Bullying and Young People

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**INTRODUCTION**

*Bullying and Young People* is Volume 431 in the ‘Issues in Society’ series of educational resource books. The aim of this series is to offer current, diverse information about important issues in our world, from an Australian perspective.

**KEY ISSUES IN THIS TOPIC**

Bullying involves one or more people repeatedly and deliberately harming, threatening or frightening someone with words, behaviour or actions. Bullying can be insistent and insidious and have devastating impacts on not just victims, but everyone involved. Bullying is, unfortunately, common among young Australians at school, online and via mobile phones.

This book identifies the various forms of bullying, explains its causes and effects, and presents advice on school anti-bullying strategies and how to tackle cyberbullying.

Whether you are an educator, student, parent, bystander, offender or victim, there is an abundance of helpful information in this book to assist in understanding bullying and how to deal with it. Bullying is not okay, and should never be accepted as a regular part of growing up.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

Titles in the ‘Issues in Society’ series are individual resource books which provide an overview on a specific subject comprised of facts and opinions.

The information in this resource book is not from any single author, publication or organisation. The unique value of the ‘Issues in Society’ series lies in its diversity of content and perspectives.

The content comes from a wide variety of sources and includes:

- Newspaper reports and opinion pieces
- Website fact sheets
- Magazine and journal articles
- Statistics and surveys
- Government reports
- Literature from special interest groups

**CRITICAL EVALUATION**

As the information reproduced in this book is from a number of different sources, readers should always be aware of the origin of the text and whether or not the source is likely to be expressing a particular bias or agenda.

It is hoped that, as you read about the many aspects of the issues explored in this book, you will critically evaluate the information presented. In some cases, it is important that you decide whether you are being presented with facts or opinions. Does the writer give a biased or an unbiased report? If an opinion is being expressed, do you agree with the writer?

**EXPLORING ISSUES**

The ‘Exploring issues’ section at the back of this book features a range of ready-to-use worksheets relating to the articles and issues raised in this book. The activities and exercises in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond.

**FURTHER RESEARCH**

This title offers a useful starting point for those who need convenient access to information about the issues involved. However, it is only a starting point. The ‘Web links’ section at the back of this book contains a list of useful websites which you can access for more reading on the topic.
Understanding bullying – for young people

Bullying is not okay, it is not simply ‘a normal part of growing up’, and help is always available to make things better, according to headspace

Bullying involves one or more people repeatedly and deliberately doing things to make another person upset, afraid or hurt. A person or a group of people might feel that they have more power than someone else and use hurtful words or actions to bully them. Bullying is not just ‘playing around’ – it can really affect someone’s feelings and emotions.

Bullying can take place just about anywhere, including the schoolyard, classroom, on the way to/from school, online, by phone, at home and at work – basically any place that people hang out. It can be related to just about anything and can come in many forms.

For example, bullying can include physical, verbal and social aggression and it can be either face-to-face or online (cyberbullying). Cyberbullying uses electronic types of communication (e.g. text messages, email and social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram or YouTube). This type of bullying can be anonymous and posted online where it can be seen by lots of people.

Unlike face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying can go on 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so people don’t get a rest from it. Bullying can also be hidden or ‘covert’ (e.g. deliberately excluding others, sending or posting pictures, or spreading rumours about someone behind their back). This type of bullying can be much harder to see.

Unfortunately, bullying is common, with around 1 in 6 Australian school students aged 7 to 17 reporting they have been bullied at least once a week.

It’s important to remember that bullying is not okay, it is not simply ‘a normal part of growing up’, and help is always available to make things better. If you are having problems with bullying, seeking support is a good way to help you to overcome the negative effects of bullying and find ways to get the bullying to stop.

Why does bullying happen?
There are lots of reasons why someone might bully someone else. They may feel powerless themselves, have low self-esteem, and may have experienced
bullying or violence. They might use bullying to feel more powerful or 'look cool' in front of others, so they feel better about themselves. Bullying behaviour can also happen because of jealousy, lack of knowledge, fear or misunderstanding. Sometimes people bully others because they feel threatened in their social group and are trying to feel more secure. The person bullying others can have a lot of social power within their group, but may be using this in a damaging way to hurt others.

What are the effects of bullying?
Anyone who has experienced bullying knows how upsetting it is. We may feel alone, unsafe, afraid, stressed, humiliated, angry, ashamed and rejected. Often we feel that there is no escape and may do things so we can 'fit in', like changing our appearance or acting differently. Sometimes we might want to hurt others, or ourselves, because of it.

Research shows that being bullied can have serious effects on a young person's physical and mental health, and their performance at school and at work, which can continue to affect them as an adult. Experiencing bullying can also increase the risk that someone will develop depression and anxiety in the future. Bullying can be traumatic, especially when carried out by friends or peers, as these relationships are so important in a young person's life.

What you can do about bullying
If you are being bullied face-to-face, try to follow these steps:

• Stay calm. It can be really hard but learning not to feel or show that you are overwhelmed can help you feel better. It might also mean the bullying stops because you are not reacting to it. Try focusing on your breathing as a way to calm yourself.

• Don't fight back. If you fight back you can make the situation worse, get hurt or be blamed for starting the trouble.

• Try to ignore the bullying by calmly turning and walking away. If the person doing the bullying tries to stop or block you, try to be firm and clear – if you can, look them in the eye and tell them to stop.

• Try to avoid the person who is bullying you, or ask a friend to stay with you when they are around.

• Tell a trusted adult what has happened straight away. This can help you to find ways to get the bullying to stop and overcome the negative feelings that can result from the bullying as soon as possible. It can also help you to prevent more serious health issues that can result from bullying in the future.

If you are being bullied online, here are some things you can do:

• Don't respond to the people who are cyberbullying.

• Talk to your parents, carer, teacher or another trusted adult about what is happening and how you can address it.

• Talk to friends you trust to get support and advice. Let them know it is hurting or frightening you and you need their support.

• Block the person or people from being able to contact you and change your privacy settings to protect what you post on social media.

• If the bullying is persistent and ongoing, delete your current online account and start a new one. Only give your new details to a small list of trusted friends.

• Report any bullying to the site where it is occurring. Sites like Facebook have a report button you can use.

• Keep everything that is sent to you such as emails,
texts, instant messages and comments on your social media accounts. Give these to someone you trust.

• If the bullying continues and you are feeling afraid or threatened, seek help to report the bullying from your local police (Google ‘police’ along with your suburb and state for contact details) or the Children’s eSafety Commissioner. If you feel you are in immediate danger, call the police on Triple Zero (000).

Ways you can support a friend

• Ask them about their situation. Remember to be respectful, caring and understanding. They may not feel like answering and that is okay.
• Listen to them and let them know they are not alone. You don’t have to have all the answers but it may help them to know that a lot of other young people are going through this as well.
• Reassure them that things will get better. Remind them that they do not have to handle this on their own.
• Support them to seek help. Help them decide how to approach the situation. Discuss who they could talk to about the bullying, such as a trusted adult. If the bullying is at school, a trusted teacher is a good place to start.
• Make sure they are safe. Sometimes this may mean you need to take action and speak to a trusted adult, even if they don’t want you to. Let them know what you are planning to do if this is the case – they might not be happy about this initially but in the long run they will usually understand why you did it.

• Look out for their mental health. Bullying can have a serious effect on someone’s mental and physical health. If you feel like your friend is struggling because of bullying they may need professional support. Their general practitioner (GP), eheadspace or their local headspace centre is a good place to start.

Try to remember, it’s unlikely that everyone agrees with the person bullying or is going along with them if they don’t say something to support you. They might be afraid of getting involved or could be ignoring the person bullying as a way of not joining in.

Who is a bystander?

Someone who sees or knows about bullying is called a bystander. How a bystander responds to bullying can have a big impact on whether the bullying continues or not.

What can I do if I’m a bystander?

• Try not to accidentally support the bullying by looking on and doing nothing, laughing at the person being bullied or by ‘liking’ or ‘sharing’ hurtful photos or posts online.
• Be an ‘upstander’ and try to step in and speak up (in an assertive but not an aggressive way).
• Tell the person being bullied that you are there for them, as they may be feeling very alone.
• Remind the person being bullied there is always help available.

Remember: Being an upstander can be hard because there is often a fear about what might happen if you defend the person being bullied. It’s important to think carefully about your safety before you try to stop the bullying. If you cannot safely take action yourself, report it to a trusted adult and let them know you want to remain anonymous.

This content was developed in partnership with the Telethon Kids Institute. The headspace Clinical Reference Group oversees and approves clinical resources made available on this website.

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BULLYING HURTS

THE FOLLOWING ADVICE IS FROM A BROCHURE PRODUCED BY THE ALANNAH AND MADELINE FOUNDATION

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm.

It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons.

Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

Single incidents and conflicts or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Types of Bullying

- Verbal or written abuse – such as targeted name-calling or jokes, or displaying offensive posters.
- Violence – including threats of violence.
- Sexual harassment – unwelcome or unreciprocated conduct of a sexual nature, which could reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation or intimidation.
- Homophobia – and other hostile behaviour towards students relating to gender and sexuality.
- Discrimination including racial discrimination – treating people differently because of their identity.
- Cyberbullying – either online or via mobile phone.

WHAT IS NOT BULLYING?

- Mutual conflict which involves a disagreement, but not an imbalance of power. Unresolved mutual conflict can develop into bullying if one of the parties targets the other repeatedly in retaliation.
- Single-episode acts of nastiness or physical aggression, or aggression directed towards many different people.
- Social rejection or dislike is not bullying unless it involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude, or create dislike by others.

SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD MIGHT BE BEING BULLIED

It’s not always easy to tell if a young person is being bullied, as sometimes they don’t want to disclose what’s happening to them.

If you notice a significant change in behaviour, this could be cause for concern. Other signs can include changes to mood or eating and sleep patterns; withdrawal from family, social groups or friends; decline in school performance or unwillingness to attend; lost, torn or broken belongings; scratches or bruises, or implausible excuses for any of the above.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS BULLYING OTHERS

- Stay calm. Remember, the behaviour is at fault, rather than the child.
- Make sure your child knows bullying behaviour is inappropriate and why.
- Try to understand the reasons why your child has behaved in this way and look for ways to address problems.
- Encourage your child to look at it from the other’s perspective, for example, “how would you feel if ...”
- Help your child think of alternative paths of action.
- Provide appropriate boundaries for their behaviour.

THINGS YOU CAN DO IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED

1. Listen to your child’s story
   Try to listen to the whole story without interrupting. Be empathic, calm and validate what your child says. Ask what your child would like to happen, before making suggestions.

2. Have a conversation about what happened
   Try not to let your emotions get involved as it might deter your child from talking to you. You’ll help them more if you stay calm. Remind your child it’s normal
to feel hurt, it’s never OK to be bullied, and it’s NOT their fault.

3. Make a record of events
Note all incidents of bullying, including what, when and where they occurred, who was involved and if anybody witnessed the incidents.

4. Work with your child’s school to find a solution
Find out if the school is aware of the bullying and whether anything has been done to address the situation. Check your school’s bullying policy. Make an appointment to speak to your child’s teacher or wellbeing coordinator. Follow up with another meeting to ensure the situation is being addressed. Remember, they are there to help.

5. Find other ways to support your child
Coach your child to use neutral language or, if appropriate, joking language in response, and explain that it is better to stay away from unsafe situations if possible. Don’t offer to confront the person yourself.
Encourage your child to get involved in extracurricular activities such as sports and hobbies where they can spend time with other young people.

It’s not always easy to tell if a young person is being bullied, as sometimes they don’t want to disclose what’s happening to them.

BULLYING IS SERIOUS
• 27 per cent of young people report they are bullied every two weeks or more often.
• Cyberbullying happens to about one in five young Australians every few weeks or more often.
• Many young people who bully online also bully face-to-face.
• Some young people who are bullied later go on to engage in bullying others.
• Bullying can seriously damage physical, social and emotional health.
• Bullying hurts the perpetrator as well. Young people who bully over time are more likely to engage in ongoing anti-social behaviour and criminality, have issues with substance abuse, demonstrate low academic achievement and be involved in future child and spouse abuse.

