

# BULLYING IN SCHOOL

## STATISTICS AND INFORMATION.

### Bullying and girls.

It's reported that:

- Up to 50% of girls from grade 6 – year 12 report being cyber-bullied
- Older school aged girls are more likely to engage in cyber-bullying, i.e. year 10 – 12.
- Girls bullied in primary years are likely to remain victims in secondary school, in their workplace and in their personal lives.
- Girls are more covert and prefer non-physical bullying.
- Prefer mobbing, ganging up, spreading rumours, isolating and excluding others.
- Are eager for acceptance, don't like exclusion, going against a crowd or associating with someone who is picked on.
- Like to be part of a group or clique.
- Take issues personally, don't forget bad experiences which can leave scars.
- More likely to avoid becoming involved as bystanders.
- Don't talk to friends, parents or teachers about bullying and are afraid of losing access to their social media.

### Bullying and boys.

It's reported that:

- Boys prefer physical and are known to be more direct i.e. verbal bullying.
- Boy's aged 13 -16 years of age often demonstrate bullying behaviour.
- Boys who relentlessly bully are more likely to engage in other antisocial/delinquent behaviour, such as vandalism, truancy or theft.
- Are eager for acceptance.
- Don't like to risk going against a crowd or associating with someone who is a target.
- Want to be cool, popular and are more often known to be bystanders.

### Schoolyard bullying.

Bullying continues to plague Australian schoolyards daily and has now become a social issue facing 1 in 4 school children. It is reported that 162,000 children don't attend school in Australia daily because of the fear of being bullied. Bullying often begins during later years in primary school, peaks in middle years at secondary school and is often less prominent during latter years i.e. year 11 and 12.

Bullying no longer ends at the school gates and can occur anywhere, anytime as cyber bullying is now the second most common form of bullying in Australia.

Bullying occurs in our homes, workplaces, social settings, making it difficult to trace and monitor.

Often bullying behaviour is learned - there is no bullying DNA and bullies often take out their own problems on others. Bullies underestimate their actions, and some may come to believe their behaviour is acceptable and normal. Often consistent bullying behaviour is associated with other forms of anti-social behaviour or aggression.

Bullying is more likely to be learned in the home and adult bullies may have experienced the behaviour in their social settings i.e. home, schoolyard, sporting club or community group. It's the responsibility of the community, our educators, parents and community to mentor, coach, train and teach our children at an early age to be assertive, to speak up and have a zero tolerance.

## HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR CHILD.

### What Can Adults Do to Support Their Child from Bullying?

- Encourage family discussions to unearth and resolve identified issues.
- Young people who receive high parental support, report fewer bullying issues as they feel confident to discuss problems thus parents should have open dialogue and ask questions that encourage interest and discussion for instance:
  - Who did you play with today?
  - Who did you have your lunch with?
  - What is one important thing you learned today?
  - How many new friends did you make?
  - What's one positive thing you did today?
  - Is there anything I can do to help you?
  - Would you like help with your homework?
- Students should feel comfortable to admit being bullied.
- Early intervention is important, and parents may notice key symptoms or signs.
- Parents should encourage their child to take action, speak up, ask for help and discuss issues openly.
- The bully prefers the victim to keep quiet as this is often their way of maintaining control.
- Discuss your children's friendships and who they're regularly engaging with.
- Children should not be encouraged to join a group for the sake of being cool or popular but rather consolidate friendships with others they feel supportive and comfortable with emotionally and socially.

- Educate your child the values of respect, diversity, tolerance, integrity, manners, social integration, acceptance, empathy, resilience and assertiveness.

## THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER

### What Can A Teacher Do If They Witness Bullying?

- Teachers owe a duty of care to protect the safety of their students.
- Teachers and the school have a duty to respond and control the bullying behaviour if it occurs at school.
- Negligence is a failure to not take reasonable care for the safety of persons to whom a duty is owed.
- Teachers should ensure their class is “bully free” – children learn behaviour through others.
- Being exposed to aggressive behaviour (at home) or in overly strict environments makes children more prone to behave this way at school.
- Teachers should look for self-esteem issues, children with low self-esteem often bully others to feel better.
- Modelling positive examples for their students and taking immediate action should ensure consistency is maintained.
- Discussion with the victim, bystander and perpetrator should be documented, noted and reported.
- If necessary contact with the parent/s should be made to inform them of the situation or any issues that may have an impact on the situation.

### Teachers should:

- Observe and look for signs – some students aren’t vocal while others may not be reading social signs and may not be aware their behaviour is bullying and hurtful.
- Look for ripped clothing.
- Hesitation about being at school.
- Student may lack friendship groups.
- Sudden decline in results.
- Lacks self-confidence and esteem.
- Not eating at recess/lunch.
- Constant crying.
- General depression and anxiety.
- Parents complaining.
- Reassure you will help and support until action can be taken.

Teachers could ask those involved in a bullying situation:

- What happened?
- When did it happen?
- Who was involved?
- Where did it happen?
- Did anyone else see it happen?
- What type of behaviour occurred?
- Did a bystander intervene?
- Has it happened before?

### Common Courtesy and Respect

It's our responsibility to educate children at a young age that regardless of their religious, cultural, ethnic, or sexual backgrounds, we should treat each other the way we like to be treated. If we fail in our endeavours then the schoolyard bully of today could potentially be the homophobic, workplace, cyber bully of tomorrow. Bullying is no longer just a school or workplace issue. A holistic approach to responding to bullying is necessary.

