



# Bullying - Understanding The Problem for Parents

# FACT SHEET

## What is Bullying?

Bullying is a behaviour where an individual purposefully and deliberately hurt others. This can be done through physical, verbal, or social means. These acts of aggression or manipulation are repeated over time and are usually related to power and social hierarchy. There seems to be some sort of “entertainment value” to bullying incidents, in which the perpetrators get pleasure from others pain.

Bullying can be:

- Premeditated or spontaneous
- Behind your back or “in your face”
- Obvious or hidden by supposed friendship involving one person or a group

## Key Elements

- **Bullying is not about conflict.** In conflicts, two or more individuals disagree on a specific topic. People who are in conflict do not intend to harm others, but rather to uphold their own opinion.
- The individual exhibiting bully behaviour tries to control and dominate others. There is **intent to harm** and the **use of fear and intimidation is common.**
- Both boys and girls are equally involved in bullying incidents.
- Bullying incidents are usually not a one-time event, but rather a **continued harassment** over an extended period of time.

## Arrogance in Action:

Power can be very addictive. According to Barbara Coloroso, there are three main factors that allow kids to harm others without feeling *empathy, compassion or shame.*

1. A sense of entitlement
2. An intolerance toward difference
3. A liberty to exclude, isolate and segregate a person deemed not worthy of respect or care

## Types of Bullying

1. Physical: accounts for less than 1/3 of all bullying. More boys than girls tend to display these behaviours – kicking, punching, spitting, destroying property
2. Verbal: accounts for 2/3 of all bullying - name-calling, put-downs, “dissing”, belittling, cruel criticism
3. Social: more common with girls and often “invisible” – excluding, ignoring, manipulating, use of body posturing, facial expressions and eye contact to humiliate or reject – “giving cut-eye”, rolling of the eyes
4. Cyber: using electronic means to intimidate, harm, exclude or ruin a reputation – includes the use of emails and instant messaging, text or digital imaging sent on cell phones, web pages and web logs (blogs), chat rooms and discussion groups

# Bullying - Understanding The Problem for Parents cont'd

## **What to do if your child is being bullied?**

- Ask your child directly
- Give child option to talk about it or not
- Help them in being specific about the details
- Assure that you are there to listen; not judge; victim not to blame
- Believe and validate feelings
- Applaud the reporting of the incident
- Encourage your child to continue to speak with you about any other incidents
- Do not advise your child to physically fight back
- Do not confront the bully or his/her family
- Involve them in social activities outside of school
- Treat the school as an ally/establish a plan with the school

## **What do to if your child bullies?**

- Keep lines of communication open - individuals will minimize the wrong doing or excuse it
- Do not accept excuses or blame
- Affirm that bullying will not be tolerated
- Teach empathy through modeling; discuss how the victim must feel
- Arrange for an effective non-violent consequence
- Unplug the drug; supervise the amount of violent TV/video/computer games that are being watched
- Help the child feel successful; praise efforts at pro-social, responsible behaviour
- Be a positive role model
- Cooperate with the school - speak to teachers and administrators about how your child is doing in changing the behaviour
- Seek partnerships if necessary (social worker, school psychologist, outside agencies)

***If your child is being bullied or bullying contact your child's teacher, Principal or Guidance Counsellor if available.***