WHO CAN HELP?
• Kids Helpline 1800 551 800 www.kidshelp.com.au
• Cybersafety help www.cybersmart.gov.au
• Australian Federal Police www.afp.gov.au
• ReachOut.com au.reachout.com
• Beyondblue www.beyondblue.org.au
• Bullying. No way! www.bullyingnoway.gov.au
• The Australian Psychological Society www.psychology.org.au

To download an electronic version of this brochure, visit the National Centre Against Bullying (NCAB) website: www.ncab.org.au

CONTACT US
The Alannah and Madeline Foundation is a national charity keeping children safe from violence. The Foundation was set up in memory of Alannah and Madeline Mikac, aged six and three, who along with their mother and 32 others were tragically killed at Port Arthur, Tasmania on 28 April 1996.
The Alannah and Madeline Foundation
PO Box 5192 South Melbourne Vic 3205
tel (03) 9697 0666, fax (03) 9690 5644
e-mail info@amf.org.au, web amf.org.au

FORMS OF BULLYING

Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. Bullying can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. The person or people bullying deliberately try to make the person being bullied upset, angry or afraid. Bullying in any form, for any reason, can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders.

There are three general types of bullying behaviour

Verbal bullying
Includes name-calling, rumour-spreading, teasing or insulting someone about physical characteristics such as their weight or height, or other attributes including race, sexuality, culture, or religion

Physical bullying
Includes violent actions e.g. hitting, biting, pinching, pushing, shoving, punching, slapping, strangling, kicking, tripping, bumping, throwing things at, scratching. Also includes intimidating another person, and damaging or stealing their belongings.

Social/relational bullying
Includes consistently excluding another person or sharing information or images that will have a harmful effect on the other person. Social bullying is linked to verbal bullying and usually occurs when people spread nasty rumours about others or exclude someone deliberately from the peer group.

Specific bullying behaviours
Forms of bullying behaviours include: verbal and written abuse, violence, sexual harassment, homophobia, racial discrimination and cyberbullying.

Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Bullying can be direct or indirect

Direct bullying – occurs between the people involved, whereas indirect actions involve others, such as passing on insults or spreading rumours.

Indirect bullying – mostly inflicts harm by damaging another’s social reputation, peer relationships and self-esteem.

Bullying can be overt or covert

Overt bullying – involves physical actions e.g. punching or kicking or observable verbal actions e.g. name-calling and insulting. Overt, direct, physical bullying is a common depiction of bullying (sometimes called ‘traditional bullying’).

Covert bullying – can be almost impossible for people outside the interpersonal interaction to identify. It can include using repeated hand gestures and weird or threatening looks, whispering, excluding or turning your back on a person, restricting where a person can sit and who they can talk with.

SOURCES

• Friendly Schools, Tell me more about bullying, http://friendlyschools.com.aufsp/tell-me-more-about-bullying

Forms of bullying, compiled by The Spinney Press.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bullying is when people repeatedly and intentionally use words or actions against someone or a group of people to cause distress and risk to their wellbeing. People who do it usually have more influence or power over someone else, or want to make someone else feel less powerful or helpless.

Bullying is a crucial issue for young people in Australia, with as many as 1 in 4 students reporting being bullied every few weeks or more. Young people also witness their friends being bullied or can engage in bullying behaviour themselves.

TOP INSIGHTS

Of the 1,000 14-25-year-olds surveyed, 23% had experienced bullying in the last 12 months. Many of the young people surveyed experienced bullying in multiple places. Over half (52%) of them experienced bullying at school, followed by the workplace (25.3%) and online (25.3%).

Approximately half of the young people surveyed had sought help or support for their experiences of bullying. Of the young people who sought help for bullying, 48% turned to their parents for support, 33% to their friends, 28.7% to a doctor or GP, and 24% to teachers.

The top reasons for not seeking support were stigma, embarrassment and fear of being seen as ‘weak’, feeling that they could handle it on their own, and a perception that the problem wasn’t serious enough to seek help.

Information and support on bullying is some of the most accessed content at ReachOut, with 138,000 visits to bullying-related content during 2016.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM THE LITERATURE

What is bullying?
Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological aggressive behaviour by a person or group directed towards a less powerful person or group that is intended to cause harm, distress or fear.

Prevalence of bullying
A study that sampled 20,832 Australian students aged between 8 and 14 years found that 1 in 4 students reported being bullied every few weeks or more, with the highest prevalence rates being reported by children in Year 5 (ages 10-11).

Mission Australia’s annual youth survey found that 1 in 5 young people indicated high levels of personal concern about personal safety and bullying.

The effects of bullying
Bullying is a crucial issue that has negative impacts for the person being bullied, bystanders, the person bullying others and the school as a whole. Experiencing bullying can make people feel alone, unsafe, afraid, stressed, ashamed and rejected. It can lead to school avoidance, poorer educational outcomes and reduced psychological wellbeing, as well as long-term negative mental health outcomes.

People who engage in bullying behaviour are more likely to dislike or feel disconnected from school, to get into fights and to leave school early.

ONLINE SURVEY

METHODS
In December 2016, ReachOut Australia conducted an online survey of 1,000 young people aged 14-25 years from across Australia. Participants were recruited via an online research panel. The sample was a nationally representative 50/50 split of males and females from metropolitan and regional locations.

FINDINGS

Experience of bullying
When asked, 23% of the sample...
said they had experienced bullying behaviour in the past 12 months. 

I didn’t want to talk about it ‘cause I felt like I sounded weak and I didn’t want to make the bullying worse by getting someone involved. I did not talk to anyone because I thought I was just being oversensitive and bullying in the workplace is something that everyone has to deal with.

Anonymous

Where young people experience bullying

The 229 young people who experienced bullying were asked where the bullying behaviour took place.

Over half (52%) indicated that they experienced bullying at school, followed by the workplace (25.3%) and online (25.3%). Many young people experienced bullying in multiple locations.

Sources of help for young people experiencing bullying

Young people were most likely to access support from a parent (47.8%), friend (33%), doctor or GP (28.7%), teacher (24.3%) or intimate partner (16.5%).

Other sources of support included searching online (6.1%), seeing a mental health professional (14.8%), accessing a Headspace centre (12.2%), contacting a youth or community centre (12.2%), calling a phone helpline (9.6%), and other sources as outlined below.

Reasons young people did not seek help for bullying

The young people who had not accessed support responded to an open-ended question about why they did not seek help or support for bullying. The top reasons for not seeking support were stigma, embarrassment and fear of being seen as ‘weak’, feeling that they could handle it on their own, and a perception that the problem wasn’t serious enough to seek help.

User research

In all our services at ReachOut, end users (young people) are involved as active participants and co-designers throughout the design research process. They participate in ideas generation, as well as providing opinions and feedback on existing design concepts.

Our services are continually evaluated from the perspective of whether they are relevant, meaningful and engaging to the young people and parents who stand to benefit from them.

In 2016, ReachOut conducted qualitative research to understand the experiences of young people on the topic of bullying and to inform content and advice to support them.

Methods

Diary study

This was an exploratory research project that included research with service providers, 12-14-year-olds and their parents. The research was carried out in a number of stages.

Researchers interviewed seven service providers who worked with young people (teachers, school counsellors and psychologists) and 13 parents of young people aged 12-14 years. Following this, 13 young people aged 12-14 (the children of the parents that were interviewed) participated in a diary study for seven days and carried out a number of activities while either using a video camera or journalling aspects of their lives. These young people then participated in a follow-up interview.

Co-design workshops

These workshops involved 11 young people aged 16-25 years. All the young people had experienced or witnessed bullying behaviour and
were able to reflect back on these experiences.

Participants completed an online pre-task before coming along to a two-hour workshop. The pre-task asked them to share their own experiences of bullying, what helped and hindered, and what advice they would give others in a similar situation.

Following this, participants attended a co-design workshop where they engaged in group activities and discussions about actionable and multimedia bullying content.

**FINDINGS**

**Young people’s definition and experiences of bullying**

*If I could wish for anything, I would say for less people to be bullies and more people to get along at school. So you can just not have that tension, if you walk past each other, you can say hello to them, start a conversation.*

*Anonymous*

Almost all young people are affected by bullying, experiencing it themselves, witnessing a friend being bullied or engaging in bullying behaviour. They are bullied for various reasons, and it often occurs both in person and online.

Participants reported that bullying took a variety of forms and included verbal bullying (spreading rumours and name-calling), physical bullying, exclusion and cyberbullying. It was often a combination, and not always just one or another form. (For example, bullying experienced at school was also occurring on social media.)

Participants were likely to turn to their peers and, in many cases, their parents for support. Some schools and teachers were able to intervene successfully; at other times, students felt that teachers were not very helpful.

Service providers gave examples of online bullying, including students creating social media pages to make fun of particular students and teachers, and group chats where young people ‘gang up’ on others.

*The only thing I was worried about was people teasing me because of my hair colour. In the first two or three terms, this one group of friends now that I hang out with, they play footy with me, they would call me a ginger every day. Like he would call out from across the quad and then other people would scream it out. I would be the only redhead person in the quad and everyone would point at me and scream, ginger. Anonymous*

**How bullying intersects with friendship issues**

Peer relationships are incredibly important for young people, particularly during the transition from primary to high school and in the early high-school years.

These friendships can be a source of distress, as well as a significant support. The line between friendship problems and bullying can sometimes become blurred.

*Friendship issues are massive. Peer interaction is everything. They’re mixing over the internet instead of face to face.*

*Service provider*
Friendship issues were the most common issue reported by young people, their parents and service providers. Friendship issues caused significant stress for almost all participants, particularly as they were transitioning from primary into high school.

Many participants had experienced conflict, or had lost touch with friends, formed new friendship groups, and experienced turbulence among their peers. Exclusion, or being ‘left out’, spreading rumours and being in the middle of fighting best friends were all experienced by participants.

Specific events, including birthday parties, could cause heightened stress about their peers (for example, whether they would be invited to friends’ parties, whether people would turn up to theirs, etc.).

Parents and service providers commented on the role that social media plays with these friendship issues, with young people being connected for longer periods of time through group chats, etc. A parent gave an example of friendship issues on social media, where young people would remove or exclude people from their lists of friends on Instagram.

Peer connection could also be positive for many young people, who turned to peers for support and cited best friends as some of the most influential and supportive people in their life.

Where do young people turn for help with bullying, and what stops them from getting support?

Parents and peers are the first place many young people turn to for support with bullying, followed by teachers and school (depending on the relationship). Many also seek information online. Things that stop young people asking for support include feelings of fear, anxiety and embarrassment, worrying that people won’t believe them, and not wanting to make the situation worse.

Young people aged 12-14 tend to turn to their peers for help, and at least half also turn to their parents. Some also turn to siblings and other relatives. Young people in this age group are more likely to seek help if one of their friends has already done so.

[Fourteen]-year-olds will suss us out for a period of time – e.g. one person sent her friends for 12 months before she decided to come. Service provider

There were mixed responses about whether young people would tell a teacher, depending on whether they had a pre-existing positive relationship with that teacher.

What things helped young people the most when they were being bullied?

Young people were asked about what helped them the most when they were experiencing bullying.

The most helpful advice was:

- Relationships: All participants commented on the importance of having friends from places outside of school, such as work or sport. However, they also acknowledged that it can be difficult for some, especially if they are already feeling down or isolated.
- Distraction/enjoyable activity: Watching TV, listening to music, watching or playing sport.
- Talking to a close relative or friend: ‘Talking with someone you trust about the situation helps you put your own thoughts into perspective and feel loved and heard.’
- Confronting the bully: Letting them know how it makes you feel.
- Removing yourself from the situation: One of the most helpful things that all participants found was removing themselves from the situation (for example, changing schools or workplaces). However, this isn’t realistic for all young people.

The most common unhelpful advice was to ‘ignore it’, as this is easier said than done and not particularly practical. Other unhelpful advice included writing in a diary, going for a walk and working it out for yourself.

Overall, unhelpful advice was that which was overly simplistic and didn’t consider the complexity of bullying.

REFERENCES

1. D. Cross, T. Shaw, L. Hearn, M. Epstein, H. Monks, L. Lester and L. Thomas, Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS), Child Health Promotion Research Centre,


PREVALENCE OF BULLYING

- Research generally suggests around one in four Australian school students has bullying face-to-face and one in five has experienced bullying online. Survey findings vary regarding the prevalence of bullying, in large part due to how bullying is measured differently by researchers.
- According to the *The economic cost of bullying in Australian schools* report conducted by PWC and commissioned by the Alannah and Madeline Foundation:

  Of the 3.8 million students in school every year, an estimated 910,000 students are victims of bullying by an estimated 543,000 bullying perpetrators. This translates into an estimated 45 million bullying incidents per year. The figure below provides more details on the characteristics of the victims and perpetrators of bullying.

