



Bullying and Teasing

Bullying has been defined as a situation where a dominant individual or group intends and causes distress to another. Bullying is a widespread problem in schools, 23% of children are likely to be physically or verbally harassed by individuals or groups. Many cases of bullying are never reported to teachers or parents. Some children who are victims still worry a great deal about the prospect of being bullied.

Bullying can last for a long time. Some children can be frightened, humiliated and lonely because of harassment over many years. Victims of bullying are often anxious, sensitive and quiet. They may not have many good friends, and may have a negative view of themselves. Some victims may be provocative; children who are socially insensitive and irritating.

Children who regularly solve their problems by bullying are more likely to continue this aggressive pattern in adulthood. With bullying, prevention is better than just treating crisis situation. Bullying rarely happens where a teacher or other adult is present. Reporting is often the only way we can know that it is occurring.

What Parents can do if their child is a victim?

If your child reports an incident of bullying, treat the information seriously. Even mild bullying and teasing can be very worrying for many children. Then brainstorm - what could you do if this happened again?

Help your child build up strategies that might work next time. When children feel more confident about dealing with a situation they will be less likely to be victimised. Role play dealing with a situation of teasing or bullying so your child can try out different ways of reacting, e.g. 'What if I was caught by Jimmy and his gang outside?'. 'What if Jane and her friends all call me 'stinky'?'. 'What if Peter and Jenny say they'll pinch my lunch money?'.

Encourage your child to build up a network of trusted adults they can go to. This network can include people at home, people at school and some outside adults (neighbours, friends, relatives) in case the adults at home are not easily available.

Report the Incident

If your child has been bullied or harassed, encourage them to report the incident. Many schools are keeping a school based register` of bullying incidents with names, places, witnesses being recorded. The more this system is accepted as a normal part of school routine, the safer students will feel about reporting incidents. This register demonstrates that the school is taking the prevention of bullying as a serious concern.

What if my child is bullying or teasing others?

Children who bully or tease others may be hot-headed or may have difficulties with getting on easily with others. They may also be involved in a peer group that supports bully behaviour. Children who bully may learn that aggressive behaviour pays off: they get what they want and feel more important and powerful. It is important to give these children clear messages that bullying others is not acceptable.

- Talk about the fact that we all have the right to be safe point out that bullying or teasing is not respecting that right. Social skills groups or techniques may help some children who bully.
- Problem-solve with your child, 'If Jim is bugging me all the time, what else could I do as well as hit him?', 'If I want my friends to think I'm tough, what can I do that won't hurt anyone else?'
- It is important not to use aggressive tactics. The use of physical or verbal aggression only reinforces the idea that this is all right, at least in some circumstances.

Share the Strategies

When parents, school and children work together a great deal of bullying and teasing can be eradicated. Communication between parents and school is important. Tell the school your concerns.

Reinforce the Protective Behaviours themes with your children, and encourage them to share these ideas with their friends.

Taken from Duffy PS newsletter, written by Diana Roe.

Bullying Website

Bullying expert, Ken Rigby, has just set up a website, for those wanting to beat the bullies.

The website is for both victims and bullies (many children don't like to be thought of as a bully). You can use the site without anyone knowing who you are. www.indigenet.unisa.edu.au/bullying/