



# Bullying - Understanding The Problem for Parents

# FACT SHEET

## What is Bullying?

*Bullying* is typically a form of repeated, persistent and aggressive behaviour that is directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance. [Ministry of Education's Policy/Program Memorandum No. 144, Bullying Prevention and Intervention, October 4, 2007]

Students may attain or maintain power over others in the school through real or perceived differences. Some areas of difference include but are not limited to size, strength, age, intelligence, economic status, social status, solidarity of peer group, religion, ethnicity, disability, need for special education, sexual orientation, family circumstances, gender and race.

## Key Elements

According to Barbara Coloroso, there are three main factors that allow children, adolescents, and young adults 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.
- 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.

## Types of Bullying

1. Physical: Kicking, punching, spitting, taking someone's hat, tripping, etc.
2. Verbal: Name calling, insults, making racist, sexist, classist, ableist, or homophobic comments.
3. Social: Excluding others from a group, ignoring, spreading gossip or rumours, facial expressions and eye contact to humiliate or reject.
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
- 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 modelling; discuss how the victim must feel
- Arrange for an effective non-violent consequence
- Supervise the amount of violent TV/video/computer games that are being watched
- Help child feel successful; praise efforts at pro-social, responsible behaviour
- Be a positive role model
- Co-operate 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.***