PREVALENCE OF BULLYING IN AUSTRALIA PER YEAR

- **3.8 million students** in school
- **910,000 victims** of school bullying
- **543,000 perpetrators** of school bullying
- **445,000 female students** are victims of bullying
- **465,000 male students** are victims of bullying
- **180,000 females** admit to having bullied
- **363,000 males** admit to having bullied
- **48 incidents** on average per female victim
- **51 incidents** on average per male victim
- **Over 110 incidents instigated** on average per female perpetrator
- **Over 60 incidents instigated** on average per male perpetrator

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Alannah and Madeline Foundation and PwC, Figure 1, p.2, *The economic cost of bullying in Australian schools* (March 2018).
SIGNS OF BULLYING
ADVICE FOR PARENTS FROM THE NATIONAL CENTRE AGAINST BULLYING

No one should have to put up with bullying. It can make people feel unsafe at school and miserable when they get home.
The following will equip you with the skills to spot different signs of bullying and some of the symptoms that could come from this.

EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL SIGNS OF BULLYING
• Changes in sleep patterns
• Changes in eating patterns
• Frequent tears or anger
• Mood swings
• Feels ill in the morning
• Becomes withdrawn or starts stammering
• Becomes aggressive and unreasonable
• Refuses to talk about what is wrong
• Begins to target siblings
• Continually 'loses' money or starts stealing.

PHYSICAL SIGNS OF BULLYING
• Has unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches
• Comes home with missing or damaged belongings or clothes
• Comes home hungry.

SCHOOL SIGNS OF BULLYING
• Doesn’t want to go to school
• Changes their route to school or are frightened of walking to school
• Doesn’t want to go to school on the bus/tram/train
• School grades begin to fall.

OTHER SIGNS OF BULLYING
Sometimes signs of bullying can be far more hidden.

They can include:
• Often alone or excluded from friendship groups at school
• A frequent target for teasing, mimicking or ridicule at school
• Unable to speak up in class and appears insecure or frightened.

CHAPTER 2
Bullying at school

CHILDREN WHO BULLY AT SCHOOL

Child Family Community Australia paper written by Jodie Lodge

Key messages
- Bullying by children is a serious problem in Australia and elsewhere.
- Children who bully tend to have a wide array of conduct problems, and show high levels of depressive, aggressive and delinquent behaviour.
- Bullying by children is considered a stepping stone for criminal behaviours, increasing the risk of police contact when they become adults by more than half.
- Children who bully increase their risk of later depression by 30%.
- Bullying arises from the complexity of children’s relationships with family members, peers, and the school community and culture. Families, especially, play an important role in bullying behaviours.
- Children who bully require greater support for behaviour change through targeted approaches. Children who chronically bully may also have mental health issues that require specialist intervention.
- Importantly, children who bully are not doomed to bully all of their life. Effective and early treatment may interrupt the risk of progressing from school bullying to later adverse life outcomes.

School bullying is a serious problem worldwide. There is now strong evidence to indicate that children who bully at school are at significant risk for a range of antisocial, criminal and poor health outcomes later in life. Importantly, bullying is a behaviour often influenced by family environment. As such, working with families to interrupt the continuity from school bullying to later adverse life outcomes could be viewed as a form of early intervention for preventing crime, as well as a method of promoting health.

This paper focuses on children who bully at school, and specifically on the ways in which parenting and family functioning underpin a child’s bullying behaviour. New evidence for possible protective or intervening factors that may interrupt the developmental sequence of antisocial behaviour is summarised. Parental involvement in anti-bullying interventions is also considered. Finally, some promising approaches for working with children who bully are outlined.

This paper provides background information about children who bully. A related publication, Working With Families Whose Child is Bullying, has suggestions for practitioners and other professionals on ways to work with and support families with a child who is bullying.

UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL BULLYING

School bullying is a serious problem in many countries. Bullying is observed across gender, race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. It is prevalent in all grades and all schools – and can be mild, moderate or severe (Smith et al., 1999).

Bullying is now widely considered as a systematic abuse of power (Rigby, 2002); that is, the intention of bullying is to put the victim in distress in some way. Bullies seek power.

While definitions in the literature vary, especially with new forms of bullying being identified, the majority of definitions include all or most of the following elements:
- Aggression
- Intentional hurtfulness
- Abuse of power (asymmetric conflict), and
- Repetition.
Importantly, bullying is distinct from interpersonal conflicts or “rough play”. While disagreement, teasing and conflict are part of growing up, bullying is an extreme form of peer conflict or teasing and can be harmful, both physically and psychologically (Rigby, 2002).

Examples of school bullying include:
- Physical fighting;
- Name-calling;
- Social exclusion;
- Spreading rumours and gossip; or
- Distributing hurtful or embarrassing messages or pictures.

It can take place in face-to-face encounters, through written words (e.g. notes), or through digital media such as text messages, social media, and websites (i.e. cyberbullying; see Box 1).

**Box 1: Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying involves using technology such as mobile phones and the internet to bully or harass another person. In Australia, 10-20% of children and young people have been cyberbullied (Joint Select Committee on Cyber-Safety, 2011).

Cyberbullying can take many forms:
- Sending mean messages or threats to a person’s email account or mobile phone
- Spreading rumours online or through texts
- Posting hurtful or threatening messages on social networking sites or web pages
- Stealing a person’s account information to break into their account and send damaging messages
- Pretending to be someone else online to hurt another person
- Taking unflattering pictures of a person and spreading them through mobile phones or the internet
- Sexting, or circulating sexually suggestive pictures or messages about a person.

For more information, see Robinson (2012).

**Did you know?**

The internet and mobile phone are fast becoming one of the key tools in bullying behaviour. Parents can be held responsible for phone or computer bullying, which can include facing legal actions or losing their phone or internet accounts.

**HOW COMMON IS BULLYING?**

A survey of schools in about 40 countries found that Australian primary schools were among those with the highest reported incidence of bullying in the world (Mullis, Martin, & Foy, 2008).

Bullying has been the focus of considerable international research and policy development (Smith et al., 1999). Estimates of the prevalence of bullying vary enormously and are dependent on how bullying is assessed and who reports it. For example, teachers and parents frequently report fewer incidents of bullying behaviours than do children and young people themselves (Lodge & Baxter, 2014). In Australia, reasonable estimates can be obtained from questionnaire data. In one large national study, approximately 1 in 6 school students (between the ages of 7 and 17) reported being bullied at least once a week – with more reports by primary-school children than secondary-school students (Rigby, 1997).

The Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study reported that 1 in 4 students (in a sample of 20,832 Australian students aged between 8 and 14 years) reported being bullied every few weeks or more, with the highest prevalence rates being reported by children in Year 5 (age 10-11 years) (Cross et al., 2009).

Data drawn from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children found that almost 1 in 3 students aged 10-11 years reported being bullied or picked on by peers, with name-calling being far more common than physical bullying (Lodge & Baxter, 2013).

For children who bully others, the prevalence in child and adolescent samples is typically around 5-15% (Craig & Harel, 2004; Kärnä, Voeten, Paskiparta, & Salmivalli, 2010; Pellegrini, Bartini, & Brooks, 1999).

**WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT BULLIES?**

A significant number of young people who bully others have been bullied themselves (Solberg & Olweus, 2003).

Researchers suggest that children who bully are self-focused, highly competitive, exhibitionistic and aggressive (Salmivalli, Kaukiainen, Kaistaniemi, & Lagerspetz, 1999). Others propose that children who bully lack empathy and tend to be manipulative and self-seeking in their interpersonal relationships (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996).

While some conceptualise bullying as a continuum of behaviours (Bosworth, Espelage, & Simon, 1999), others (Salmivalli et al., 1996) suggest that children who bully can be grouped by their level of involvement:
- **Ringleaders** – organising a group of bullies and initiating the bullying;
- **Followers** – who join in the bullying once it is started; and
- **Reinforcers** – who do not actively join in, but reinforce more passively by watching and laughing or encouraging the bullying.

However, in terms of the child who bullies, the literature commonly distinguishes between pure bullies and bully victims (those children who both bully and are victims of bullying) (Wolke, Woods, Stanford, & Schulz, 2001). A number of studies have examined these two groups, and have found several important differences.

The **pure bully**:
- Appears motivated by a strong personal desire to control others and may feel empowered to bully when peer bystanders appear to support their behaviour;
- Doesn’t appear to care about fairness or another person’s feelings; and
- Has usually experienced abuse or neglect (Rigby, 2011).
The bully victim:
• Might experience depression, anger, anxiety and/or impulsivity (Haynie et al., 2001; Holt & Espelage, 2007; Swearer et al., 2001);
• Shows more negative affect and poorer self-regulation than bullies (Haynie et al., 2001; Toblin et al., 2005);
• Engages in more illegal or problematic behaviours (e.g., carrying a weapon, using alcohol, using illegal drugs, fighting, lying to parents, staying out past curfew) than pure bullies (Haynie et al., 2001; Stein et al., 2007);
• Shows lower levels of remorse when committing antisocial acts than pure bullies (Fanti et al., 2009);
• May show more deficits in problem solving, engage in external blaming, and endorse more aggressive actions (see Box 2; O’Brennan, Bradshaw, & Sawyer, 2009; Cassidy & Taylor, 2005; Haynie et al., 2001); and
• Demonstrates attitudes supportive of retaliatory behaviour (O’Brennan et al., 2009).

Box 2: Bully victims and social knowledge
A deficit in interpreting social cues is one factor suggested as being related to the tendency of bully victims to attribute blame to others (Camodeca, Goosens, Schuengel, & Tervoort, 2003); that is, bully victims are more likely to respond with blame, anger and retaliation in ambiguous social interactions when the intent of the perpetrator is unknown. These children may not consider the possibility that the perpetrator had no harmful intent (Camodeca et al., 2003).

Did you know?
• Bully victims are at increased risk for a number of problem outcomes (Haynie et al., 2001; Swearer et al., 2001).
• Bully victims are more inclined to associate with deviant peers who share similar antisocial attitudes and who engage in criminal behaviour (Haynie et al., 2001; Menesini et al., 2009).

CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND CRIMINAL OFFENDING LATER IN LIFE
Children who bully tend to have a wide array of behaviour and emotional problems. Comorbidity or the co-occurrence of bullying and other childhood disorders is common.

Children’s developmental problems
Children who bully display more conduct problems and other externalising behaviours (see Box 3; Cook et al., 2010; Salmon, James, Cassidy, & Javaloyes, 2000). They have been found to be impulsive and lack self-control (O’Brennen et al., 2009; Pontzer, 2010; Unnever & Cornell, 2009). They are more likely to be inattentive and hyperactive (Cho, Henderickson, & Mock, 2009).

Coolidg, DenBoer, and Segal (2004) found bullying behaviour to be associated with diagnoses of conduct disorder, oppositional defiant disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and depressive disorder compared to a group-matched control group. A positive attitude toward aggression, combined with impulsivity, has also been found to increase the likelihood that children will behave aggressively (Fite, Goodnight, Bates, Dodge, & Petit, 2008).

Various psychiatric correlates have also been identified. Children involved in bullying at the age of 8 or 12 years – in particular those who were bully victims – were reported to have more psychiatric symptoms and a greater chance of displaying deviant behaviour when they reached 15 years (Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Puura, 2001). Some studies indicate that anxiety and depression are equally common among bullies and victims (e.g., Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Rantanen, & Rimpelä, 2000).

Box 3: Behavioural and emotional problems associated with childhood bullying

- Bipolar disorder
- Lifelong alcohol and marijuana use
- Nicotine dependence
- Antisocial personality disorder (characterised by a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others, and a lack of empathy)
- Paranoid personality disorder (characterised by a pattern of irrational suspicion and mistrust of others, interpreting motivations as malevolent)
- Histrionic personality disorder (characterised by a pervasive pattern of attention-seeking behaviour and excessive emotions)
- Passive-aggressive disorders
- A family history of antisocial behaviour.

Source: Vaughn et al. (2010)

Criminal offending as an adult
There is now strong evidence for a substantial link between children who bully their peers and later offending and depression. Bullying others at school is a highly significant predictor of a child growing up to be a criminal offender, on average six years later in life.
Farrington, Lösel, Ttofi and Theodorakis (2012) have provided the most comprehensive and up-to-date scientific evidence on this. Using meta-analyses, the authors specifically looked at the strength of the relationship of school bullying with later offending and depression, using the findings reported from longitudinal studies (29 associated with offending and 49 associated with depression), including Australian studies. Their research suggests that bullying peers at school increases by more than half the risk of later becoming an offender. Bullying peers at school was also significantly related to later depression – increasing the risk by 30%

An additional body of research has isolated bullying as a unique risk marker of later offending. For example, the Christchurch Health and Development Study, a longitudinal New Zealand study spanning 30 years, provided evidence for direct linkages between childhood bullying and violent offending and arrest/conviction in adulthood, independent of the effects of childhood conduct and attention problems (Fergusson, Boden, & Horwood, 2014).

