to bully each other all day every day through electronic means (see Cyber Bullying fact sheet).

Children who are bullied experience real suffering that can interfere with their social and emotional development, as well as with their school performance. Some victims of bullying have even attempted suicide rather than continue to endure such harassment and punishment.

Definition:

Deliberate psychological, emotional and/or physical harassment of one student by another or a group, occurring at school or in transit between school and home. Includes exclusion from peer group, intimidation, extortion and violence.

Indications that someone you know is a victim of bullying

- physical signs (injuries)
- withdrawal, vagueness, lack of motivation
- avoidance of situations e.g. school
- unusual behaviour
- emotional changes, i.e. anxiety, worry, nervousness, distress, unhappiness, sadness, depression, secretiveness, unhappiness at the end of weekends and holidays.

Types of Bullying

- *Direct*
 - physical (damaging property, injuring victim, forcing victim to do things)
 - verbal (teasing, name calling)
 - written (hurtful notes, graffiti, defamation).
- *Indirect*
 - manipulation of relationship (spreading rumours)
 - exclusion.

How Does A Bully Become A Bully? – Some Possibilities

- They were victims of bullying and violence themselves.
- Low self-esteem - the belief that controlling someone else will help them feel better about themselves.
- Exposure to media violence.
- Family behaviour
 - violent parents (child follows by example)
 - parents provide little emotional support and/or fail to be involved with or monitor their child's activities
 - extremely permissive or excessively harsh parental styles.
- They may have learned that bullying is an effective way to get what they want – favours, attention, relief from boredom.
- Deficits in social skills – they may have fewer responses to situations (usually a violent response due to poor verbal communication skills) than normal children.
- Impulsive, authoritarian personality type; high prejudice and low empathy.

What Your Child Can Do To Avoid Bullying

- Travel to school or social events in a group rather than alone.
- Do not react to the bullying by becoming distressed, just ignore it – do not give them the reaction they are looking for.
- Be confident – stand straight, walk purposefully and give brief eye contact to those around you to show you are not intimidated. Bullies tend to target weakness. If you don't *feel* confident, pretend to be.
- Report the bullying to a teacher and a parent.
- Remember that you are not the one with the problem, the bully is.

What Can You Do As A Parent?

- Listen to your child and make it clear that it is not their fault – encourage them to confide in you
- Raise the issue of bullying with your child's school and discuss what steps the school will be taking to deal with the issue
- Help your child to develop strategies to deal with the bullying including communication skills and assertiveness.
- Help your child find ways to change the situation
- Ensure that your child is not trying to handle the bullying on their own
- Contact the Department of Education if the school is not responding appropriately to the situation
- Keep a record of the bullying incidents

What Can The School Do?

- Encourage students to report bullying (assure them that they will remain anonymous).
- Encourage bystanders to refuse to watch bullying (most bullying occurs in the presence of others); to distract the bully and report them.
- Increase staff knowledge and awareness of bullying.
- Gather information about the current situation and other schools' strategies
- Increase awareness of bullying within the school
 - make it clear to students that it is unacceptable

- emphasise the consequences of hurting others.
- Teach activities that involve cooperation.
- Consult with parents, community groups and students to develop and maintain an anti-bullying program.
- Develop and distribute information on anti-bullying strategies.

Additional consultation or intervention may be required for your child. A child and adolescent psychiatrist or other mental health professional can help develop a strategy to deal with the bullying. Seeking professional assistance early can lessen the risk of lasting emotional consequences.

Where to Get Help

- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800
- Lifeline 131 114
- Parent Line 132 055
- Peer support program for schools <http://www.peersupport.edu.au/>
- www.reachout.com.au
- www.kidshelp.com.au
- Your local GP
- School Counsellor
- Local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team (see Community Health Centres in the White Pages)
- Department of Education (see Education Department in the White Pages)
- Mental Health Information Service 1300 794 991 (for services in your area)



Telephone Interpreter Service 131 450

If English is not your first language please call the Mental Health Information Service through the Telephone Interpreter Service (TIS). This service is free to non-English speaking Australian citizens or permanent residents. TIS have access to interpreters speaking more than 120 languages and dialects.

Further Reading

- Kids Helpline www.kidshelp.com.au
- Schoolyard Bullies www.canadianparents.com
- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry www.aacap.org
- NSW schools anti bullying policy www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentssupport/studentwellbeing/anti-bullyingpolicy.php
- Department of Education and Training www.det.nsw.edu.au/antibullying
- Rigby, K. 1997, 'What children tell us about bullying in schools', *Children Australia*, 22(2) 28-34
- *Bully In Sight: How to Predict, Resist, Challenge and Combat Bullying* - by Tim Field
- *A Journey Out of Bullying: From Despair to Hope* by Patricia L. Scott
- *Odd Girl Out : The Hidden Culture Of Aggression In Girls* by Rachel Simmons
- *Time to Tell 'Em Off! A Pocket Guide to Overcoming Peer Ridicule* by Deanna Miller

Mental Health Resource Centre

The Resource Centre contains material that promotes a better understanding of mental health issues. New books and DVDs are purchased on a regular basis and visitors are welcome to come in and browse.

Members of MHA, CAG and ARAFMI may check-out resources on loan. The length of the loan is 3 weeks. Membership costs between \$10 - \$30 per individual per annum. Please note that most of the reference books are not available for loan

You will find the Resource Centre Booklist on our website: www.mentalhealth.asn.au for further information contact 1300 794 991.

Disclaimer

This information is for educational purposes. As neither brochures nor websites can diagnose people it is always important to obtain professional advice and/or help when needed. The listed websites provide additional information, but should not be taken as an endorsement or recommendation.

This information may be reproduced with an acknowledgement to the Mental Health Association NSW. This and other fact sheets are available for download from www.mentalhealth.asn.au. The Association encourages feedback and welcomes comments about the information provided.

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