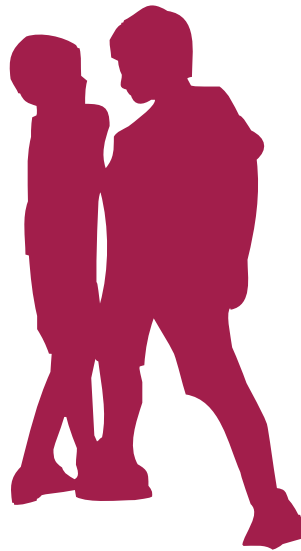


Fear & Loathing: A Guide to Bullying Behaviour

Bullying occurs when a child is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more children. It may be physical (hitting or kicking); verbal (name-calling, insults, racist comments and constant teasing); relational (gossip, ostracism); or reactive (taunting that invites a response). Bullying is most often about intimidation and an imbalance of power.

Most bullying goes unreported because victims feel that nothing will be done and they might receive greater retaliation the next time. Those who watch are afraid to report because they might lose their social status, because they tend to identify with the power of the bully rather than the weakness of the victim, and because of fears that they might be next.



A bully

- abuses power physically, psychologically or sexually
- teases, taunts and spreads rumours
- breaks another person down
- often comes from a family without a lot of supervision and where physical punishment is used
- might be really defiant with adults and prone to breaking a lot of rules

A victim

- is afraid to go to school, reluctant to get onto the school bus, avoids places such as hallways, certain playground areas and especially washrooms
- lives with varying degrees of dread, apprehension, shame and anxiety
- might experience long-term consequences and develop self-destructive tendencies
- might be passive, anxious, timid, insecure, cry easily or intentionally seek attention to make up for social deficits

Potential bullies may...

- have been bullied or abused
- have oppressive parents or siblings
- be hurting so much that they need to hurt others

- lack self-esteem and confidence
- feel inadequate or inferior and easily become jealous
- witness violence in their home
- be impulsive
- start off as observers of bullying then follow the bully's lead

Potential victims may...

- lack confidence or self-esteem
- be small for their age
- be new to the neighbourhood
- be physically different, clumsy or attention seeking
- have noticeable cultural differences
- be from either end of the socio-economic or intellectual continuum
- be isolated and insecure

If your child is a victim

- Be available for and reassure your child that you will help sort out the problem.
- Validate your child's feelings as normal.
- Let your child know it's not their fault.
- Help your child be specific.
- Believe your child. Make no value judgements.
- Never blame. Bullying is *never* the victims fault.

- Do not suggest physically fighting back... ever!
- Ask how he/she has tried to stop the bullying. Suggest possible alternatives.
- Suggest he/she play in a different, safer school area, closer to a supervising adult.
- Privately share your child's concern with school personnel.
- Remember your child might be scared or embarrassed to tell you. Be patient.
- Acknowledge to your child that name-calling *does* hurt.
- Do *not* approach the family of the other child.
- Do *not* blame the teacher or the administration.
- Offer to assist with anti-bullying initiatives at school or become a school volunteer.
- Remember, you are your child's most important teacher.

If your child is bullying

- Bullies rarely have close friends and often have difficulty getting along well with others.
- Check whether your child has more money, possessions or purchases than he/she can explain.
- Think through whether your child is or might be a bully.
- Ask yourself whether your child is imitating behaviour from your home.
- Avoid severe punishment. It doesn't work.
- Check out the fairness of your rules and limits.
- Be aware that he/she will likely deny or minimize his/her involvement.
- Do *not* lose your temper ...but *do* say that bullying is not okay.
- Get the facts and ask to be kept informed. Privately talk to the child's teacher.
- Be open and share information with school personnel.
- Use role play to teach different viewpoints.
- Acknowledge the positive side of your child.
- Seek out parenting classes or workshops.
- Don't hesitate to ask for help.