In an Australian longitudinal study of 650 adolescents (in Victoria), students who bullied at age 16–17 years had over four times the odds of engaging in non-violent antisocial behaviour and two times the odds of violent antisocial behaviour in young adulthood (age 19–20 years) (Hemphill, Tollit, & Herrenkohl, 2014). Similarly, longitudinal data from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, a prospective cohort study of around 4,300 young people in Scotland, found that those who engaged in persistent bullying in their early teens (ages 13, 14, 15, and 16 years) were at increased risk of being violent in later adolescence (age 17 years) (McVie, 2014).

Other prospective studies, such as the Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development (Farrington, 1993), point to inter-generational continuity – with those who had been bullies at age 14 being more likely at age 32 to have children who also bullied their peers.

**Box 4: Family factors contributing to bullying behaviours in children**

- The child is rejected or perceived negatively by one or both parents.
- There is a lack of nurturing and emotional support provided by the family.
- Often poor bonding exists between the parent and child.
- Parental disharmony and conflict is present.
- Harsh, physical punishment is used to coerce and control the child.
- The parent’s discipline is inconsistent and based on the parent’s mood rather than on the child’s behaviour.
- The family is socially isolated and lacking in outside support.

Source: Bonds & Stoker (2000)

It should be noted, however, that not all bullies come from broken homes and unhappy families; some bullies come from loving, accepting and nurturing family environments (Ball et al., 2008). There is some evidence that child characteristics make some children more prone to bullying than others. For example, Olweus (1993) suggested that temperament (an inborn personality characteristic) could account for the development of an aggressive reaction pattern in some children. That is, a child who is naturally hot-headed and short-tempered may be more likely to use violence as a way of solving problems if they are not taught otherwise by their parents and teachers. Likewise, the crucial role of peers in bullying should not be overlooked, as peers assume many roles, including being co-bullies, supporting and being an audience to bullies, and also intervening in bullying (see Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Olweus, 1999; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004).

**PARENTING TECHNIQUES**

A substantial body of research suggests that children who come from families using authoritarian parenting techniques (such as harsh and inconsistent punishment) as opposed to an authoritative (democratic) style of parenting are more likely to bully their peers (Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Espelage, Bossworth, & Simon, 2000; Shields & Cicchetti, 2001).

Others report that bullies are more likely to have experienced abusive, neglecting and/or hostile parental discipline techniques while growing up (Pontzer, 2010). Conversely, children who perceive their parents as authoritative, especially supporting their independence...
and autonomy, are less likely to engage in bullying behaviour at school (Rican, Klicperova, & Koucka, 1993).

Key dimensions of parenting techniques include:

- **Communication and supervision** – poor parent-child communication (Spriggs, Iannotti, Nansel, & Haynie, 2007) and lack of parental monitoring (Espelage et al., 2000) have been documented as increasing the risk of children bullying others. In contrast, effective parental communication with their child and parental-peer interactions (in the form of parents meeting their child’s friends) has been associated with a lower risk of children bullying others (Shetgiri, Lin, & Flores, 2012).

- **Support and involvement** – parental support (Conners-Burrow, Johnson, Whiteside-Mansell, McKelvey, & Gargus, 2009) and parental academic involvement (Hill et al., 2004) are related to lower levels of aggressive behaviour in children. Children who perceive their parents as holding positive attitudes toward them are less likely to be involved in bullying (Rican et al., 1993; Rigby, 1993). Conversely, parental feelings that their child bothers them a lot are associated with increased bullying, as is parental anger toward their child (Shetgiri et al., 2012).

**PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS**

Parent-child relationships have powerful effects on children’s emotional wellbeing (Dawson & Ashman, 2000), basic coping and problem-solving abilities, and future capacity for relationships (Lerner & Castellino, 2002). Children with a parent or caregiver who is insensitive and rejecting of their needs are more likely to demonstrate antisocial traits (e.g., lack of concern for others’ feelings) and callous or unemotional characteristics (Fite, Greening, & Stoppelbien, 2008).

Children who report that they bully their peers are more likely to:

- Have insecure relationships with their parent(s), characterised by inconsistent parental attention to their children’s needs, and parental rejection and insensitivity, and
- Have less affectionate and supportive fathers (Williams & Kennedy, 2012).

**PARENTS AS ROLE MODELS**

It is well established that children learn behaviours through observation and role modelling. Children who bully are significantly more likely than others to perceive their family as being less concerned about each other’s problems and needs (Rican, 1995). Parental divorce (Malone et al., 2004), parental stress (Fite, Greening et al., 2008) and child maltreatment (Cullerton-Sen et al., 2008) have all been linked to aggression in children. Children living in homes with violence between their parents are at a greater risk of themselves displaying violent, aggressive and bullying behaviours outside the home (see Hong and Espelage, 2012, for a review). Other research points to the level of physical aggression between siblings – the most common form of family violence – as influencing bullying behaviour (Ensor, Marks, Jacobs, & Hughes, 2010).

Parents of children who bully can be intimidating – they may become emotionally reactive when their child’s bullying behaviour is noticed, and may threaten litigation against the school (Crothers & Kolbert, 2008). Children who bully others at school frequently have parents who teach them how to retaliate and to hit back when attacked (Demaray & Malecki, 2003).

**WHAT WORKS IN BULLYING INTERVENTIONS**

**A new body of research points to the potential role of parents in buffering children against the long-term negative effects of school bullying.**

**PROTECTIVE FACTORS AGAINST BULLYING AND LATER OFFENDING**

Several protective factors against children bullying were identified in the first systematic review of prospective longitudinal studies (Ttofi, Bowes, Farrington, & Lösel, 2014). These are summarised in Box 5.

Interestingly, most factors identified with protective effects against criminal offending tended to be related to the family and school/social aspects, while most protective factors against violent offending tended to be individual. This is convincing evidence that can potentially inform future program planning – namely, parent interventions might be efficacious in interrupting the continuity from bullying in school to later criminal offending, but not to violence.

**SCHOOL ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAMS**

Children who bully require greater support for behaviour change, using selective and targeted approaches.

**Box 5: Protective effects for children who bully**

**Individual factors**

- High intelligence
- Adaptive coping
- Prosocial behaviour and attitudes

**Family factors**

- Stable (undisrupted) family
- Attached to parents
- High parental monitoring
- Consistent discipline
- High family socio-economic status
- Involvement in the family

**School/social factors**

- Good academic/school performance
- Prosocial (helpful) peers

Source: Ttofi et al. (2014)
Programs that implement a whole-school approach are widely advocated for addressing school bullying (Hanish & Guerra, 2000; Pepler, Craig, Ziegler, & Charach, 1994; Smith et al., 2008). A whole-school approach aims to improve the general school environment by training all teachers, administrators and school counsellors to model and reinforce positive behaviour and anti-bullying messages (Olweus, 1993).

Importantly, programs that include social and emotional learning – such as self-awareness, relationship skills, or responsible decision-making – have consistently yielded mixed results (Farrington & Ttofi, 2011; Lawner & Terzain, 2013). That is, the effects of such programs on bullying outcomes has varied at different times, for different subgroups, or in different evaluations.

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAMS**

*Parent training is an important part of discouraging bullying behaviours.*

Parental involvement in school anti-bullying programs varies extensively. Many efforts are focused on awareness raising, including inviting parents to a school anti-bullying conference day (Olweus, Limber, & Mihalic, 1999) and using the school newsletter to communicate with parents about bullying, school policies, and other activities and skills taught to students (Cross et al., 2003; Frey et al., 2005; Olweus et al., 1999). Parents may also be consulted and involved when the school bullying policy and programs are being created (Sharp & Thompson, 1994). Other approaches involve meeting with parents of victims and bullies when incidents occur, as a way to increase direct involvement (Bonds & Stoker, 2000; Olweus, 1993).

A meta-analysis of international bullying prevention programs revealed that parent training was a key component of bullying prevention efforts that reduced bullying and victimisation in schools (Farrington & Ttofi, 2011). Nevertheless, a lack of parent decision-making (Sherer & Nickerson, 2010; Waasdorp, Pas, O’Brennan, & Bradshaw, 2011) and parent attitudes and beliefs that, for example, bullying behaviour in their child is acceptable (Olweus & Limber, 2010) continue to be major obstacles for many home-school liaison efforts.

**LEVELS OF PREVENTIVE INTERVENTION**

*Different treatments may be required, depending on the severity of bullying and the age, social and psychological characteristics of the child (Rigby & Slee, 2008).*

While many anti-bullying programs may have positive effects on how children in general view bullying behaviours (either from being a target or passively witnessing bullying), typical anti-bullying approaches may be of limited benefit for children who bully others (Rahey & Craig, 2002). Rigby and Slee (2008) proposed that differences in the severity of bullying and the age, social and psychological characteristics of the children involved demand different types of treatment.

Taking a mental health approach may be more effective than the socialisation orientation used in many schools. It follows that children who bully require greater support for behaviour change through selective and targeted approaches, as some of the risk factors are beyond the scope of school programs (Hilton, Anggela-Cole, & Wakita, 2010).

Within the broader literature, three levels of intervention are described: universal, selective and indicated preventive interventions.

**Universal preventive interventions**

Universal preventive interventions take the broadest approach, targeting a whole population that has not been identified on the basis of individual risk (O’Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009). Universal prevention interventions might target schools or whole communities.

For example, the Friendly Schools and Families Program (Cross et al., 2003) is an Australian school-based bullying program for primary school students. This universal intervention provides a variety of whole-school strategies based on the Health Promoting Schools model to:

- Increase understanding and awareness of bullying
- Increase communication about bullying
- Promote adaptive responses to bullying
- Promote peer and adult support for students who are bullied, and
- Promote peer as well as adult discouragement of bullying behaviour.

The program is designed to help all members of the school community, including teachers, school administrators, students and parents. For further information, see www.friendlyschools.com.au.
Selective preventive interventions

Selective preventive interventions target individuals or a population subgroup whose risk of developing bullying behaviours or associated problems is significantly higher than average. Selective interventions target biological, psychological or social risk factors that are more prominent among high-risk groups than among the wider population (O’Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009). In practice, selective programs in schools target children who have already been identified as a bully and are considered useful methods of intervention in cases of non-severe bullying.

For example, the Method of Shared Concern (Pikas, 1989) requires the practitioner to work on the problem with the “suspected” bullies, first as individuals, and then in a group. While this approach has seldom been evaluated, in Australia it has been reported to have had positive outcomes with 15 cases that were addressed (at 17 schools) (Rigby & Griffiths, 2010). Another program, the Support Group Method (formerly the No Blame Approach; Mains & Robinson, 1998) involves developing a shared responsibility between the bullies and a group of peers who are convened to help resolve the problem. In this, the practitioner plays a facilitative role. An 80% success rate has been claimed with this approach (Young & Holdorf, 2003).

Indicated preventive interventions

Indicated preventive interventions target high-risk individuals who engage in bullying or are identified as experiencing early signs of or symptoms foreshadowing mental, emotional or behavioural disorders. Such interventions focus on the immediate risk and protective factors present in the individual’s environment (O’Connell, Boat, & Warner, 2009). Evaluations of indicated preventive interventions aimed at improving the mental health of children and adolescents suggest such secondary prevention programs significantly reduce problems and significantly increase competencies (Durlak & Wells, 1998). In relation to bullying, indicated intervention is a new but promising area.

An example of such a program is the Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT), a family therapy program for children at risk for developing behavioural problems. The primary emphasis is on identifying and modifying maladaptive patterns of family interaction that are linked to the child’s symptoms. Evaluations suggest it is an effective method for reducing short-term anger and bullying behaviour (see the related publication: Working With Families Whose Child is Bullying: An Evidence-Based Guide for Practitioners).

PROMISING APPROACHES FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN WHO BULLY

It is important to note that only a limited number of evidence-based anti-bullying programs exist. Evidence-based prevention refers to a set of prevention activities that evaluation research has shown to be effective. Some of these prevention activities help individuals develop the intentions and skills to act in a healthy manner. Others focus on creating an environment that supports healthy behaviour.

