

Bullying . . . it hurts!

What is bullying?

Bullying is much more than teasing. The evidence and incidence of bullying varies, but the effects are always the same. It is humiliating and very often devastating to the innocent victim.

Bullying may be physical, or it may be verbal and psychological. Whatever the type of bullying, it hurts. Bullying is destructive both to the victim and the bully. Whatever the reasons for a child being bullied, it needs to be stopped.

If your child is being bothered, intimidated, or threatened by any other student, it is very important that it is brought to the attention of the school principal. To remain silent about bullying is to encourage it as a means of solving problems.

Why do children bully?

Bullying is a form of aggression. It allows the bully to release aggression on an innocent victim for other things that are troubling him/her. Put-downs come from people who have a low sense of self-esteem. Working with school counsellors or administration will help a bully to understand how to react in a positive way.

Is your child being bullied?

Young children often tell an adult when they are being bullied, but older children may keep it to themselves. Children being bullied will almost always display signs of the effects of this torment. If a parent suspects their child is being bullied, encouragement is required to persuade the child to discuss it.

If your child is being bothered, intimidated, or threatened by any other student, it is very important to inform the principal.

To remain silent about bullying is to encourage it as a means of solving problems. Prompt notification is essential in dealing with matters related to student conduct. The administration is able to assess the problem, meet with students privately and seek solutions that are respectful and educational.

Suggestions for handling teasing and put-downs

If children know ahead of time they may be teased, they may be able to use some problem-solving skills to come to solutions. Role-playing situations at home can be an effective way of giving children opportunities to practice new behaviours. Teaching children exactly how to ignore someone is a very important skill.

The two reactions that generally reinforce bullying are fear and anger. Children should think of ways of responding that exclude those reactions. Children should:

- tell an adult about the bully
- try to ignore the bully
- try not to show that they are upset
- tell the bully they do not like what he/she is doing
- remember that the bully has the problem, not them
- try to walk away
- try to stay in a group

The most important point is that the child tells an adult. Once the situation has been verbalized, it can be dealt with. When children know they have the support of others, they will begin to gain confidence. Positive assertiveness is necessary in stopping bullies.

This article has been adapted from a booklet produced by the BC Block Parent Program