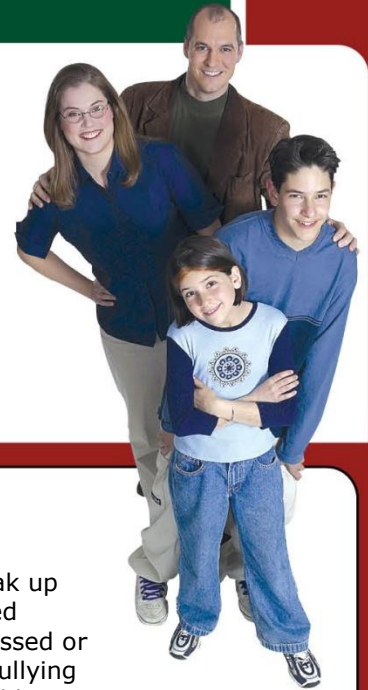


The SPEC Family LINK Letter

LINKS

Community Information Centre



Bullying

Bullying is a conscious, wilful, deliberate, repeated and hostile activity marked by an imbalance of power, intent to harm or threaten aggression, fear and distress and/or harm another person's body, feelings, self esteem, or reputation. It is the assertion of interpersonal power through aggression. Bullying is a relationship problem.

Bullying involves three key individuals or groups:

1. The bully
2. The target
3. The bystander

Depending on the circumstance, we may have played all of these roles at different times in our lives. The bully is the person or persons who are causing harm. People who choose to bully want power and control. They try to exert power over the person they're targeting by engaging in bullying behaviours. For the cycle to end, somebody needs to talk to the bully to make them aware of how their comments and actions hurt the people around them. Awareness leads to change, but silence can't lead to anything good.

Resources

Lifetalk Counselling Services
403.362.2210

Grasslands Innovations Project
Family School Liaison Workers
www.grasslands.ab.ca

Employment Standards
1.877.427.3731 (work place bullying)
The SPEC Association for Children and Families
www.spec.ab.ca
403.362.5056

Children don't always speak up when they are being bullied because they are embarrassed or afraid the person who is bullying will get back at them. Children sometimes believe they must remain silent in order to belong. The child's behaviour may be a clue to bullying even before they are willing to talk about it.

Here are some warning signs to watch for:

- Being afraid to go to school or complaining about feeling ill in the mornings.
- Skipping school or starting to do poorly in school.
- "Losing" belongings or coming home with clothes or books destroyed.
- Having nightmares, becoming withdrawn or beginning to bully other children.
- Attempting to talk about suicide.

Children naturally argue and fight with brothers and sisters. In doing so, they practice assertiveness, negotiation skills and conflict resolution. Early training and teaching in kindness, sharing, love, sensitivity to the needs of other people and problem solving is much easier than trying to train after a child has developed a poor self image and poor habits of self discipline.

SPEC

The SPEC Association for Children and Families
Community Cultural Centre
#101-327, 3rd Street West, Brooks, Alberta.
E-mail: links@spec.ab.ca

403-501-5556 (direct line)

Bullying is destructive – not just for the victims, but also for those who exhibit bullying behavior. Recognizing bullying in children or youth is an important step in stopping and preventing the emotional, physical and social scars that can last a lifetime. Bullying is a learned behavior, and children need help in fostering more positive relationships for their own well-being.

Ways to prevent bullying

Be a positive role model. Recognize your role in modeling positive relationships. Set a good example and reinforce positive behavior when you see it.

Communicate. A child or youth who exhibits bullying behavior needs to be able to talk about their own experiences. During a quiet time of day, establish an open, friendly, non-threatening line of communication.

See the child inside the bully. Often, a child or youth who exhibits bullying behavior has been bullied in the past. In a non-judgmental way, try to find out what the child or youth is feeling, and if something has happened to make him or her feel vulnerable.

Teach empathy. Read stories about bullying, identify how each child feels in the interaction, draw pictures, and role play, with the child and adult exchanging roles, discussing how each feels. Help them to see the victim's point of view, and how hurtful and damaging bullying can be.

Do something fun together. Fun activities and positive attention build confidence, positive pathways, and encourage empathy and compassion for others.

Teach leadership. Provide activities and opportunities that channel energy into constructive leadership situations.

Make amends and be friends. Teach the child or youth ways to make amends for past behavior (e.g., to apologize, or do something helpful or nice), and help them connect with others who have the same interests in play and learning.

Set consistent consequences. Send the message that damaging behavior is unacceptable. Withdraw privileges and replace with instructive activities, like reading, to redirect negative energy.