In a review of intervention approaches that have been rigorously evaluated (see Lawner & Terzian, 2013), certain approaches may be more effective for working with children who bully.1

Those identified as being more successful include:

- **Positive Action** – a school-based program designed to reduce behaviour problems;
- **Resolve It, Solve It** – a school- and community-based media campaign to reduce violence and aggression;
- **Success in Stages: Build Respect, Stop Bullying** – an interactive computer program to decrease and prevent bullying; and
- **Brief Strategic Family Therapy** – a family therapy program for children at risk for developing behavioural problems (see the related publication: Working With Families Whose Child is Bullying: An Evidence-Based Guide for Practitioners).

Summary

This paper highlights the strong association of school bullying with criminal and poor health outcomes in adult life. Furthermore, it features a new body of research that points to the potential role of parents in buffering children who bully against offending behaviour in later life. This is convincing evidence for the use of indicated preventive interventions that involve working with families, and offers a new and promising early intervention approach for preventing crime, promoting health and addressing school bullying. This is the focus of a related practitioner guide, Working With Families Whose Child is Bullying, which has suggestions for practitioners and other professionals on ways to work with and support families with a child who is bullying.

1. The effectiveness of the programs was assessed on physical and verbal behaviours and did not include social or relational bullying.

REFERENCES

For a full list of references for this publication, go to: https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/children-who-bully-school/export

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SCHOOL RESPONSES TO BULLYING

There is an increasing awareness of the prevalence and impacts of bullying within schools and in Australian society in general. Anti-bullying approaches are now part of a school’s legal and moral duty of care towards staff and students alike.

According to the National Centre Against Bullying¹, “schools implement a wide variety of anti-bullying programs. These are most effective when part of a multi-faceted, systematic, whole-of-school approach, owned by the entire school community and continually revisited and renewed. Nevertheless, any work of this kind requires persistent effort and can never be regarded as complete.”

In order to deal with bullying at schools, it is important to determine whether the primary purpose is preventing or responding to bullying. According to the Bullying. No Way! website, there are two approaches²:

**Prevention approaches**

These involve proactive work to challenge cultural norms and social prejudices with the whole school community. They focus on establishing a positive school climate and a safe environment for everyone. Preventative work is ongoing and sustained, built into the school values and mission, and involves everyone in the school community. Whole-school frameworks are generally preventative approaches.

**Response approaches**

These involve positive ways to intervene to stop bullying once it has happened, supporting the students involved, repairing the harm and restoring relationships and the environment. Some approaches used in response to bullying also aim to prevent bullying from occurring again through the repair of relationships and improvement of understanding and knowledge.

The following six methods of intervention have been identified by leading bullying researcher Dr Ken Rigby³ to address cases of bullying in schools. Each intervention method has its own pros and cons, however all approaches rely on a whole-school approach and an informed understanding of the reasons why each may be used in particular circumstances.

According to the Victorian Department of Education and Training⁴, “it is important to recognise that these methods are NOT alternatives to taking considered proactive steps to prevent bullying from occurring, such as good classroom management, class discussions of bullying, social skills training, promoting positive bystander behaviour, developing peer support. Such steps can reduce the number of cases that occur.”

For more detailed information on the following six bullying intervention approaches, refer to this Bully Stoppers page on the Victorian Department of Education and Training website: www.education.vic.gov.au/about/pr.../teach overview.aspx

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¹ National Centre Against Bullying
² Bullying. No Way!
³ Dr Ken Rigby
⁴ Victorian Department of Education and Training
THE 6 METHODS OF INTERVENTION

Traditional disciplinary approach
Involves the development and communication of clear rules about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and reasonable consequences for breaking the rules. These consequences generally involve direct sanctions as a punishment against the student who is responsible for the bullying behaviour. In this approach, school staff make it clear that bullying is unacceptable, create rules and enforce consequences as a deterrence.

Strengthening the target
This involves systematically supporting the victim to deal more effectively with the person or persons who seek to bully him or her, thereby empowering the student and reducing the school’s involvement. This approach is most often used in low level cases where it is felt safe enough for the target to develop coping skills.

Mediation
Process in which students in conflict (including conflicts involving a bully and victim), are invited (not compelled) to take part in a session with a mediator, staff member or peer mediator, to help resolve their differences.

Support group method
Process in which the offending student attends a meeting together with the victim, at which the offender is required to reflect upon the harm that has been done, experience remorse and act restoratively towards the person/s offended.

Restorative practice
All parties take part in a meeting where offenders acknowledge the harm they have caused and then act restoratively to repair relationships, either through an apology and/or acts of compensation. This approach is commonly taken where the perpetrator is able to be sincerely remorseful and both parties can agree to work together to prevent further bullying, with the outcome being monitored.

Method of shared concern
Non-punitive multi-stage strategy used with groups of students who are suspected of bullying. Suspected bullies are first interviewed individually. The practitioner shares a concern for the bullied student and invites each of them to say what they will do to help. Once it has been established that helpful actions have taken place, the suspected bullies meet with the practitioner, plan what they propose to do next, and subsequently meet with the victim to resolve the problem.

FOOTNOTES
2. Bullying. No Way!, How approaches can be designed, https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/PreventingBullying/WhatWorks/Pages/How-approaches-can-be-designed.aspx

School responses to bullying, compiled by The Spinney Press.
‘I DON’T WANT TO BE TEASED’
– why bullied children are reluctant to seek help from teachers

Students are more reluctant to seek help from teachers than from friends or parents, writes anti-bullying expert Ken Rigby

In Australia approximately one student in five is bullied at school every few weeks or more often. Many of these students suffer serious emotional and psychological harm, such as persistent anxiety, depression and suicidal thinking, and are unable to concentrate on their school work. It is clear they need help.

Teachers routinely inform students that if they are being bullied at school they should seek help from a trusted adult, such as a teacher or school counsellor.

A new two-part ABC documentary, Bullied addresses the question of how victimised students can receive help from their school.

Part one of the documentary describes the intense suffering of an adolescent victim and the frustration and anguish of his family in finding that the school is not taking any effective action to deal with the case. They do however allow the documentary makers to gather help and support for the unfortunate student through a group meeting with his peers.

This approach proves to be successful. But why did the school fail to provide such help? One possibility is that students are reluctant to go to teachers for help. Another is that teachers lack the skill to stop the bullying from going on.

Students seek help from peers over teachers

Some new research1, based on an online survey of 1,688 students in Years 5 to 10, provides data on how many bullied students actually do seek help – and from whom.

Of the 631 students who reported that they had been bullied at one time or another at school, over half (53%) said they sought help from other students in the first instance. Slightly fewer (51%) went to their parents. But what is revealing is that only 38% said they would go to teachers or counsellors for help.

Students appear far more reluctant to seek help from teachers than from other people.

Given that school authorities are strategically placed to observe what happens between their students, and to work with students who are being bullied – including perpetrators, victims, bystanders and others – it is surprising that they are not the first port of call for distressed students.

Why don’t students want to approach teachers?
The survey provided some explanations from students who were bullied and did not seek help from teachers.

Here’s a summary of the themes that emerged, and a few quotes from the students themselves:

1. Uncertainty about the role of teachers in addressing cases of bullying.
“lt is none of their business.” “They are here to teach us.”

2. Bullying is a personal matter.
“I don’t feel comfortable telling someone I don’t really know.”
“There is no one in the school I can trust.”

3. Lack of belief that they would take the bullying seriously.
“They might laugh. I have seen them brush off students’ problems.”

“I don’t want to be teased because I told a teacher.”

5. Not wishing to get others into trouble.
“The people (the bullies) were my friends and I don’t want to lose them.”

6. A sense of personal inadequacy.
“I would feel weak and embarrassed.”

Approximately 1 student in 5 is bullied at school every few weeks or more often. Many of these students suffer serious emotional and psychological harm, such as persistent anxiety, depression and suicidal thinking, and are unable to concentrate on their school work. It is clear they need help.
7. Having a preferred option.
   “I can get help from friends and parents.”

So should teachers intervene to stop bullying? According to the survey, telling a teacher produced no better outcomes than telling a friend or a parent.

In approximately 70% of cases – where students sought help from a teacher – the bullying continued, though in some cases at a reduced rate. According to students, telling a parent or a friend has fewer potential drawbacks.

These findings point to the inadequacy of pre-service and in-service training provided to teachers to counter bullying.

Research shows that teachers often rely too heavily on:
- Anti-bullying policies that are not adequately implemented
- The teaching of social and emotional skills to all students, a desirable initiative but hardly the solution for what to do when bullying actually occurs
- The use of discredited methods of intervention, such as the use of punishment, sometimes repackaged as “consequences”.

As revealed by the Australian study, teachers are generally unacquainted with more effective problem-solving approaches to bullying which involve working closely with perpetrators, victims and other students.

A few approaches that could work for teachers

Although restorative practices have in recent years been increasingly adopted and employed in some schools, other demonstrably effective intervention methods such as the Support Group Method and the Method of Shared Concern are virtually unknown.

Rather than just passing on tips to teachers on how to handle cases of bullying, systematic teacher education is needed to inform teachers of the different intervention methods now available and how each can be effectively applied.

Recognising that bullying is a problem of dysfunctional relationships is the starting point.

The solution, often overlooked, lies in helping students themselves to think about the difficulties they may encounter in relating to each other and especially the agony experienced by victims of bullying – and then to reach a collective agreement on how to act to ensure that no one is harmed.

**Trust issues**

There remains the problem of students often finding it inappropriate, futile or counterproductive in telling a teacher or counsellor. This is due, in part, to the quality of the relationships that students typically have with school staff, especially in secondary schools.

Students commonly report it is hard for them to find teachers they can trust and with whom they can share their personal concerns. Arguably relationships would improve if more teachers were seen as actually having the skills to provide effective help.

Teachers almost unanimously told us that the training they have received to address bullying was far from adequate, especially in providing little or no help in how to handle actual cases.

Students commonly report it is hard for them to find teachers they can trust and with whom they can share their personal concerns. Arguably relationships would improve if more teachers were seen as actually having the skills to provide effective help.

But cases of bullying are often far from easy to resolve. They may have their roots in the darker side of human nature and frustrations experienced in the home and in the wider community.

What teachers can do will always be limited – but can be far less limited than is the case at present.

**ENDNOTE**


**DISCLOSURE STATEMENT**

Kenneth Rigby receives funding from the Australian Department of Education and Training.

Kenneth Rigby is Adjunct Professor, University of South Australia.

Helping your child who is being bullied

Advice for parents by psychologist Michelle Roberts from a fact sheet first published by the Trauma and Grief Network

Australian Research has indicated that 10% of children report being bullied most days. Your child is not the only one!

When your child is bullied, all of your protective parenting and caring skills come to the fore. You want to stop the bully and to protect your child.

Helping children protect themselves from bullying is more likely to be successful than attempts to stop the bullies.

WHAT IS BULLYING?
“Bullying is a form of aggression involving the abuse of power in relationships”.¹ It is recognised globally as a complex and serious problem. It can be seen as the “abuse of power through unjustified and repeated acts of aggressive behaviour intended to inflict harm”.²

Bullying has the potential to result in severe psychological, social and mental health problems in both the bullied and the bully.³

There are different types of bullying behaviours:
• Covert bullying is not always obvious. It is sometimes referred to as “hidden bullying.” It might include behaviours such as deliberately leaving a child out of an activity (exclusion), or it can include the spreading of gossip, hurtful stories, rumours or enforcing social isolation and may include cyberbullying”. Social exclusion has been demonstrated to be the worst form of bullying.⁴
• Overt bullying is often easier to see and includes direct aggression with intent to distress, upset and hurt. It includes behaviours such as verbal abuse, making fun of someone or belittling, threats, physical or verbal attacks, personal insults and humiliation.

Research indicates that covert bullying may result in more severe psychological, social and mental health problems that overt bullying.⁵

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP YOUR CHILD

Believe
The first step to helping your child is to believe them when they tell you that they are being bullied. We know that children are less likely to tell adults they are being bullied because they don’t believe adults can make a difference⁶ or that they will be believed or that telling someone will make the bullying worse.

Listen
To what is happening and when it is happening. Listen when your child tells you about bullying, if they say it’s happening, they probably are experiencing bullying. Being bullied is often a personal view of what the situation is, it is something that makes your child feel sad, frightened and left out.

