



School Bullying

What Parents Need to Know

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What is bullying?

Repeated aggression, verbal
psychological or physical conducted
by an individual or group against
others

(Des 2003)

Is it bullying? Checklist for Parents and Teachers

- Effect. Is the person upset, afraid, traumatised?
- Aggression. Is there physical, verbal, psychological aggression directed by one person against another?
- Imbalance of power
- Planned or repeated behaviour
- Defencelessness
- Unprovoked?

Types of bullying

- General
- Racial
- Sexual
- Relational
- Homophobic
- Cyber

Causes of Bullying?

- Normative behaviour
- Nature or nurture?
- Part of the human condition?
- Family background
- Styles of child rearing
- Norms in the peer group
- Norms in the organisation

Relational aggression

When a person in a group deliberately sets out to:

- exclude another member
- damage that person's feelings of belonging to the friendship group

This is done by:

- pretending to be friends but subtly organising things so that the victim is left without any friends
- manipulating members of the group to isolate the victim
- direct control. "You cant be my friend unless...".
- indirect behaviours "the silent treatment"
- spreading rumours, telling lies, malicious gossip
- telling secrets
- abusive text/phone messages, notes

Effects of Bullying

Physical effects

- Frequent minor illnesses
- Anger
- Violence
- Physical damage
- Loss of/ damage to property

Emotional/Psychological

- Aggression
- Depression
- Loss of confidence
- Loneliness
- Fear/ anxiety
- Social isolation
- Suicide

Effects of Bullying

Academic/ school effects

- Punctuality problems
- Poor academic performance
- Poor attendance
- Truancy
- School dropout/ phobia

Effects on school staff

- Class disruption
- Stressful working conditions
- Low morale
- Poor academic achievement
- Absenteeism
- Stress related illnesses

Q: Who is likely to become a target for bullying?

A: Anyone

- Anxious Insecure
- Cautious Sensitive Quiet
- React by withdrawing
- Low self-esteem
- See themselves negatively
- Not aggressive
- Physically weaker
- Lonely in school
- Isolated
- No friend
- Provoke others

Anyone can become a victim

- Being different (Slagging)
 - New to class or school or neighbourhood
 - Accent
 - Race Nationality Ethnic
 - Traveller Refugee
 - Adoptive parents Social status/class
- Physical Characteristics
 - Tall Small
 - Overweight Underweight
 - Glasses
 - Hair Skin
- Special needs
 - Health Problems
 - Emotional Behavioural problems
 - Remedial issues Learning difficulties
 - ADHD
 - Autistic spectrum Aspergers Syndrome

Myths about bullying

- This is normal
- Young people must learn to cope
- It is part of growing up
- It didn't do me any harm
- It will toughen them up

Why young people will not tell us about being bullied

Fear of:

- Telling
- Retaliation
- Ridicule
- Ostracisation
- Parents reaction
- Secrecy

Feelings of:

- Loneliness
- Powerlessness
- Shame
- Guilt
- Helplessness
- Loss of confidence

Is your child being bullied?- what to look for

Physical signs

- Unexplained bruising, cuts etc.
- Loss of/ damage to personal property
- Hunger or thirst
- Frequent minor illnesses, headaches, tummy
- Bedwetting
- Loss of appetite
- Obsessive behaviour, physical appearance, weight
- Stammering
- Requests for extra money

Emotional/Psychological signs

- Fear Anxiety
- Significant loss of confidence
- Sensitivity to criticism, tearfulness
- Seeking to be alone, withdrawn , moody

Changes in mood:

- Before school
- After school
- During breaks from school
- At the weekend Sunday evening
- Holidays

Emotional/Psychological signs

- Outbursts of anger, temper, irritability at home
- Bullying brother and sisters, parents
- Well behaved child suddenly troublesome

Sign of depression

- Changes in: mood appetite sleep pattern
- Tiredness neglect of appearance
- Expressions of sadness, worthlessness
- Nightmares, crying at night
- Restless, dangerous, wild, disruptive behaviour
- Cynicism, black mood
- Implied or overt threats of suicide

