

Guide to bullying

What is bullying?

Bullying is a form of repeated, persistent and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. It occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived *power imbalance*.

Bullying may be: sexual, verbal, prejudicial, physical or cyberbullying.

How to prevent bullying

- Promoting positive relationships within and between the entire school to enhance school climate and a supportive learning environment.
- Educating and developing awareness about bullying, the importance of healthy relationships, and self-awareness about the use of real and perceived power in relationships.
- Consolidating attitudes which are incompatible with bullying for inclusion, acceptance and respect for all.
- Developing awareness of bullying issues at the school.
- Developing positive solutions to prevent and address bullying.

- Learning positive strategies to address bullying by
 - a. children and youth who are victimized
 - b. children and youth who witness bullying
 - c. teachers, and
 - d. other school staff;
- Building social responsibility and open trusting communication about bullying and relationship difficulties.

What you can do

- serious talks with bullies and victims.
- serious talks with the parents of bullies and victims.
- role playing of non-aggressive behavior with bullies.
- role playing of assertive behavior with victims.
- increase self-esteem

Strategies for Teachers

Up to half of today's children are victims of school bullying. Parents, educators, and students alike must work together to help stop bullying in their class-rooms, playgrounds, and schools. The following strategies can help teachers and administrators to combat bullying in their schools.

Plan and Make Consequences Clear

An effective strategy for schools to reduce bullying is to have a policy outlining how teachers and school staff address the issue of bullying

in the classroom and how incidents are dealt with after they have happened. All students need to be aware of the consequences of bullying.

Safeguard Honesty

Students feel safe reporting bullying when teachers, administrators, and other school personnel respect the anonymity of the victim and/or reporting students.

Create a Bullying Policy

An effective strategy to reduce bullying is to create a school-wide policy that defines bullying, outlines how teachers and school staff should address the issue of bullying in the classroom, and delineates how incidents are to be dealt with after they occur. All students need to be aware of the consequences of bullying.

The school policy must clearly define all forms of bullying behavior. Bullying behavior can be classified under four main headings: Physical Bullying, Verbal Bullying, Relational Bullying, and Sexual Harassment (Bullying). Many bullies try to pass off acts of aggression as roughhousing between friends, or just having fun. However, there is a difference between play and bullying. An episode of bullying has three identifying characteristics:

- A power difference between the individual being bullied and the bully
- A negative intent on the part of the bully to hurt, embarrass, or humiliate the other
- Repeated behavior—with others, with the same person, and/or with the same person over time

Inclusion and Discussion

Involve all members of a school community including pupils, parents, teachers, and non-teaching staff in the formation of the bullying policy. Provide a range of opportunities for pupils to talk about bullying.

Adopt effective strategies

Effective strategies include:

- **No-blame approach:** A step-by-step technique that allows early intervention because it does not require that anyone is proved to be at fault. A group of young people, which includes bystanders as well as possible bullies, is made aware of a victim's distress and is asked to suggest solutions. This approach is particularly useful in dealing with group bullying and name-calling.
- **Peer-support efforts:** Mobilize students to take a stand against bullying behavior.
- **Circle-time discussions:** Bring students, teachers, and school professionals to address the issue of bullying, explore the effect of bullying on the school atmosphere, and brainstorm solutions when problems arise.

Power of Students

Mobilize the masses of students who are neither victims nor bullies to take action against bullying. Students can take action in many different ways: refusing to watch bullying, reporting bullying incidents, initiating conflict resolution strategies, using distraction with either the bully or the victim.

Ask

An initial step that schools can take to combat bullying is to distribute a questionnaire that asks students, parents, and teachers to describe

any bullying that they are aware of in their school. The results can be used to increase awareness of the extent of the problem, justify intervention efforts, and serve as a benchmark to measure the impact of improvements in school climate once an intervention is initiated.

The results from the questionnaire can be used to conduct a bullying-awareness campaign. The campaign can be conducted during parent-teacher conference days, through parent newsletters, and at PTA meetings. Potential goals of a campaign include: increasing parental awareness of the problem, highlighting the importance of parental involvement for program success, and encouraging parental support of program goals.