Act quickly
Let your child know that you understand how distressing this is to them. Helping your child with strategies to cope with the bullying behaviour and doing this immediately is more likely to stop the bullying and to help your child before the bullying causes emotional difficulties.

WHAT WORKS?
1. Using a problem-solving approach.
2. Ask your child what they have tried so far. Look at these strategies and identify those that have been successful.
3. Work on adding more tools for social survival, such as practising saying “leave me alone” calmly and walking away, looking at ways to avoid situations where the bullying is likely to occur and making friends that are supportive.
4. Mediation by an adult not related to either child.
5. Making the problem one of shared concern and shared responsibility for a solution, enlisting the help of friends, teachers and peers.
6. Taking a ‘no blame approach’.
7. Direct teaching of social survival skills.
THE BYSTANDER ROLE

The bullied/bully relationship occurs within the wider friendship or peer group. The broader peer group is powerful in allowing bullying to happen or putting a stop to it. There is evidence that older adolescents are more influenced by their peer group than their own behaviour. Encouraging all children to speak up when they witness bullying is a powerful bully stopping strategy.

SHARED CONCERN

Stopping bullying involves individuals, peers, parents and teachers working together. Encourage your child to let you inform their school of the problem.

WHAT IS LESS SUCCESSFUL?

Punishing the bully. Children who are being bullied are more motivated to fix the problem than the children who are bullying.

SCHOOL

May fail to recognise bullying, it can be difficult to detect. If your child is being bullied at school, make sure that their teacher and the principal are aware. Ask for a meeting to plan together what the strategies for ending the bullying will be. Remember, this is a ‘shared concern’.

Resources

- National Centre Against Bullying
  www.ncab.org.au
- Raising Children Network
  www.raisingchildren.net.au

ENDNOTES

5. Australian covert bullying prevalence survey.
6. McGrath, H & Noble, T. Bullying Solutions. Evidence-Based approaches to bullying in Australian schools. Pearson Education.

Michelle Roberts is a School Psychologist, Child, Adolescent and Schools Trauma and Disaster consultant in Victoria.
WHAT SHOULD PARENTS DO IF THEIR CHILD IS BULLIED AT SCHOOL?

If a child is being bullied at school should parents intervene? Talking to the school, the other parents, the other child are all options, but is it better to let your children fend for themselves, asks Karyn Healy

Having your child bullied at school is one of the greatest fears of parents – and research shows this fear is well-founded. School bullying has been described as the single most important threat to the mental health of children and adolescents.

Well-controlled studies show that being bullied in primary school increases the risk of serious mental health problems into adolescence and ongoing depression leading well into adulthood.

DAMNED IF YOU DO, DAMNED IF YOU DON'T?

So when parents find out their child is being bullied, they are right to be concerned. But what exactly should they do about it? Should they tell the school, approach the parents of the other child, or just let their child deal with it?

It can be difficult to weigh up the sometimes conflicting advice given to parents. Parents desperately want to help their child, but if they jump in too quickly to protect their child they can be labelled as over-protective or over-indulgent.

School authorities often recommend parents leave the school to handle it. This is fine if the school is successful in stopping the bullying. However, this is not always the case. Most school programs to address bullying make only modest improvements, leaving some children to continue to be bullied.

This could be why we often hear of parents taking matters into their own hands. This can lead to uncertain legal ground if parents reprimand other children and to ugly arguments between parents. Clearly none of these approaches is ideal.

NEW RESEARCH ON HOW PARENTS CAN HELP THEIR CHILDREN

We now know that parenting specifically affects children's risk of being bullied at school. A meta-analysis in 2013 concluded that warm, supportive parenting is a protective factor and negative parenting is a risk factor for children being bullied at school.

Another large well-controlled study from the UK showed that having warm supportive family relationships also helps buffer children against the adverse emotional consequences of being bullied. This means that when children feel supported by their parents, they are less likely to attract bullying. They also have someone to turn to at home when things are not going well at school, which helps them cope.

Research has identified two additional ways parents can make a positive difference to children's relationships with peers: parents can coach children in social skills and they can actively support their children's friendships.

Parents see children every day so are in an ideal position to help children find ways to deal with peer problems. Parents can improve children's social skills, which can help children become better accepted by peers, and support children's friendships by organising play-dates and other activities that help children develop close friendships with children at school. Having good friends at school helps protect children against bullying.

A program at the University of Queensland called “Resilience Triple P” teaches parents to support their child, support their child’s friendships, coach their child in social and emotional skills, and communicate effectively with the school and other adults. A total of 111 families were randomly allocated to either receiving the program or not, and monitored over nine months. Schools of both intervention and control families were informed that parents had a concern about bullying.

Compared with families in the control condition, children whose families received Resilience Triple P showed greater reductions in victimisation, distress and depression. Teachers reported children became better accepted by peers. Children reported liking school more.

Resilience Triple P involves parents in helping children deal effectively with peer problems. However, if the child’s efforts do not work, or if the child is in danger, the parents step up as advocates for their children.

School authorities often recommend parents leave the school to handle it. This is fine if the school is successful in stopping the bullying. However, this is not always the case.
It is important when approaching the school for parents to plan carefully what they want to say. Schools can easily become defensive about the issue of bullying.

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP CHILDREN COPE

If your child talks to you about problems with other children at school, this is good news. Very often children don’t tell anyone about being bullied; they might feel ashamed or worried how their parents will respond. It is important that when children approach parents with a problem, parents stop and listen. If parents become emotional or over-react, this may discourage children from confiding further.

If a child is not communicating, there are signs that indicate they could be being bullied at school. These signs include trying to avoid school or social situations, greater sensitivity and mood swings, changes in eating and sleeping, and unexplained physical symptoms. If children are demonstrating any of these patterns, parents could gently ask children how things are going in various areas of their lives.

Whether or not a child is being bullied, it is important for parents to support their children's friendships, as an investment in children's ongoing mental health and wellbeing. This means making time for children to catch up with friends and getting to know other parents as a way of supporting your child’s relationships.

When children are upset by other children's behaviour, parents can provide a valuable sounding board. They can help children interpret situations and decide what to do.

Very often problems can be solved if the child can stand up for themselves calmly. Parents can help children practise how to do this. Parents might also help children learn how to ignore minor issues, strengthen friendships with kind children, resolve ongoing conflicts and get help from a teacher when needed.

APPROACHING THE SCHOOL AND OTHER ADULTS

If a child is unable to deal with a distressing issue by themselves, it is important that the parent communicates for the child. If the child is experiencing problems at school, parents should first contact the child’s school.

This would involve approaching the child’s teacher if the issue is with another child in the class, or perhaps the school management if the issue is broader.

It is important when approaching the school for parents to plan carefully what they want to say. Schools can easily become defensive about the issue of bullying. It is important parents stay calm and explain exactly what happened and how their child was affected. The parent can request help in improving the situation and then check how this goes over time.

There are other adults who may be supervising children when bullying occurs. Parents may need to have conversations with out-of-school-hours care staff, sporting coaches, scout leaders and dance teachers.

The situation is a bit more sensitive if the problems occur when your child is being supervised by friends or family members. The same principles apply though – you need to calmly request the other adult’s help without blaming them or putting their child down. Sometimes this can start by acknowledging the children are having problems – and suggesting you could work together to help them.

Generally it is a risky move to approach parents of another child at school bullying your child, if you don’t already have a good relationship with them. Your approach is unlikely to improve things and may result in heated conflict. This may worsen the relationship between the children, making it more difficult for the school to resolve the issue.

WHAT IF NOTHING WORKS?

Sometimes, despite parents’ best efforts to support their child and seek help from the school, the bullying continues. Ongoing bullying poses an unacceptable risk to any child. If your child is experiencing ongoing distress from bullying, and the school doesn’t address it despite your requests, consider other options – including going to higher education authorities and reporting cases of physical assault or cyber-bullying to police.

Parents should also consider whether another school might provide a better option for their child, but it’s important to involve the child in this decision.

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Karyn L Healy is co-author of Resilience Triple P. Resilience Triple P and all Triple P programs are owned by the University of Queensland. The University has licensed Triple P International Pty Ltd to publish and disseminate Triple P programs worldwide. Royalties stemming from published Triple P resources are distributed to the Parenting and Family Support Centre; School of Psychology; Faculty of Health and Behavioural Sciences; and contributory authors. No author has any share or ownership in Triple P International Pty Ltd.
DOES YOUR CHILD BULLY OTHERS?

TEN POSITIVE ACTIONS FOR PARENTS

Jodie Lodge offers some tips in this fact sheet from the Australian Institute of Family Studies

So your child is bullying others? While it is a normal reaction to feel shocked, worried, fearful or even to deny or defend the bullying – try to listen to what others are saying about your child.

Children can’t learn without making mistakes. It’s how we help them deal with those mistakes that matters.

Bullying is intended to hurt, frighten or threaten someone, and can continue over time. It might be physical, or involve teasing somebody, or leaving that person out of a group or activity. It can be face-to-face, or might happen by mobile phone or via the internet. Bullying is a way of having power over others and not simply random childhood meanness.

As a parent, you need to step in.

Did you know?
Children who bully are more likely to:
• Do poorly in school
• Turn to violence as a way to deal with problems
• Damage property or steal
• Abuse drugs or alcohol
• Get in trouble with the law.

Here are 10 positive actions you can take
• Stay calm: Avoid blame and focus on potential solutions.
• Talk with your child: Let them know firmly that bullying is unacceptable, and that it must stop.
• Ask why: Try to find out if there is something troubling your child either at school or at home.
• Get on board: Take it seriously. Support the school policy.
• Set clear, but reasonable rules: Reward good behaviour and follow through with consequences.
• Monitor your child: Supervise your child and give them immediate feedback on their progress.
• Create a respectful home: Encourage respectful and kind actions between family members.
• Spend time with your child: Nurture your relationship and model positive ways of dealing with conflict.
• Make a commitment: Support your child’s efforts to improve.
• Get help: If things don’t improve, it’s a good idea to seek professional advice.

Remember, the times when our children challenge us are the times when they need our respect and support the most.

Help lines and other support
• Parent Helpline 1300 364 100
• Youth Healthline 1300 13 17 19
• Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800
• Find a psychologist service

Search for a psychologist in your area (www.psychology.org.au/findapsychologist) or phone 1800 333 497.

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RESPOND TO BULLYING

Bystanders should become upstanders to stop bullying, according to this advice from Bully Zero Australia Foundation

The power of one person cannot be underestimated and could be the difference between how the victim perceives the situation and the actual reality of the manageable behaviour. The largest most powerful group in a bullying situation is the bystander, yet 70% of Australians do nothing to help.

Those who stand by and watch are a part of the bullying.

**How can we manage this behaviour?**

By being an upstander, not the bystander!

The largest and most powerful group in a bullying situation is the bystander, but the majority of onlookers remain as bystanders, failing to stand up, support or assist the victim.

Bullying can end in under 10 seconds if a bystander intervenes.

Often in bullying situations the bystander knows the behaviour is unacceptable and inappropriate but unless they are asked for help or made to feel they have a responsibility to act, they may silently collude or walk away.

**Why don’t bystanders intervene?**

- Don’t know what to do.
- Are scared.
- Afraid of being the next victim.
- Ignoring the situation because they believe it’s not their business.
- Don’t know the victim or perpetrator.
- No further action was taken when they last complained.

**Bystanders could be the cause as some:**

- Instigate the bullying by prodding the bully to begin.
- Join in the bullying once it’s begun.
- Follow and actively participate but don’t initiate, which encourages the bullying behaviour.
- Supportive/passive bullies don’t join in but actively and openly support the bullying by watching, laughing, cheering or making comments that further stimulate and encourage the bully, not realising they are contributing to the problem.
- Passive bystanders provide the audience with what the bully thrives on, the silent acceptance allowing them to continue the hurtful behaviour.
- Disengaged onlookers don’t get involved, don’t take a stand, don’t participate actively – say it’s none of their business and wait until someone else takes action.
- Passive defenders dislike the bullying and think they should help but do nothing.
- The defender dislikes the bullying and will try to help by rendering assistance.
- Observers see the bullying and may feel they’re in an unsafe environment.

Bystanders that don’t intervene or report bullying often suffer negative consequences themselves.

**Some may experience:**

- Pressure to participate.
- Anxiety about speaking to anyone.
- Powerlessness to stop the bullying.
- Fear of associating with the victim or bully.
- Guilt for not having defended the victim.

