

Bullying and Cyberbullying

For Parents and Educators

What Parents/Caregivers Need to Know

Bullying affects the majority of Canadian children, at least once, throughout their childhood. For some kids, bullying is a daily reality. Bullying is about power and the abuse of power – and abuse is not a normal part of childhood. The effects of bullying are immediate and long-lasting, putting our children at risk for a number of physical, social and mental health problems. As parents, these risks should not be acceptable. Adult intervention stops bullying – it is our responsibility.

Risks for Children who bully

Children who bully are learning to use power and aggression to control and victimize other children. If their behavior is not addressed they risk growing up not knowing the difference between right and wrong. They risk high rates of delinquency, substance abuse, academic problems and a future of crime. Children who bully risk a lifetime of difficult relationships with others, including being bullied themselves.

Risks for Children who are being bullied

Children who are being bullied feel increasingly powerless and become trapped in relationships in which they are being abused. If the imbalance of power is not addressed, these children will experience social anxiety, loneliness and a sense of hopelessness. They will suffer from headaches, stomach aches and low self-esteem. They will want to avoid school, risking their academic performance and increasing their isolation. Children who are being bullied are at higher risk of depression and are more likely to contemplate, attempt or commit suicide.

The Parent's Role

Parents are responsible for creating positive environments that promote children's ability to create and maintain healthy relationships. By helping children develop the essential social skills to navigate peer conflicts and by minimizing opportunities for negative peer interactions, parents can help adjust the imbalance of power inherent in bullying relationships.

Bullying can take on many different forms as children progress from early childhood to adolescence. During this time, your child could rotate between any of three characters: the one being bullied, the one bullying and the one watching it all happen. Regardless of what role your child plays, bullying has long-term negative consequences and must be challenged.

This section offers information and practical strategies parents can use to help their children build healthy relationships and prevent violence.

Whether they are the ones being hurt, or the ones being aggressive towards others, children may find talking to adults about bullying difficult. Adult intervention is the key to bullying prevention; parents and educators alike need to be aware of the behaviors and emotional signs that children are being victimized or are using power aggressively. Because bullying is foremost a relationship problem, adults must also look for signs of bullying or victimization within the child's relationships. These signs indicate that children who are being bullied often lack relationships that encourage positive identity, power and independence and children who are bullying often experience power and aggression in their own relationships, or in those close to them.

Emotional & Behavioral Signs of Being Bullied

- Afraid to go to school or other activities
- Appears anxious or fearful
- Low self-esteem and makes negative comments
- Complains of feeling unwell (headaches and stomach aches)
- Lower interest in activities and lower performance at school
- Loses things, needs money, reports being hungry after school
- Injuries, bruising, damaged clothing or articles
- Appears unhappy, irritable
- Trouble sleeping, nightmares
- Threats to hurt themselves or others
- May appear isolated from the peer group

Relationship Signs of Being Bullied

- Parents may be overprotective, restrictive
- Siblings may bully child at home
- Lonely and isolated at school
- Few friends at school or in neighborhood
- Teachers may be unaware of child's strengths and challenges and therefore unresponsive to needs
- Few opportunities to shine and show talents at home, school or in the community (positive power)

Emotional & Behavioral Signs of Bullying Others

- Aggressive with parents, siblings, pets, and friends
- Low concern for others' feelings
- Bossy and manipulative behavior
- Unexplained objects or money
- Secretive about possessions and activities
- Holds a positive view of aggression
- Easily frustrated and quick to anger
- Does not recognize impact of his/her behavior

Relationship Signs of Bullying Others

- Parents may model use of power and aggression by yelling, hitting or rejecting child
- Parents may model use of power and aggression with each other
- Siblings may bully a child at home
- Child has friends who bully and are aggressive
- Child has trouble standing up to peer pressure
- Teachers or coaches may model use of power and aggression by yelling, excluding or rejecting
- Few opportunities to shine and show talents at home, school or in the community (positive power)

The Educator's Role

- Children spend a large portion of their day in school. Their experiences while there has a tremendous impact on their development, affecting both their physical and mental health. Bullying can happen wherever children gather – in the playground, at summer camp, on sports teams or during

organized activities – but the majority of bullying happens at school, making teachers a child’s first line of defense.

- It is absolutely critical that teachers take bullying seriously, intervening when necessary and encouraging healthy relationship skills. The bullying behavior children experience or adopt within peer relationships at school will carry over to other relationships as they move through adolescence and into adulthood.
- Teachers influence how students develop social skills, empathy, social responsibility and citizenship. Relationship skills are just as essential as knowing how to read and write. When children are taught how to recognize and manage their emotions, how to make decisions and how to behave ethically and responsibly, they are better equipped to engage in healthy relationships.

-

The information here is for youth who want to learn more about bullying! Whether you are experiencing bullying, have witnessed bullying, or have bullied someone else, this section of the website is for you.

- [Bullying information for teens](#)
- [Bullying information for kids](#)

The world is more connected than it has ever been. Skype, email, Facebook, Twitter. We can snap a picture on our phones, post a thought or share a joke with thousands of other people – all within a matter of seconds. Today’s teens, having never known a world without the Internet, are especially adept at picking up new technology and use electronic communication to create vital social networks. Problems arise when the technology that is supposed to bring people together is used instead to abuse others, pushing peers out of their social network into a world that is filled with loneliness, embarrassment, fear or shame.

What is Cyberbullying?

- Sending mean and sometimes threatening emails or text messages.
- Spreading gossip, secrets or rumors about another person that will damage that person's reputation.
- Breaking into an email account and sending hurtful materials to others under an assumed identity.
- Creating blogs or websites that have stories, cartoons, pictures or jokes ridiculing others.
- Creating polling websites where visitors are asked to rate individuals' attributes in a negative manner.
- Taking an embarrassing photo of someone with a digital camera and emailing that photo to others.
- Engaging someone in instant messaging, tricking them into revealing personal information and then forwarding that information to others.
- Using someone else's password in order to change their profile to reflect sexual, racist and other content that may offend others.
- Posting false or hurtful messages on online bulletin boards or in chat rooms.
- Deliberately excluding others from instant messaging and email contact lists.

The Impact of Cyberbullying

Unlike other forms of bullying, harassment, humiliation, intimidation and threatening of others through cyberbullying occurs 24 hours a day. It is relentless and aggressive, reaching kids at the dinner table while sitting with their parents, or in the privacy of their bedroom. There is no safe zone.

Kids who bully others through electronic means are able to hide behind the technology, remaining anonymous if they choose. Kids who cyberbully don't immediately see the reaction of their words or taunts, which might otherwise spark some empathy for the pain they have caused. Not witnessing the reaction of others makes it easier to become more aggressive and vicious.

Kids who witness cyberbullying by receiving messages or forwarding them to others don't consider themselves as being part of the problem. Forwarding hurtful messages or content can increase the number of people who witness the bullying of another by thousands, *instantly*. "Liking" a message or passing it on tells the person who is cyberbullying that his or her behavior is okay and makes it easier for that person to become more aggressive and vicious.

Kids who are cyberbullied feel an intense sense of isolation, fear, loneliness and despair. Their desperation can sometimes lead to acts of self-harm or tragically, even suicide.