School related signs

- Reluctance to go, wanting to be accompanied
- Returning in bad form
- Changing route
- Avoiding certain days/lessons
- Nervousness in class
- Punctuality problems
- Poor concentration
- Deterioration in school work
- Expressions of hopelessness
- Fewer phone calls, friends calling, invitations
- Reluctance to take part in activities
- Abusive phone calls, texts, email

Protective Factors

- School leadership
- Whole school approach
- Active policy
- Genuine friendships
- Good atmosphere in peer group/Group affiliation

If you believe your child is being bullied

- Ask
- Reassure
- Do not encourage retaliation
- Discuss a plan of action
- Negotiate about contacting the school
- Remember adult intervention is almost always required
- Contact the school

Please don't go to the school, Mum!

- Don't over/under react
- Discuss worst fears
- Reassure them of safety
- Drive/collect etc.
- Mental health at risk
- Give these messages:
 - Bullying can happen to anyone
 - It is not your fault
 - There is nothing wrong with you
 - You don't have to face this alone
 - You don't have to put up with it

Approaching the school

- Make an appointment & prepare for it.- What? Who? Where? When? Why?
- Check if school has a policy-request a copy in advance
- At the meeting ask:
 - To have the incident investigated
 - How will your child be protected?
 - Confidentiality
 - To be kept informed of progress- fix date, contact person
 - How will it be monitored?

Is your child using bullying behaviour?

- Aggressiveness- short fuse, violent outbursts
- Fights
- Vandalism
- Having money or possessions they can't explain
- Gang
- Over reacting
- Cruelty to animals
- Disrespectful to others, young, elderly
- Enjoys the suffering of others
- Few genuine friends
- Disruptive at school-detention etc.
- Requests from others to be moved away
- Complaints

What to do if your child is bullying

- Separate the person from the behaviour
- Explain what is wrong with the behaviour
- Help them understand the pain caused
- Teach by example- treat them with respect
- Insist on a few house rules- time, no hitting, no name-calling
- Keep tabs
- Build their self worth- catch them being good!
- Listen to them. Talk to them.
- Reward good behaviour with praise
- Support the school if they are in the wrong

Facts about young people involved in bullying others

- Persistent bullies at age 12 twice as likely at 24 to have a criminal conviction
- Four times as likely to be multiple offenders
- Carry this through into adulthood, marriage, & parenthood
- More likely to experience marital breakdown, alcohol/drug abuse, childcare probs & continued aggression

Helping at Home: Building Confidence

- Praise for achievements in different areas
- Communicate on an ongoing basis-good mood
- Take seriously and listen without criticism
- Supportive conversation
- Helps develop understanding of how we relate-
facial expressions-body language-interpret mood
- Basic information
- Self image and physical appearance "in look"

Helping at Home: Teaching Social Skills

- Children learn through imitation and observation
- Encourage them to watch others and role models
- Practise basic greetings-teen politeness
- Develop a "script"
- Choose one friendly student-groups not always closed-moving around
- Speak clearly and relaxed about subjects which interest them
- Practise: reading aloud from a newspaper
- Discourage interrupting all the time, being noisy or shrill, showing off, a know-all, not listening to others

Helping at Home: Teaching Social Skills

- Be aware of what is happening in their world
- Familiar with TV, programmes, current music, suitable teen magazines, gigs
- TV not a substitute for friends
- Looking happy, making an effort to join in, humour, will encourage others to accept
- Humour is useful for dealing with verbal bullying and can reduce tensions
- Friends in other areas of their lives

Helping at Home: Coping with Fear

- Professional help for a child “paralysed” by fear
- Discourage submissive body language
- Practise making direct and relaxed eye contact when speaking even in a bullying situation when they are fearful
- Look in mirror saying “NO!” “Leave me alone”
- Best advice
- Physical self protection

Helping at Home: Coping with Fear-personal space

- Stay with same group of friendly students in corridors or when lining up
- Stay with a group & don't be last to leave a building or room.
- Stay in sight of friends or adults
- Take reasonable care of personal belongings-reduces unnecessary conflict
- Walk quietly & confidently away
- Stay calm, try not to show anger

Making an assertive statement

- Say it before the situation has deteriorated into bullying
- Know what you want to say
- Keep it short and say it clearly
- Keep to the point
- Look the person in the eye
- Be persistent but don't whine or apologise

As Parents we must be realistic

“I” Statements: 4 Steps

- 1 Say what you don't like about the person's behaviour. Stick to the facts and be calm
- 2 Say how it makes you feel
- 3 Say that you want it to stop
- 4 Say what action you are going to take if it does not change

“I” Statements: 4 Steps

“I don’t like you calling me names every time I walk past you in the corridor. That makes me really angry. I want the name calling to stop. If it happens again I will report it”

Parents: Not a strategy to be used in case of a physical attack

The Broken Record!