**The helpful bystander could:**

- Directly intervene by discouraging the bully, defend the victim or redirect the situation away from the bullying.
- Seek/get help and rally support from peers to stand up against and report the bullying behaviour.
- Approach the victim to let them know they’re aware of the behaviour and that it’s not acceptable. Support the victim by displaying empathy and validation of their feelings.
• Be a catalyst, speak up for the victim by communicating assertive messages.
• Inform the victim that they’re not alone – in most cases, bullied individuals have overwhelming feelings of isolation, alienation or loneliness.

**How to become an upstander**

Bullies prefer an audience as this provides them with attention, which they crave. Attention empowers the bully, making them feel less guilty about their actions.

**How to become the upstander:**
• Step in, tell the bully that their behaviour is unacceptable.
• Report their behaviour and actions to a teacher, parent, HR, employer, colleague, union or trusted adult.
• Change the culture by standing up against the bully with your peers in a reasonable, non-aggressive manner. The power of the bully needs to be taken away thereby disempowering them of their inappropriate behaviour.
• Be friendly and approachable to the victim. Providing attention and expressing support, this is the behaviour a helpful upstander demonstrates.
• Redirect the situation away from the bullying by focusing on other activities.

See it, hear it, then STOP IT! Preventing bullying is everyone’s responsibility and business, we all have a responsibility to act to put a STOP to the behaviour!

**Are you the bully? What can you do?**
• Admitting – that your behaviour is inappropriate and hurtful is paramount.
• Take responsibility for your actions and thoughts – acknowledge that your actions and behaviour are not funny and can be viewed as damaging.
• Talk to your friend, teacher, school or contact Bully Zero Australia Foundation about what is/isn’t bullying or appropriate behaviour.

• Stop and think – apologise to the victim and let them know you acknowledge your wrongdoing and/or unacceptable behaviour and that it will not continue.
• Openly talk – to a trusted friend, teacher, colleague, adult or the Foundation for advice, guidance and support.

**Why are you behaving this way?**

Ask yourself:
• Was I angry?
• Do I want power, control, authority and attention? If so, do I deserve it and why?
• To amuse yourself and others?
• Pre-emption against bullying toward yourself?
• Is what I’m doing okay and normal?
• Is it because I have experienced bullying, violence at home, school and this is my opportunity for venting or revenge. “Others have and continue to do it too.”
• Am I feeling unworthy or unhappy – happy people don’t bully others.
• Do I envy others and am I jealous of them?
• Why am I behaving as though I’m self-catered and don’t care for others?
• I’m not sure if my behaviour is harmful.
• I was just joking, I really didn’t mean it.
• I know my behaviour is wrong but unless I’m asked to stop – I will probably continue.

Bullies often find it difficult to empathise, sympathise and understand what the victim is feeling. Bullies don’t care and argue that they didn’t do anything.

Think like a bullied individual – empathise, put yourself in the shoes of the victim and imagine what they would be feeling.

**Bullied victims may feel:**
• Scared, afraid, sad, worried, anxious, unhappy, emotionally hurt, confused, hopeless, upset, ashamed, disconnected, socially isolated/alone, quiet and bad tempered.
• Low morale, self-esteem and loss of self-confidence.
• Withdrawn and not wanting to attend school or work.
• Poor concentration, irritated, moody, depressed, miserable, angry, physically weak, powerless and guilty.
• Can have severe physical and mental health issues and outcomes.
• Alone with no friends or support around them.
• Ashamed or embarrassed about the way they look and feel.
• Confused about not knowing if it’s their fault for being physically, racially, sexually and or emotionally different.
• Reserved as they don’t want...
others to know, fearing revenge.

• That there is something wrong with them and everyone else is perfect.

**Difference is a beautiful thing**

No two hands are the same; we are different in physical appearance, personality, religion, spiritual beliefs, cultural background, the gender we are attracted to and our physical capabilities which may be enhanced or restricted due to certain personal conditions.

At Bully Zero Australia Foundation we believe no one deserves to be treated differently.

**Who do bullies target?**

• Individuals they perceive as weak, vulnerable and less powerful.
• Shy and passive individuals.
• New students/employees, alone or not in a group.
• Those that perform poorly.
• Gay or lesbian individuals (homophobic bullying).
• Individuals that have noticeable physical differences, disability or impairment.
• Overweight or skinny individuals.
• Individuals from a different religious background, ethnicity or race.

**Role of parents – what can you do?**

• Often children won’t talk about the bullying situation to parents or teachers – they often don’t show signs.
• Great deal of bullying rarely occurs in front of adults.
• Parents need to actively listen and empower their children to talk about the bullying behaviour and not be afraid to speak their mind.
• Speak openly and honestly, empathise, gather information and facts.
• Break the situation down – but don’t turn a molehill into a big mountain.
• Take notes, record the responses, ask questions: what happened, who is involved, when did it occur, what did you do and who did you speak to?
• Deal with feelings first and reassure your support.
• Try to understand and learn about what is/isn’t bullying and explain expected behaviour and suggest solutions if qualified.
• Early intervention is the best solution. Should you notice symptoms or signs – do something – take action – ask for help if you can’t manage.
• Speak to the child care/ kindergarten teacher, school or organisation involved (ask to see their bullying policy).
• Ensure your child develops resilience and empathy by being assertive and having good communication skills.
• Your child should understand the consequences of bullying as perpetrator or victim.
• Don’t add to the problem, stay calm and seek assistance.
• Don’t advise or suggest that your child react or retaliate – often bullies will want a reaction. Bullies prefer the victim keep quiet as this is their way of maintaining control.
• Develop your understanding and skills of bullying and social media – often there is a gap between the parents’ interpretation and understanding to that of their child.

CHAPTER 3
Dealing with cyberbullying

CYBERBULLYING: WHAT IS IT AND HOW TO GET HELP

FACT SHEET ADVICE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

If you are being bullied and need support, it is important that you read this fact sheet and go to the ‘Getting help’ section. If you know or see someone being bullied go to the Supportive bystander fact sheet to find out how to help them.

Cyberbullying is bullying that is done through the use of technology. For example, using the internet, a mobile phone or a camera to hurt or embarrass someone is considered cyberbullying. It can be shared widely with a lot of people quickly, which is why it is so dangerous and hurtful.

What happens with cyberbullying?

• A lot of people can view or take part in it
• It is often done in secret with the bully hiding who they are by creating false profiles or names, or sending anonymous messages
• It is difficult to remove as it is shared online so it can be recorded and saved in different places
• It is hard for the person being bullied to escape if they use technology often
• The content (photos, texts, videos) can be shared with a lot of people
• This content may also be easy to find by searching on a web browser like Google.

What does cyberbullying look like?

• Being sent mean or hurtful text messages from someone you know or even someone you don't know
• Getting nasty, threatening or hurtful messages through social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter, or through sites where people can ask/answer questions like Formspring or internet forums
• People sending photos and videos of you to others to try and embarrass or hurt you
• People spreading rumours about you via emails or social networking sites or text messages
• People trying to stop you from communicating with others
• People stealing your passwords or getting into your accounts and changing the information there
• People setting up fake profiles pretending to be you, or posting messages or status updates from your accounts.

Feelings you may be having if you are being bullied

• Feeling guilty like it is your fault
• Feeling hopeless and stuck like you can’t get out of the situation
• Feeling alone, like there is no one to help you
• Feeling like you don't fit in with the cool group
• Feeling depressed and rejected by your friends and other groups of people
• Feeling unsafe and afraid
• Feeling confused and stressed out wondering what to do and why this is happening to you
• Feeling ashamed that this is happening to you.

Cyberbullying can be shared widely with a lot of people quickly, which is why it is so dangerous and hurtful.

Being safe from bullies online

• Do not share your private information like passwords, name and address, phone numbers with people you don’t know. This can also include sharing of photos of yourself, your friends and your family.
• Don’t respond to messages when you are angry or hurt – either to strangers and also to people you know. This will often encourage them to continue or increase their harassment of you.
• Log out and stop messaging if you feel you are being harassed.
• Remember you have the option to block, delete and report anyone who is harassing you online and on your mobile.
• Find out how to report bullying and harassment on each of the different social networks that you use.
• Keep a record of calls, messages, posts and emails that may be hurtful or harmful to you.
• Remember to set up the privacy options on your social networking sites like Facebook in a way you are comfortable with.

It is important to know that each State and Territory in Australia has different laws for Bullying. Lawstuff provides legal information to children and young people in Australia. Please go to www.lawstuff.org.au and click on your State or Territory to get legal information related to cyberbullying in your area.

To find out about cyberbullying and how to get help you can also go to the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) Cybersmart Program at www.esafety.gov.au.

**Getting help**

If you have been bullied or witnessed others been bullied and need help contact:

• **Kids Helpline** (1800 55 1800) is a free and confidential, telephone counselling service for 5 to 25 year olds in Australia, www.kids helpline.com.au
• **Lifeline** (13 11 14) is a free and confidential service staffed by trained telephone counsellors, www.lifeline.org.au
• **Australian Human Rights Commission** (1300 656 419) has a complaint handling service that may investigate complaints of discrimination, harassment and bullying, www.humanrights.gov.au/complaints_information/index.html

This fact sheet was developed in partnership with ReachOut.com, 2011.

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Cyber bullying is a crime

Online bullying is more than just bad behaviour, cautions Bully Zero Australia Foundation

The Commonwealth legislation governs online stalking and harassment behaviour. The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Telecommunications Offences and Other Measures Act) – (No. 2) 2004 makes it a crime to use a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence.

The alleged individual could be found guilty under – 474.17 A (1) if:

a. Person uses a carriage service;

b. Does so in a way (whether by method of use or content of a communication, or both) that reasonable persons would regard as being, in all circumstances;

• Menacing, harassing or offending;

• Penalty: Imprisonment of up to – 3 years.

Cyber bullying

• Social media has enhanced our ability to be connected and engaged, the technology sector is now the largest in the world.

• Australia is one of the most connected and engaged in the world and on average we own at least 3 devices.

• While social media has fantastic benefits it has come at a devastating cost, with families, friends and most importantly victims who feel there is nowhere to turn to. Words do hurt and we’re reminded of the consequences of cyber bullying almost on a daily basis with reports that 1 in 8 Australians experience cyber bullying.

• Some Australians are showing signs of being addicted to their devices and for some there is now a dependency on technology that is to be reachable and contactable all the time (techno stress – inability to disconnect).

• There are phenomena such as FOMO (fear of missing out) and FONK (fear of not knowing) which has impacted on our ability to be connected to our social media platforms and devices.

• Cyber bullying is now the second most common form of bullying in Australia. Some behave with no responsibility while others are callous and ruthless.

• Cyber bullying is intergenerational and anyone can be a victim, whatever their age.

• Cyber bullies have the ability to target individuals 24/7, they can remain anonymous and significantly impact a large number of users and individuals instantly. Cyber bullies can intrude in places that were once regarded safe – our homes. Perpetrators, predators, paedophiles and groomers can influence and gain access to our most vulnerable.

• Victims of cyber bullying can feel powerless, lonely, upset, insecure, desperate and have feelings of refuge as there is no escape from the perpetrator who continues to harass, troll or stalk the victim.

• Everything posted online is stored even if deleted, every time a message is sent it’s saved by phone companies even after it’s deleted. Emails and private messages sent are stored by host providers of the platform. Chat conversations through companies like Messenger and other social media applications are stored on servers. Every device that accesses the internet has its own Internet Protocol (IP) address that can be traced back to the user.

• Ignorance of the law is no excuse – users should consider their online actions as authorities are responding to inappropriate behaviour with heavy fines and prison terms.

Bullying is a crime in Victoria and the crimes amendment (bullying 2011 – section 21A) of the stalking provisions are now in effect. This amendment strengthens the existing stalking and harassment provisions of the Victorian Crimes Act 1958 and covers bullying/cyber bullying behaviours. Police now have the power to prosecute for stalking and serious bullying conduct. In other states stalking and harassment laws cover parts of the Victorian Act but there is no specific law that makes bullying a crime.

As a certified provider of cyber safety programs nationally we work closely with the Office of the Children’s eSafety Commissioner to ensure children and teenagers are empowered to deal with inappropriate online behaviour. Please visit www.esafety.gov.au.

What is cyber bullying?

Cyber bullying is the deliberate use of social media platforms, information and communication technologies, new media technologies i.e. (email, phones, chatrooms, discussion groups, applications, instant messaging, blogs, video clips, cameras, hate websites/pages, blogs and gaming sites) to repeatedly harass, threaten, humiliate and victimise another with the intention to cause harm, reputation damage, discomfort and intimidation.

