

Stand up and Stop Bullying



Bullying is defined as a conscious, willful, deliberate and repeated hostile activity marked by an imbalance of power, intent to harm, and/or a threat of aggression. When bullying goes from bad to worse, it may lead to a feeling of terror on the part of the person being bullied.

Society as a whole is impacted by bullying – even the bullies themselves. Through their own actions and the inaction of others, bullies learn that antisocial behaviour and exerting control over others (whether verbal, physical, social, or via e-mail) is acceptable and that it works.

If you think about it, most people have been a target of bullying at some point in their lives. They may have also been the person who was doing the bullying or, most certainly, seen someone being bullied. It's hurtful and harmful and is NOT a normal part of growing up.

Bullying can take different forms, including:

Verbal: taunts, name-calling and put-downs, threats and intimidation

Social: exclusion from peer groups, ganging up, or group teasing

Physical: assault

Cyber: using the computer or other technology to harass or threaten

What the Experts Say

“Bullying is the assertion of power through aggression. Its forms change with age: school playground bullying, sexual harassment, gang attacks, dating violence, assault, marital violence, child abuse, workplace harassment and elder abuse.”
(Pepler and Craig, 1997)

“Bullies do not grow out of bullying. The forms of bullying change with age. It leads to more serious problems in adult life, like sexual harassment, dating aggression and criminality.” (Dr. Wendy Craig, Queens University)

“Homophobic language is often the most common verbal form of bullying, yet it is the least responded to by students and trusted adults.” (Kristopher Wells, University of Alberta)

“Our humanity is caught up in that of all others. We are human because we belong. We are made for community, for togetherness, for family, to exist in a delicate network of interdependence... We are sisters and brothers of one another whether we like it or not, and each one of us is a precious individual.”

(Archbishop Desmond Tutu)

Bystanders have all the power

If you're the person who is watching the bullying (the bystander) you might be afraid that the bully could turn on you if you step in and say something. Realize that the bully is controlling you with your own fear, and exerting power over you with that fear. Research shows that bystanders who step in and take action can usually stop the bullying within 10 seconds (Craig and Pepler, 1997). You need to be safe though, which means that you may need to go for help instead of intervening directly...but you can make a difference.

Most kids feel uncomfortable witnessing bullying, but very few intervene.

(Craig and Pepler, 1997)

If you're standing around watching, you're part of the problem instead of the solution. You are exactly the audience that the bully wants. You—more than anyone else—have the power to help. Here's what you can do as a **bystander**:

- **Recognize bullying.** It's not just physical. It can be social, verbal and cyber as well.
- **Speak up.** Tell the bully that what they're doing is wrong and that you won't get involved. You have an opinion too, and it matters more than you think.
- **Walk away and go get help.** Standing around and watching just brings attention to the bully.
- **Encourage bystanders to get involved as a group.** Band together and walk away. Show the bully that you're not so easily entertained.
- **Help the target.** Put yourself in their shoes. Wouldn't you want someone to help you if you were being bullied?
- **Don't fight the bully.** It's not safe, and it'll just fuel the fire.

If you're a victim of bullying:

- **Stay calm.** Bullies LOVE a reaction so don't give them one.
- **Don't fight back.** You may get hurt or make the situation worse. Bullies want attention—fighting back only gives them what they want.
- **Avoid vulnerable situations.** Walk to school earlier or later in the day, or walk with brothers, sisters, neighbours or friends. Don't be alone in hallways, restrooms or empty classrooms.
- **Project confidence.** Slouching, looking at the ground or your feet, and fidgeting show that you're not sure of yourself. Hold your head up and stand up straight. Bullies pick on you because they think you're afraid.
- **Don't be afraid to tell people you trust.** Adults can help more than you think. They have resources that you don't and the benefit of experience. If at first you don't find a supportive adult, keep looking. You'll find one that will listen and help you.
- **Never give out or share personal information online,** including your name, the names of friends or family, your address, phone number and school name. Personal info also includes pictures of yourself and your email address. Never tell anyone your passwords.
- **Don't reply to messages from cyberbullies.** Even though you may really want to. Cyberbullies want to know that they're messing with your mind.
- **Don't erase or delete messages from cyberbullies.** You don't have to read it, but keep it. It's your evidence. The police and your Internet Service Provider and/or your telephone company can use these messages to help you.

Bystanders are present 85% of the time when someone is being bullied

(Craig and Pepler, 1997)