Work together. Parents, caregivers, communities and schools must work together to prevent and stop bullying. If you think a child or youth is exhibiting bullying behavior, contact the school and parents to monitor the situation. Together, we can foster a climate where every child can be cared for and safe.

Children may imitate aggressive behaviour they have seen on TV, in movies or at home. Research shows that 93% of video games reward violent behaviours.

Today's multicultural society

Growing up in today's multicultural society, a child must learn to deal with ethnic and cultural differences in a positive way. However, these differences sometimes lead children to look at their peers who don't share a majority ethnicity or cultural heritage as "others"—which can lead to negative behaviour, such as bullying. Different ethnic and cultural groups may have different motives, requiring adult intervention and action to prevent bullying.

In a school with kids from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, bullying can include a complex web of racially motivated incidents, and disputes based on cultural heritage, ethnicity and immigration status. Relationships are extra important for immigrants, since establishing friendships in their new home is often considered an important goal.



Children who feel like outcasts based on their heritage often feel hurt and angry, which could lead to behavioural problems down the line—and they need advocates for their protection and well being. Take a stand to eliminate hate-based bullying, and you can have a positive impact on not only these students, but also on the levels of acceptance of students in general

Bullying is painful and humiliating. Kids who are bullied feel embarrassed, battered and shamed. If the pain is not relieved, bullying can even lead to consideration of suicide or violent behaviour toward themselves or others.

You can help your child deal with bullying by working with the school to help your child handle the bullying problem. You are leading by example and giving a clear message that bullying is wrong. You can help encourage your child to talk to you about it and by giving helpful advice.

- Walk away from the situation
- Don't hit back, don't talk back
- Find a friend or an adult

Bullying Myths

Myth: "It builds Character"

Reality: Children who are bullied repeatedly have low self-esteem and do not trust others. Bullying damages a person's self-concept.

Myth: "That's not bullying. They are just teasing"

Reality: Vicious taunting hurts and should be stopped!

Myth: "There have always been bullies and there always will be."

Reality: By working together as parents, teachers, and students we have the power to change things and create a better future for our children.

Myth: Children have to learn to stand up for themselves.

Reality: Children who get up the courage to complain about being bullied are saying they cannot cope with the situation on their own. Treat their complaints as a call for help.

Myth: Children should hit back – only harder.

Reality: This could cause serious harm. People who are bullies are often bigger and more powerful than their victims. This also gives children the idea that violence is a legitimate way to solve problems.

Myth #4: Sticks and stones can break your bones but words can never hurt me.

Reality: Scars left by name calling can last a lifetime.

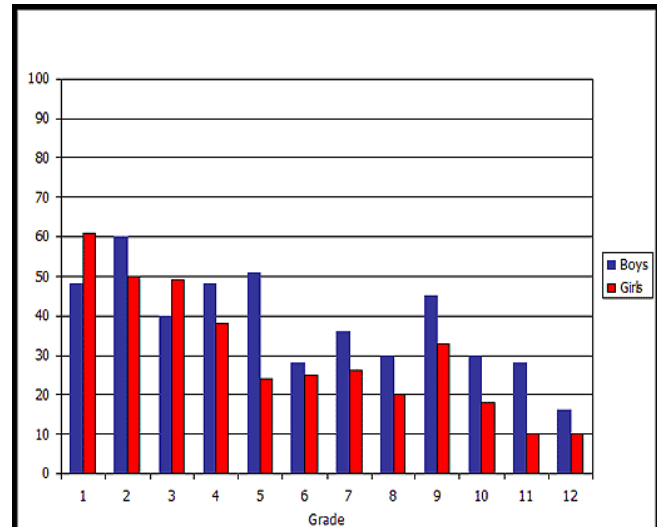
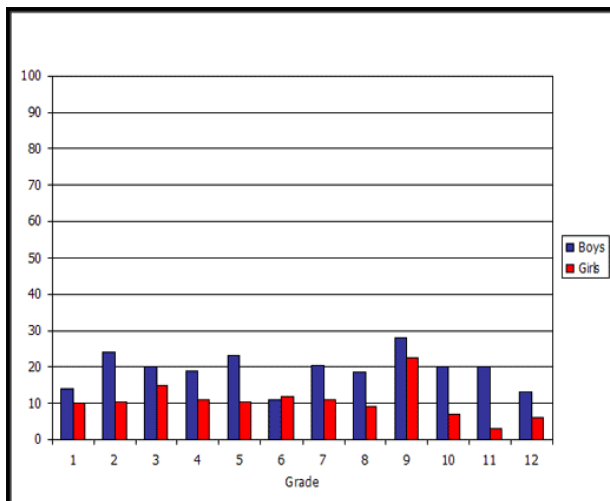
Is it possible that your child is bullying others? Children who physically bully other students may also come home with bruises, scraped and torn clothing. They may suddenly have more money to spend than usual or new possessions that they wouldn't normally be able to afford. They may also "talk tough" about other students. Children who bully sometimes do so at home as well as at school. Look and listen within your own household. Are there signs that one of your children is bullied by a sibling?

