



A PARENTS' GUIDE TO THE Bullied, Bullies & Bystanders

Bullying is a three part problem which is typically the end result of behavior patterns that are all too often ignored. Bullying can be significantly reduced if these behavior patterns are recognized and addressed early in life before they become a problem. Bullying is best prevented using a three pronged approach that looks at it from the perspectives of the bullied, bullies and bystanders.



WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying occurs when someone deliberately does or says something to hurt someone else on a repeated basis. It is not a normal or acceptable part of growing up and can lead to tragic consequences. Bullying should never be tolerated as no one deserves or asks to be bullied!

Bullying generally falls into one of four categories:

- Verbal
- Social (Exclusion)
- Physical
- Cyberbullying

Bullying can become a police matter, if the behaviour involves threats, harassment, assaults, thefts, mischief (vandalism) etc. Verbal, physical and cyberbullying typically involve one or more of these offences.

BULLYING STARTS EARLY

By some estimates bullying occurs every seven minutes on elementary school playgrounds. There are many ways that young people bully each other--even if they don't realize or recognize it.

Bullying includes:

- punching, shoving and other acts that hurt people physically,
- spreading bad rumours about people,
- teasing people in a mean way, or,
- getting people to "gang up" on others.

While instances of bullying are typically first documented in schools, bullying occurs everywhere and is often first exhibited while children are at play.

ARE YOU THE PARENT OF A BULLY?

It is difficult for most parents to objectively "see" their children. For one thing, their children may be on their best behavior in their presence.

On the other hand, parents may:

- not know what to look for,
- tend to overlook these traits in any event, if they do not fit with their image of the child, or,
- even confuse the traits of a bully with assertiveness--particularly if they share these traits.

Parents must be attuned to bullying behavior in their children and the potential negative effects! People who engage in bullying behavior are more likely to exhibit violent, antisocial behaviours, such as dating aggression, sexual harassment, marital, child and elder abuse. It is estimated by some studies that people engaged in bullying behavior are four times more likely to be involved in criminal behavior along with drugs and alcohol in their adult years.

• Warning Signs That YOUR Child Is A Bully:

- Behaves aggressively with people, including siblings, and animals -- often hurting others.
- Is easily angered and frustrated when playing co-operative games.
- Believes violence is an acceptable way to solve problems.
- Hangs around with other children who are aggressive.

• What Can YOU Do?

- Understand that bullying is a learned behaviour that may be affected by the behavior of others, violent video games and gore and hate internet sites.¹
- Share your bullying stories (good and "bad"). Let children know, by words and actions, that bullying is not okay.
- Teach your child to act in ways that respects themselves and others.
- Acknowledge what is happening and seek help if needed.
- Direct your child to the "Are You Bullying" section of the KidsHelpPhone.ca web-site or have them research bullies and bullying for themselves on the internet and report back what they've found and what can they do.
- Never resort to bully tactics in an effort to make them stop.

¹ Bullyingincanada.ca

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS SUBJECT, PLEASE CONTACT:

PEEL REGIONAL POLICE
Crime Prevention Services
 7750 Hurontario Street
 Brampton, Ontario
 L6V 3W6

Tel. 905-453-2121 ext. 4021
 Fax 905-456-6106

You may also want to examine our Internet site at:

www.peelpolice.ca

• If Your Child Has Been IDENTIFIED As A Bully

- Remain calm, listen to the complaint and take it seriously.
- Talk and listen to your child - acknowledge their perspective but focus on accountability.
- Seek help from your child's:
 - Teacher/other school personnel,
 - Doctor,
 - Religious community, or,
 - Other social welfare supports.
- Provide opportunities to develop positive leadership skills.

• Short & Long-Term Consequences

As stated earlier, bullying can be a predictor of future aversive behavior. Of equal concern are its short term consequences. These can include:

- disciplinary problems at school – including expulsion,
- police involvement and criminal charges regardless of school involvement,
- significant associated legal costs, and,
- possible civil suits for defamatory libel in which the parent can be held liable.

Parents should also be aware that many of these consequences are increasingly being viewed as having zero tolerance and upon conviction your child's employment and travel opportunities (particularly North American travel) can be severely curtailed.

IS YOUR CHILD BEING BULLIED?

Young people who are bullied often feel lonely, unhappy and frightened. Parents must be aware of the signs of bullying as their children are often nervous about involving them for fear of making the problem worse or being called or thought of as a "rat". Bullying, if left unchecked, can lead to lasting and even tragic consequences.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- anger,
- embarrassment,
- shame,
- loss of confidence/low self-esteem,
- withdrawal from family and school activities,
- difficulty in learning/concentrating,
- violent behaviour including thoughts of suicide/suicidal behaviour.

Make sure you know and recognize the signs of bullying and consider when children are most vulnerable.

• Warning Signs

- Headaches, anxiety/panic attacks, stomach aches,
- frustration,
- trouble sleeping/"sleeping" too much, being exhausted,
- frequently alone/loneliness/difficult time making friends,
- torn clothing, missing belongings,
- suddenly complains of headaches, stomach-aches or nightmares,
- does not want to go to school/truancy,
- becomes upset after going on-line, or,
- depression.

• Times of Greatest Vulnerability

Transition from:

- elementary school to middle school, or,
- middle school to high school.

• Advice For Parents

- Pay attention to relationships in your child's groups.
- Make sure your child is aware of the difference between "ratting" and responsible reporting.

IN THE EVENT THAT YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED ...

• Make Sure Your Child Is Aware That It's Not Their Fault

Tell them to:

- Keep a record of what has happened (this can be important should it continue).
- Get support from friends but don't seek vengeance.
- Avoid specific places where bullying has happened such as an infrequently used washroom.

• Teach Your Child To Be Assertive

- Shoulders straight,
- eyes up, and,
- clear voice.

• Work Out A Plan Together To Put An End To Bullying

Help them develop and practice a short, clear message telling the bully to stop.

Tell them to:

- **NOT** fight back,
- walk away and find a safe place with a positive crowd,
- tell someone you trust, and,
- don't give up!

Also:

- contact school administrators for school based problems, and,

- look for opportunities that allow your child to enhance their strengths and self-confidence.

Be sure to **NEVER**:

- regard it as a way of building character, or,
- seek vengeance.

The goal is to make it stop.

DOES YOUR CHILD WATCH OR DO NOTHING WHEN OTHERS ARE BULLIED?

In the majority of cases, bullying stops within 10 seconds when peers intervene, or do not support the bullying behavior² – **Bystanders Are Important!**

• Advice For Parents & Kids

- Talk to your kids about bullying and listen to what they say.
- Help children plan what they will do if they see someone being bullied. Tell them that it is not o.k. to stand and watch.
- Teach your child to act in ways that show respect for themselves as well as others.
- Get involved in violence prevention at your children's school and the community.

WHAT ABOUT CYBERBULLYING?

Bullying can be effected through e-mails or social networking sites. Keep the computer your child uses in a common area so that you can monitor their activities and watch for changes in behaviour. Familiarize yourself with on-line activities. For more information on Cyberbullying, consult the Computer Safety, Internet Safety fact sheet found on the Crime Prevention page of the Peel Regional Police web-site at www.peelpolice.ca.

RESOURCES

Check out:

- **Kids Help Phone**
www.KidsHelpPhone.ca
1-800-668-6868
- **Region of Peel – Public Health**
www.peelregion.ca
905-799-7700
- **Canadian Safe Schools**
www.canadiansafeschools.com
- **Canadian Red Cross**
www.redcross.ca
905-689-0732

² Bullyingincanada.ca