

Bullying Information

Ellen Stirling Primary School



Definition of bullying

The definition of bullying is when an individual or a group of people with more power, **repeatedly and intentionally** cause 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.

While the bullying definition is broad and can occur in a variety of environments it usually is a relationship problem and requires relationship-based solutions. These are best solved in the social environment in which they occur: in a child or young person's life, this is most often the school.

What bullying is not

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

These actions can cause great distress. However, they do not fit the definition of bullying, and they're not examples of bullying unless someone is **deliberately and repeatedly** doing them.

Types of bullying

Physical bullying: Physical bullying includes hitting, kicking, tripping, pinching and pushing or damaging property. Physical bullying causes both short term and long term damage.

Verbal bullying: Verbal bullying includes name calling, insults, teasing, intimidation, homophobic or racist remarks, or verbal abuse. While verbal bullying can start off harmless, it can escalate to levels which start affecting the individual target. Keep reading in this section for techniques to deal with verbal bullying.

Social bullying: Social bullying, sometimes referred to as 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. Social 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.

Cyber bullying: Cyber bullying can be overt or covert bullying behaviours using digital technologies, including hardware such as computers and smartphones, and software such as social media, instant messaging, texts, websites and other online platforms.

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. Cyber bullying can include:

- Abusive or hurtful texts emails or posts, images or videos
- Deliberately excluding others online
- Nasty gossip or rumours
- Imitating others online or using their log-in



Signs of bullying

The following will equip you with the skills to spot different signs of bullying and some of the symptoms that could come from this.

Emotional and behavioural signs of bullying

- Changes in sleep patterns
- Changes in eating patterns
- Frequent tears or anger
- Mood swings
- Feels ill in the morning
- Becomes withdrawn or starts stammering
- Becomes aggressive and unreasonable
- Refuses to talk about what is wrong
- Begins to target siblings
- Continually 'loses' money or starts stealing

Physical signs of bullying

- Has unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches
- Comes home with missing or damaged belongings or clothes
- Comes home hungry

School signs of bullying

- Doesn't want to go to school
- Changes their route to school or are frightened of walking to school
- Doesn't want to go to school on the bus/train
- School grades begin to fall



Other signs of bullying

Sometimes signs of bullying can be far more hidden. They can include:

- Often alone or excluded from friendship groups at school
- A frequent target for teasing, mimicking or ridicule at school
- Unable to speak up in class and appears insecure or frightened

What you can do

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 young person or their parents yourself. This might make things worse for your child.

Contact the school

Bullying arises from social situations – family, school, clubs, and work – and if possible, cases of bullying are best dealt with where they occur. In children's lives, school is the most common location for bullying. It's therefore important you alert the school to the situation, as they may not be aware of it.

Don't assume the school will know about the situation, because your child may not have told them. The majority of children and teenagers do not disclose to teachers or parents. Be confident that once alerted the school will want to stop bullying behaviour as much as you.

Here are some tips to guide your discussions with the school:

- Make an appointment to speak to your child's teacher, Associate Principals or the Principal
- Check your school's bullying/ behaviour policy
- Note what the policy includes so that you are aware
- Take along your notes about the situation or screen-shots, texts etc. It's often difficult to remember specific details
- Find out if the school is aware of the bullying
- Ask what is being done to ensure your child's safety
- Ask for a follow -up appointment to ensure the situation is being addressed. The school may ask you to attend a restorative conference. If so, they will explain to you what is involved
- If your child asks to stay home from school, explain it won't help – and may make things worse.

Additional Support

- Kids Helpline 1800 551 800
www.kidshelpline.com.au
- Australian Federal Police www.afp.gov.au
- Beyondblue www.beyondblue.org.au
- Bullying. No way! www.bullyingnoway.gov.au
- The Australian Psychological Society
www.psychology.org.au