

# Bullying is serious

27 per cent of young people report they are bullied every two weeks or more often.

- ◆ Cyberbullying happens to about 1 in 10 Australian young people every few weeks or more often.
- ◆ Many young people who bully online also bully face to face.
- ◆ Some young people who are bullied later go on to engage in bullying others.
- ◆ Bullying can seriously damage physical, social and emotional health.
- ◆ Bullying hurts the perpetrator as well. Young people who bully over time are more likely to engage in ongoing anti-social behaviour and criminality, have issues with substance abuse, demonstrate low academic achievement and be involved in future child and spouse abuse.

## What is bullying?

Bullying is when someone or a group of people with more power repeatedly and intentionally causes hurt or harm to another person or group of people who feel helpless to respond. Bullying can continue over time, is often hidden from adults and will probably continue if no action is taken.

### Bullying isn't:

- ◆ single episodes of social rejection or dislike
- ◆ single episode acts of nastiness or spite
- ◆ random acts of aggression or intimidation
- ◆ mutual arguments, disagreements or rights.



## What is bullying and Types of bullying

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Building Respectful and Safe Schools (2010) identifies four types of bullying.

1. **Physical bullying** includes hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching and pushing or damaging property.
2. **Verbal bullying** includes name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse.
3. **Covert bullying** is often harder to recognise and can be carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Covert bullying includes:
  - ◆ lying and spreading rumours
  - ◆ negative facial or physical gestures, menacing or contemptuous looks
  - ◆ playing nasty jokes to embarrass and humiliate
  - ◆ mimicking unkindly
  - ◆ encouraging others to socially exclude someone
  - ◆ damaging someone's social reputation or social acceptance.
4. **Cyber bullying** is overt or covert bullying behaviours using digital technologies. Examples include harassment via a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory personal website or deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces. Cyber bullying can happen at any time. It can be in public or in private, and sometimes only known to the target and the person bullying.

## Signs that your child might be being bullied

It's not always easy to tell if a young person is being bullied, as sometimes they don't want to disclose what's happening to them. If you notice a significant change in behaviour, this could be cause for concern. Other signs can include changes to mood or eating and sleep patterns; withdrawal from family, social groups or friends; decline in school performance or unwillingness to attend; lost, torn or broken belongings; scratches or bruises, or implausible excuses for any of the above.

## What to do if your child is bullying others

Stay calm. Remember, the behaviour is at fault, rather than the child.

- ◆ Make sure your child knows bullying behaviour is inappropriate and why.
- ◆ Try to understand the reasons why your child has behaved in this way and look for ways to address problems.
- ◆ Encourage your child to look at it from the other's perspective, e.g., "how would you feel if..."
- ◆ Help your child think of alternative paths of action.
- ◆ Provide appropriate boundaries for their behaviour.

## Things you can do if your child is being bullied

1. **Listen** - Try to listen to the whole story without interrupting. Be empathic, calm and validate what is being said. Ask what your child would like to happen, before you make suggestions.
2. **Talk** - Have a conversation about what happened. Try not to make the conversation intense or you might deter your child from talking to you. Remind your child it's normal to feel hurt, it's never OK to be bullied, and it's NOT their fault.
3. **Find out what is happening** - Note what, when and where the bullying occurred, who was involved, how often and if anybody else witnessed it. Don't offer to confront the person yourself.
4. **Contact the school** - Check your school's bullying policy. Find out if the school is aware of the bullying and whether anything has been done to address the situation. Make an appointment to speak to your child's teacher or coordinator. Try to make a follow-up appointment to ensure the situation is being addressed.
5. **Give sensible advice** - Encourage your child not to fight back, but coach them to use neutral or, if appropriate, joking language in response. Help them explore other possible responses.
  - ◆ Tell them that the behaviour was intentional and it won't just go away.
  - ◆ Explain it's safer to avoid people, places or situations that could expose them to further bullying.
  - ◆ If your child asks to stay home from school, explain that it won't help - and may make things worse.
  - ◆ If possible, help to make opportunities for them to join other groups of young people - e.g. clubs at school or other groups outside of school time.

## Who can help?

**Kids' Helpline**

1800 551 800

[www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

**Cybersafety help**

[www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/report.aspx)

**Australian Federal Police**

[www.afp.gov.au](http://www.afp.gov.au)

**Reach Out**

[www.reachout.com.au](http://www.reachout.com.au)

**Bullying. No way!**

[www.bullyingnoway.com.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.com.au)

**Beyondblue**

[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)