

Beat Bullying

July 2005 Newsletter

Teasing, threats, verbal abuse, harassment, hitting or pushing. Research suggests one in six children are bullied at least once a week. Here are some facts and hints to help beat the bullying.

Bullying is ongoing aggression by a child or a group of children against other children. It can happen anywhere.

In one year, Kids Help Line received around 6000 calls about bullying, which accounts for nearly 10% of counselling calls.

Why are children bullied?

Sometimes a child may be picked on for no particular reason, or there may be a reason like the following which make them a target. They may:

- look different (smaller, weaker, or younger)
- have a disability
- not be good at sport or school-work
- be anxious or not be able to cope socially

- be from a different socio-economic background.

(Kids Help Line Fact Sheet No 7)

Why do children bully?

Children bully for many reasons. They may:

- get power or control over others, which they enjoy and feel popular
- not be affected by the distress of the victim
- believe some people deserve to be bullied
- have been influenced by other aggressive people

- be a victim of bullying

- be feeling unhappy or scared.

(Kids Help Line Fact Sheet No 7 & Parenting SA)

How do you know if your child is being bullied?

Often, the person being bullied doesn't always tell anyone, because they may be ashamed or afraid. Some signs of children being bullied are:

- not wanting to go to school
- avoiding their usual way of travel to school
- being tense, tearful and unhappy
- bruises or scratches
- talking about not having any friends
- vagueness (especially around certain topics) or not wanting to tell you what has happened during the day
- lack of motivation

What can parents do?

Parents often find it difficult to know what to do if they know or think their child is a victim of bullying. Here's a few pointers:

- Listen to your child and take their worries seriously. It is important that the child understands that bullying is not their fault.
- Help them feel good about themselves. Often a child who is being bullied will lack confidence and feel lonely. Try to talk about the things that they do well.
- Allow your child to have some control of the situations they are in. Try not to handle everything for them.
- Ask your child for ideas on how they should handle the situation.
- Work on some ways to solve the problem with your child. Brainstorm together to make a list of all the possible ideas and then decide which will actually be the most helpful in the situation you are talking about. Some of these ideas might include:
 - Learning to ignore the comments that are hurtful;
 - Staying with a group of supportive friends; or
 - Practising communications and assertion skills.

- Talk to your child's school about how they deal with bullying. Make a list of the things that have happened to your child. Be clear and be firm about their suffering. Be prepared to name the children who are doing the bullying. If bullying persists, write down WHO, WHAT, WHERE, and WHEN.

Being Bullied on the Phone or by Email

This newer type of bullying or harassment is becoming widespread. More and more children and adults are being sent frightening, rude, or sexual threats or messages through email or SMS, which are considered harassment.

While the sender may be known, the messages can be sent anonymously which is very frightening for children and adults.

What can you do?

- If this is happening at school, ensure you notify the school principal or IT support.
- Contact your phone and email providers to see what they can do to prevent this.
- Change your phone number or email address may help.

If you feel you need help with some of these strategies, please contact us to talk to one of our psychologists.