

The Alannah
and Madeline
Foundation



Keeping children safe from violence

Bullying hurts



What is bullying?

Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm.

It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons.

Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

Single incidents and conflicts or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Types of bullying

- **Verbal or written abuse** - such as targeted name-calling or jokes, or displaying offensive posters.
- **Violence** - including threats of violence.
- **Sexual harassment** - unwelcome or unreciprocated conduct of a sexual nature, which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation.
- **Homophobia** - and other hostile behaviour towards students relating to gender and sexuality.
- **Discrimination including racial discrimination** - treating people differently because of their identity.
- **Cyberbullying** - either online or via mobile phone.

What is not bullying?

- **Mutual conflict** which involves a disagreement, but not an imbalance of power. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.
- **Single-episode acts** of nastiness or physical aggression, or aggression directed towards many different people.
- **Social rejection or dislike** is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude, or create dislike by others.



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, for example, "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 to your child's story

Try to listen to the whole story without interrupting. Be empathic, calm and validate what your child says. Ask what your child would like to happen, before making suggestions.

2. Have a conversation about what happened

Try not to let your emotions get involved as it might deter your child from talking to you. You'll help them more if you stay calm. Remind your child it's normal to feel hurt, it's never OK to be bullied, and it's NOT their fault.

3. Make a record of events

Note all incidents of bullying, including what, when and where they occurred, who was involved and if anybody witnessed the incidents.

4. Work with your child's school to find a solution

Find out if the school is aware of the bullying and whether anything has been done to address the situation. Check your school's bullying policy. Make an appointment to speak to your child's teacher or wellbeing coordinator. Follow up with another meeting to ensure the situation is being addressed. Remember, they are there to help.

5. Find other ways to support your child

Coach your child to use neutral language or, if appropriate, joking language in response, and explain that it is better to stay away from unsafe situations if possible. Don't offer to confront the person yourself.

Encourage your child to get involved in extra-curricular activities such as sports and hobbies where they can spend time with other young people.



Bullying is serious

- 27 per cent of young people report they are bullied every two weeks or more often.
- Cyberbullying happens to about one in five young Australians 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.



Who can help?

Kids Helpline

1800 551 800

www.kidshelp.com.au

Cybersafety help

www.cybersmart.gov.au

Australian Federal Police

www.afp.gov.au

ReachOut.com

au.reachout.com

Beyondblue

www.beyondblue.org.au

Bullying. No way!

www.bullyingnoway.gov.au

The Australian Psychological Society

www.psychology.org.au

To download an electronic version of this brochure, visit the National Centre Against Bullying (NCAB) website: **www.ncab.org.au**

Contact us

The Alannah and Madeline Foundation is a national charity keeping children safe from violence.

The Foundation was set up in memory of Alannah and Madeline Mikac, aged six and three, who along with their mother and 32 others were tragically killed at Port Arthur, Tasmania on 28 April 1996.

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