

PARENT INFORMATION SHEET

www.parentline.org.au



Helping Your Child Cope with Bullying

REMEMBER:

- *Bullying cannot be tolerated.*
- *Ensure you support your child in practical ways.*
- *Give your child help, but do not make it their responsibility to end the bullying themselves.*
- *Provide emotional support.*
- *Ensure your child does not blame themselves if they are the victim.*

Teasing and bullying are common behaviours wherever people exist together. It is unlikely that any child will complete school without some experience of these interactions.

As parents, it is distressing to find that your child is being teased or bullied at school. Here are some tips to help you support your child:

TEASING

Teasing can be a 'mild' form of bullying, but if it is allowed to go too far can cause damage to a child's emotional state and self-esteem. There are a number of things that parents can do to help:

Rehearse Responses to Teasing

Teach your child not to show that he or she is upset when teased. Try to work out what upsets him the most and then get the child to imagine himself coping in that situation.

Play-acting a scene can be helpful as can explaining that a child who reacts in an upset manner is more likely to be teased. This is particularly important when it is likely that a child will be teased regularly for a specific difference e.g. wearing glasses. The parent can then 'rehearse' some responses with the child so that he has a selection of replies to teasing.

Proudly managed by



Encourage Your Child to get Adult Support

Encourage to walk away to a trusted adult when the teasing occurs. Explain that this is not being a 'wimp' a 'dobber' or a 'tattle tale' but just being sensible. Your child may need your help to identify adults they can trust.

Encourage Friendships

If possible, it is generally better to keep away from the teaser and to stay near friends. Friends can be both a support and a deterrent to teasing.

Build Resilience

Remember that the long term goal is to build confident children who can recognise teasing as an attempt to hurt them which won't really work if we can develop their resilience.

BULLYING

While it may be reasonable to expect that a child cope with a certain amount of teasing, bullying can never be seen as reasonable or acceptable. There is no doubt that some children live in enormous fear of bullies. Their thinking, behaviour and emotions may all be affected. Following are some guidelines for helping your child.

Support Your Child

Do not make your child is responsible for ending the bullying by themselves. They need the support and help of adults like you to deal with the problem.

Listen to Your Child's Concerns

Really listen to your child if they complain about being bullied and show that you are trying to understand what it must be like for them. Avoid passing judgement, interrogating, over-reacting, or offering advice too soon.

Deal With Self-Blame

It is common for children who are victims to blame themselves for the bullying. Ask them about who is to blame for the situation. If they believe it is themselves, reassure them they it is not their fault.

Show you Believe

Acknowledge that the problem is real. Many children believe that they should be able to deal with the situation themselves and feel ashamed that they were unable to do so.

An appropriate response could be: 'I know this is really happening. Bullying is not OK and we need to find a way to stop it.. I will do whatever I can to help you'.

Discuss What Your Child Has Tried

Having listened to them, ask the child what they have tried already to deal with the problems. It could be that they have tried something once which may be useful if applied consistently but they have given up too soon.

Ask your child to describe exactly what happened when they tried a particular strategy in order to determine how successful the tactic was.

Coach Your Child

Tell your child the possible reasons for the teasing or bullying. This can help them to find a way to deal with the problem.

Coaching from an adult can be helpful e.g. 'Maybe Tom does this to show the other kids how smart and tough he is and he is picking on you because it works - do you think he'd stop picking on you if you didn't seem to be upset?'

Brainstorm

Ask your child for his opinion on how best to deal with the problem. Brainstorming can be useful here and once a few options have been generated and a list made, then your child can decide what they think would be most useful.

Some options could be: ignoring the teasing, walking away from any threats, making friends with other children so they are not on their own during breaks etc.

Practise the Solutions

You can play the role of the problem child and the child should play himself. Provide feedback on the things you liked about what he did and then suggest things he might do differently. Keep practising!

Consider Approaching the School

This may not be a popular idea with your child but bullying is serious and really needs to be dealt with at school level. Many schools have bullying policies in place and are anxious to ensure that bullying is dealt with.

It is best to approach the school in a spirit of concern for your child rather than laying blame on other children. The school should be concerned by your report and look into the issue.

Foster Friendships

Encourage your child to make friends with other children at school, as children who have friends are less likely to be bullied.

You can help by inviting other children home or making it easy for your child to bring other children home. It can be helpful to enrol your child in a club or sport where they can do something they enjoy alongside other children, and build friendships.

Help Your Child “Fit In”

In the final years of primary school, and at high school there can be strong need for children not to be different, so it can help to ensure that your child is similar to other children in their clothes and accessories.

While this should obviously not cost more than the family can afford, there might be some inexpensive alternatives which would do.

Develop Self-confidence

Build up your child's self-confidence. Children with low self-esteem are often the targets for bullying and that bullying itself often results in low self-esteem.

Avoid implying that your child is bad or a failure and try to plan ahead to prevent your child getting into circumstances where failure is likely. Give lots of praise for their efforts and achievements and set up situations where your child can succeed.

Most importantly, give undivided attention regularly. This 'high quality time' helps a child to feel valued and understood and increases the chances of good communication between parent and child.