- Using the same statement over and over again to reinforce a point when you are under pressure to do something
- The advantage is that the young person is not making an apology or excuse and does not have to think of clever things to say
- "I don't want to: lend money, do that, agree with that, not drinking, don't smoke
- No!

Fogging

Making a neutral statement that shows the young person has not been bothered by what has been said

“Whatever”

“So what”

The comment should then be ignored if appropriate

Power Phrase

- Positive self talk which may build inner strength and help confidence
- Take a deep breath and as you breath out say your power phrase to yourself

“I can do it”

“I’m doing fine”

“I can handle this”

Sensible precautions

- Look the bully in the eye. Stand tall, look confident
- Speak slowly, clearly, firmly, using “I” statements, “I am not a Please leave me alone”

Sensible precautions

- Leave expensive items at home. Don't brag
- Do not provoke a bully
- Keep a sense of humour- laugh off casual taunts
- Keep a diary
- If surrounded, protect by placing bag in front of your chest. Hand over rather than fight. But tell an adult.
- Tell, tell, tell

Bullying and children with special educational needs

- Substantially more at risk of being involved in bully/victim problems (Smith, 1999)
- Are teased more and have fewer friends (Martlew and Hodson, 1991)
- Mainstream children showed a preference for social interaction with other mainstream peers rather than children with SEN (Martlew and Hodson, 1991)

Bullying and children with special educational needs

- Children with moderate disabilities more likely to be selected as victims (33%) than those without learning difficulties (8%). (Nabuzoka and Smith, 1993)
- Less protective peer relationships, less popular and more rejected (Nabuzoka and Smith, 1993)
- More at risk of bullying others (Whitney, Smith and Thompson, 1994).
- Some children with behaviour problems may act out in an aggressive way and become provocative victims (Smith, 1999)

www.webwise.ie

NCTE Safety initiative

- Discover the internet together
- Agree rules with child for internet use
 - How long online
 - Types of sites
 - Encourage child to be careful when disclosing personal information
 - PC in a public room

Tips for Parents

- Talk about the risks associated with meeting online friends.
 - 27% said they were asked for info-photo, phone, address
 - 7% met someone. 1.4 % turned out to be an adult. (Webwise, 2006. 9-16, 848 students)
- Teach child how to verify information they find online
- Don't be too critical-its not always their fault
- Report online material you may consider illegal:
www.hotline.ie

Tips for Parents

- Encourage respect for others
 - 2006, 26% visited hateful websites. Boys 3 times more likely to have visited a lot
- Know your child's internet use whether on mobile or PC.
- Remember that the positive aspects of the internet outweigh the negative

Tips for Parents

- O2 announced details of a new service to combat bullying on mobile phones. The service, which is free of charge, allows you to block unwanted messages from other mobile phone numbers.

Tips for Parents

- Called Block It, the new service, which is free of charge, allows O2 customers to block unwanted text, picture and video messages from other mobile phone numbers. The service, which will be available from mid-June, can block messages sent from any Irish mobile network, and will work on any mobile handset.

Cyber bullying: Advice for students

- Don't give out private information/passwords
- Think before you post personal pictures
- Don't post pictures of others without their permission
- Don't post anything that might cause you embarrassment
- Instant messaging-don't accept messages from people you don't know

Cyber bullying: Advice for Students

- Don't send a message when you are angry
- Delete messages from people you don't know or who seem mean
- Don't join in with bullying behaviour
- Don't do nothing! Take action, tell an adult
- Learn how to block and report certain people in chat rooms. Learn how to save material in case your parents need to report it.
- Conversations are not private; others can copy and print and share anything you post