

BULLYING PREVENTION & INTERVENTION FOR THE ELEMENTARY STUDENT

What Parents Can Do To Help

Bullying behaviour may include: name-calling, pushing, giggling or making faces when another child talks, excluding a child from a game, ignoring a child, tattling to get a child in trouble, using a child's name as an insult, making a point not to sit or line up near a certain child, or writing negative messages on the internet.

Bullying is a serious issue for today's youth and one that requires adult intervention. While parents cannot protect their children from every danger that life may present, there are a number of things they can do to foster the proper skills needed to create and maintain healthy relationships and stop the violence of bullying.

- **Stop, Listen and Stand Up!**
One of the single most effective things a child can do to stop the violence of bullying is to tell an adult. Kids may not feel comfortable talking to you about being bullied. They could be embarrassed or scared that telling someone will make the problem worse. It takes a lot of courage for a bullied child to come forward. Be sure to give your child your full attention and ask for details about the bullying: How often does it happen? How long has it been going on? In how many places does it occur and how has it affected you? Stand up for your child - report the bullying to other adults in your child's life (teachers, coaches) and work together to give your child the support he/she needs to develop healthy relationships
- **Teach Your Child To Be Assertive - Not Aggressive**
Research shows that using aggression to deal with aggression usually makes the problem worse. Teach your child how to stand up for him/herself by rehearsing phrases and words such as, "STOP!" until they sound confident. Reassure them that walking away and reporting a bullying incident is the best thing to do.
- **Change The Dynamics**
Parents need to be aware of the dynamics in children's peer groups. It is extremely important that parents provide an environment that promotes positive friendships and reduces negative interactions; parents need to ensure all children are included and that bullying behaviour does not flourish. Consider enrolling your child in various activities in and out of school so they can experience many different friendships. Make connections with other parents so that children's peer interactions can be monitored.
- **Build On Children's Strengths**
Children who are bullied often have low self-esteem. Find activities they enjoy so they can start to feel good about themselves. For children who bully, provide opportunities for them to use their natural leadership skills in a positive way (e.g., teaching siblings and younger children a new sport or skill).
- **Praise (and Practice!) Inclusive and Respectful Behaviour**
Parents set the tone for family relationships and children learn relationship skills by watching their parents' behaviour. Practice tolerance and model the use of positive power by respecting and supporting others. Encourage positive relationships among children by praising respectful and inclusive behaviour whenever you see it. Try and focus on the positives of your child, even when they need correcting.

Use Consequences That Teach and Encourage Empathy

Parents must set guidelines, limits, and consequences for unacceptable aggressive behaviour – whether it's at home, on a sports team or at school. Consequences should teach children that bullying behaviour is wrong and should show children how to use their power in a positive, rather than destructive way. Consequences should not be solely punitive but instead have learning outcomes where children may make things right and restore relationships.

When children bully, their privileges can be withdrawn and replaced by an learning activity from this list of suggestions below:

- Have your children draw a picture of what **they think it must feel like to be bullied**. Talk about the feelings that children who are bullied might feel.
- Have your children identify instances of bullying in the media (e.g., television, newspapers, radio, magazines, websites) and talk with them about their reactions to these instances. Talk with your children about their own strengths and weaknesses and **how they can use power to help, not hurt, others**. If they are sorry for their behaviour and genuinely want to make amends, have your children write a letter or card of apology to the children who were victimized.
- Encourage your children to make a **verbal apology that includes taking responsibility** for the behaviour and indicating what they will do to ensure the children who were victimized feel better. It is important that the children who were victimized want to participate in this process and that the apology is given privately rather than publicly. Apologies conducted in front of others can leave both children feeling embarrassed.
- Encourage your children to repair or restore property or personal belongings that were damaged as a result of the bullying. This is called **restoration**.
- Encourage your children to perform **5 acts of kindness** and describe how they felt after completing each act.
- **Identify your children's strengths and abilities** and provide them with opportunities to highlight these skills in ways that help others. For example, if your children excel at soccer, get them to teach or practice with younger children or siblings.
- When you are addressing children who have bullied, it is essential that you are constructive and avoid using your power aggressively. **If you model bullying for your children, it will be difficult for them to develop healthy relationships**.

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<http://www.prevnet.ca/bullying/parents/parents-of-elementary-school-children>