Bullying behaviour can develop over a long period of time or as a result of major changes, losses or upsets in a child's or teen's life. Think about how problems and conflicts are dealt with in your home. Talk through issues positively as a family. An important way to discourage bullying is to be a good role model and show your kids how to sort out difficulties without using power or aggression. Let your child know that bullying is wrong and is not acceptable behaviour under any circumstances.

Everyone suffers when bullying occurs, and everyone can help prevent it. In 85% of cases, bullying takes place in front of witnesses. Bystanders avoid getting involved. They may be afraid they could become a target themselves or make things worse for the victim involved already.

Tips to combat bullying

- Take complaints seriously
- When a child makes a complaint, comfort and reassure the child
- Family should remain non confrontational
- Praise the child for having the confidence to come speak with you
- Don't make assumptions, gather all the information



The graph above shows how many children are being victimized by bullying.

The graph to the left shows how many children actually reported being bullied.

Stats Canada 2011

Workplace bullying

Adult bullies, like their schoolyard counterparts, tend to be insecure people with poor or non-existent social skills and little empathy. They turn this insecurity outwards, finding satisfaction in their ability to attack and diminish the capable people around them. A workplace bully subjects the target to unjustified criticism and trivial fault-finding. In addition, he or she humiliates the target, especially in front of others, and ignores, overrules, isolates and excludes the target. If the bully is the target's superior, he or she may: set the target up for failure by setting unrealistic goals or deadlines, or denying necessary information and resources; either overload the target with work or take all work away (sometimes replacing proper work with demeaning jobs); or increase responsibility while removing authority. Regardless of specific tactics, the intimidation is driven by the bully's need to control others.

Bullied employees waste between 10 and 52 per cent of their time at work. Research shows they spend time defending themselves and networking for support, thinking about the situation, being not motivated and stressed, not to mention taking sick leave due to stress-related illnesses. Bullies poison their working environment with low morale, fear, anger, and depression. The employer pays for this in lost efficiency, absenteeism, high staff turnover, severance packages and law suits. In extreme cases, a violent incident may be the tragic outcome. The target's family and friends also suffer the results of daily stress and eventual breakdown. Marriages suffer or are destroyed under the pressure of the target's anxiety and anger. Friendships cool because the bullied employee becomes obsessive about the situation.

Online Resources

www.bullyfreealberta.ca
www.b-free.ca
www.bullying.org
www.erasebullying.ca

Workplace bullying statistic

- 81% of bullies are in a supervisory role.
- 58% of bullies are female.
- 84% of bullied employees are female.
- 21% of all workers have been targeted bullies.
- Women bullies target women employees more often than they target males.
- 82% of bullied employees lost their jobs, and 38% left voluntarily.
- Targets endure bullying for almost two years before filing a complaint.
- 17% of victims have to transfer to other jobs.
- Bullying is three times more prevalent than sexual harassment.
- As many as ten percent of suicides are related to workplace bullying.

Although it may be hard to believe sometimes, you're not alone. Others will stand with you to stop the bullying. Times have changed. There are people in your life that will understand and help, if you can tell them what you need. Bullying has a way of wearing down someone's self-esteem. Names can hurt just as much as broken bones, and teasing isn't always done in fun. You should like going to school or work every day. You should be able to get a text message or an email without feeling sick. Leaving your house in the morning shouldn't require a mental pep talk. People who are bullied suffer 24/7 - not just right when something happens to them.

Additional Resources

Suicide Crisis
1.800.448.3000
Bully Canada Helpline
1.877.352.4497

At LINKS Community Information Centre, we are committed to improving and maintaining the well-being of children and families in our community.

As parents and community members, we recognize that parenting is a difficult, yet rewarding, 24-hour a day, seven-day a week job. But parenting is also the most important job we will ever have. The Family LINK Letter has been developed to provide information on timely concerns and suggested resources. We hope you enjoy this issue.

If you would like future issues of the Family LINK Letter delivered to your home or place of work, contact LINKS at 403-501-5556.

THE SPEC ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

S P E C

It's all SPEC!

LINKS

Parent LINK Centre

Connections

Family Support