In 2015, Australia was ranked 3rd in the number of searches made on the topic of cyber bullying via Google.

Cyber bullying can include:

• Harassment – sending ongoing abusive, insulting or unwanted messages. Tormenting someone with hateful and hurtful text messages, emails, posts or instant messages that offend, humiliate or intimidate.

• Flaming/trolling – disagreements online between two individuals using aggressive and or abusive language, gradually resulting in others joining in.

• Denigration – spreading lies, rumours or gossip about
someone to damage their reputation or friendship.

- **Impersonation** – pretending to be someone else by posting and sending inappropriate material online i.e. saying things they wouldn’t normally say face-to-face.

- **Outing and trickery** – placing someone else’s information online without their consent. Trickery is persuading someone into providing secrets or embarrassing information and then placing these online. This could be done through a fake website, profile or by editing someone’s own profile.

- **Exclusion** – deliberately excluding someone from an online group or excluding them from activities because they have not participated in an online activity.

- **Cyber-stalking** – following someone through cyberspace and repeatedly harassing or denigrating them which may raise significant fear in the individual. Moving with them to different sites or applications and posting threatening messages.

- **Sexting** – sending or posting messages, videos or photos of sexual nature. It’s illegal to post pictures or images of another without their consent and or if the individual is under 18 years of age.

- **Pornography** – possession and manufacturing of pornographic images and videos of an individual under the age of 18 is illegal and is covered by State and Commonwealth laws.

### SIGNS OF CYBER BULLYING

Cyber victims may feel anxious and isolated during the initial stages of cyber bullying. Early detection is important for prevention and harm minimisation, including the health and wellbeing of the individual.

Cyber bullying victims could show signs of cyber bullying by:

- Keeping to themselves and no longer engaging with their usual friends.
- Changes in sudden behaviour i.e. become angry, intense and negative while using or after.
- Secretive – minimises screen, hides device or deletes messages immediately.
- Irritated, loses interest, enjoyment in online activities, anxious, hesitant/guilty about going online – (receives an abundance of messages).
- Decreased appetite, health problems, addiction and nightmares.
- Depressed, no care or attention about their online behaviour.
- Self-esteem issues – children with low confidence could be prone to behaving inappropriately online as they don’t care about the repercussions.
- Uses hostile language that advocates and incites violence or aggression towards the perpetrator.
- Is making comment about planning/preparing to commit online or offline inappropriate behaviour.
- Inappropriate online behaviour rarely occurs in front of adults – telling your child to stop may not work. Open discussion to determine the issue and finding an appropriate response is recommended.

### HOW TO PREVENT CYBER BULLYING

- Block
- Ignore
- Delete
- Unfriend
- Report

- Block the bully and ask them to stop making comment.
- Don’t open and resist the temptation to respond, retaliate or reply to messages; if cyber bullies don’t receive a response they are likely to give up.
- If you do respond – an assertive approach is recommended – “Can I please ask you to stop, remove the ... I don’t appreciate the message” etc.
- Do not send, post or show offensive and inappropriate content, messages, pictures or videos about others online.
- It is illegal for a minor (under the age of 18) to post explicit photos of themselves online.
- Permission should be sought prior to posting any photo of another individual online.
- Maintain a record of harassing messages/replies, as evidence and report to appropriate authorities i.e. teacher, parent, adult, employer, manager, internet service provider (ISP), police, Office of the Children’s eSafety Commissioner (users under 18) or talk to a trusted friend.
- Think before posting personal information, name, address, phone number, details of family/friends and personal photographs or videos.
- Do not agree to meet individuals offline who you don’t know personally.
- Be aware that strangers can download, store, share/forward your personal information to others, which has the potential to create more avenues for cyber bullying, harassment, stalking and intimidation.
• Do not open spam messages, click on prize offers, hyperlinks and popups that offer free or discounted items as there could be viruses or Trojans.

WORK WITH A TRUSTED ADULT
• Seek their opinion and knowledge.
• Have the game or application road tested by a trusted adult.
• If the threatening/harassing behaviour is occurring at school, talk to your teacher, welfare coordinator or your principal. If outside school hours, speak to your parents, a trusted adult, police or contact the Office of the Children’s eSafety Commissioner.
• We recommend using parental controls or inbuilt computer security features (available at Bully Zero).
• If the behaviour is a workplace bullying issue and is occurring outside normal work hours, contact your employer or police.

MONITOR USAGE
• If constant online use is having a negative impact on your wellbeing or that of your friends and family, then this may be a sign for a break. Apply time limits to internet usage, excessive amounts of social media engagement can distract the user from the ability to self-regulate feelings. It could interfere with development of empathy, social and problem-solving skills (typically obtained by exploring unstructured play and interacting with friends). It’s important to have direct face-to-face interaction.
• There is no suggested time limit however should excessive usage affect sleep, self-esteem or cause stress, the Foundation suggests a break from social media; balance is key.
• Parents could install a filter that not only records the amount of time used but can automatically disconnect the service temporarily once a set limit has been reached. The Foundation has reliable evidence-based software to respond and address such issue.

REPORT CYBER BULLYING – BE THE UPSTANDER
• Cyber bullying affects 1 in 8 Australians and it’s our responsibility to stop and prevent it. Cyber bullying behaviour can stop in under 10 seconds if the bystander intervenes and takes assertive action by being the upstander. Never allow the bully to get away with thinking that no one will help.
• Doing nothing sends a clear message that the poor behaviour is acceptable, be part of the solution rather than wait for someone else. Step in, stand up, report and inform the cyber bully that their behaviour is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

ROLE OF POLICE
• If the bullying behaviour is causing serious distress, harm, harassment, stalking, violence, humiliation or threats to harm, then contact with police should be made. Police will establish if an offence has been committed, investigate further and take relevant action under State or Commonwealth law.
• In Victoria, serious bullying is a crime protected by the Crimes Legislative Amendment Act 2004. In other States stalking and harassment laws also exist to protect the victims. If an offence is committed, it’s the duty of police to investigate and determine the best response for dealing with perpetrators utilising formalised procedures and processes.
• Each case is dealt with on its merits and the underlying philosophy of police in Australia is based on harm minimisation, in particular, where children are involved. They are committed to providing undivided support to ensure the welfare, safety and wellbeing of children, including both victim and offender, is protected and maintained.
• Police will take action where there is evidence of bullying, stalking or harassment.
• The Commonwealth legislation governs online stalking and harassment behaviour. The Crimes Legislation Amendment (Telecommunications Offences and Other Measures Act) – (No. 2) 2004 makes it a crime to use a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence.

ROLE OF PARENTS
• No parent would willingly leave their child aged 6 in a library, in a swimming pool, shopping centre or local park without monitoring them.
• Social media is a playground, but it’s digital and more difficult to control. Having open communication about online activities and usage including the monitoring of internet usage i.e. applications, games and internet platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, Kik Messenger, Facetime, Skype, Tumblr, YouTube) is fundamental in understanding the child’s social media world. Youngsters are digital natives and this is their world, it’s not about quantity but quality. Children should be taught good online habits to be responsible digital citizens.
• Parents should help maintain their child’s social health, wellbeing and prevent harmful online

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behaviours. Parents should acknowledge symptoms and raise concerns with their child’s school, contact the Foundation: (03) 9094 3718 or the Office of the Children’s eSafety Commissioner: 1800 880 176 – www.esafety.gov.au.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?
• Have open-ended conversations to learn about your child’s online life. Mentor your child about responsible social media usage and allow guided interactions and open dialogue. Practise scenarios to develop assertiveness strategies and help your child identify teachers, friends and others that could assist.
• Ensure your child is legally permitted to hold an account and/or engage with certain social networking sites, platforms, applications and games.
• Ensure you and your child read the licence agreement and activate privacy settings as (default settings may not be safe).
• Set clear boundaries, house rules and time limits i.e. device free dinner time (phone check policy – random checks).
• Talk to your child, ask what platforms they’re using, who their friends are and advise them to never befriend anyone online they don’t know. They should add or accept users they know or have some commonality with.
• Be involved, positive and interested in your child’s hobbies, friendships on and offline.
• Develop your social media skills and join your child’s preferred network or applications i.e. Facebook, Snapchat or Instagram.
• Understand the social media platforms they are using i.e. how to create a status, upload content, check in services and privacy (basic social networking functions) and ensure you road test websites, applications or games your child is downloading (free games include advertising and some innocent games simulate gambling and desensitise children to the gaming format).
• Be familiar with the acronyms children and teenagers use. See the most common acronym used by teens here: www.bzaf.org.au/acronyms
• Suggest that your child make their personal information private and not share personal information with strangers.
• Educate and teach your child about online safety, their responsibilities, potential risks and ask your child to stop, look and think before posting or sharing any content that could be inappropriate.
• Explain they must gain permission from their friends or family before posting pictures, videos or any other content that does not involve them directly.
• Don’t be afraid to talk to your child about peer pressure and how they should not be persuaded to post inappropriate content, i.e. photos, videos or personal information.
• Consider parental controls, filtering software and effective strategies to respond to inappropriate online behaviour are available. The Foundation has partners offering software that can respond to specific needs of parents and users.

Anything published online in a public domain is no longer private. Information including photos can be exploited and used inappropriately. Technology in the wrong hands can be a weapon of mass destruction.

We suggest caution and a proactive approach; confiscation of devices is not a solution, we suggest open and honest communication to promote responsible usage.

The Foundation offers cyber safety workshops and seminars to educate students, teachers and parents about cyber safety, please call (03) 9094 3718.

How to stop cyber bullying

National Centre Against Bullying presents these practical tips and discussion points on the topic of cyber bullying.

One in 10 young people are cyber bullied every few weeks. The effects of this type of bullying on young people today cannot be underestimated; with most houses having multiple online devices, it makes it very hard for a young person to escape the negativity when at home. Below are some practical tips and discussion points to share with your children on the topic of cyber bullying.

Topics to discuss about stopping cyber bullying behaviours

• Explain it’s never a good idea to retaliate against cyber bullying.
• Collect the evidence (screenshots, saving texts etc.) of the behaviour.
• Get your child to change their privacy settings.
• Ask your child if they know whether the same thing is happening to others. Encourage them to support their friends and report any cyber bullying to the school if the perpetrator goes there as well.
• If there is any indication your child may be at risk, or if threats have been made, stopping the cyber bullying is critical, make a report to the police. Laws have been broken. Contact the internet service provider or the site owner so that material can be preserved but removed from public view.

Practical tips on how to stop cyber bullying

• Talk about technology with your children. It’s OK if they know more than you do.
• Reach an agreement about what acceptable online behaviour looks and feels like and how they will spend time online (e.g. homework, social networking and gaming). If you and your children have regular conversations about the online world, they’ll be more likely to talk to you if they are harassed or experiencing cyber bullying or if something feels uncomfortable.
• For young children’s use and safety it is appropriate to put filters in place, set security to ‘high’ and to keep a close eye on what they are doing online. And make sure you set agreements about how much time they can allocate to different activities online.
• Make sure passwords are changed regularly and kept private even from friends, as friends sometimes become enemies and could use their online accounts in offensive or obnoxious ways. As children become older, supervision needs will diminish as they take responsibility for their own online behaviour.
• Many children don’t want to talk about how to stop cyber bullying or other negative experiences because they fear their access to technology will be removed. Reassure them this won’t happen. Cyber bullying is serious and not a case of ‘it’s just words’. Cyber attacks have a lasting effect and can damage a child in a variety of ways.
• Like face-to-face bullying, cyber bullying is also usually a relationship problem that starts off at school but happens out of school hours, often on privately-owned devices. Even though the bullying doesn’t take place in school hours it can create serious problems back at school by affecting students’ feelings of safety, wellbeing and even their academic progress. Dealing with it therefore falls within a school’s duty of care.

Mobile devices are a great way to stay in touch with friends and know what’s going on. They enable you to text, web browse, email, video, chat, social network and play games.

However, bullies can abuse and misuse mobiles to cyberbully others. Cyberbullying is totally unacceptable. It can also be illegal.

Cyberbullying can be distressing for you, your family and friends. It involves behaviours such as: calling others names, spreading rumours, pretending to be someone else (also called identity theft) and saying nasty and hurtful things. It can also involve threats and intimidation.

Don’t get involved in cyberbullying. Some people think they can get away with doing and saying things on their mobiles in the digital world that they would not do face-to-face. You are not anonymous. Your comments on blogs and social networks, pictures sent by text and video uploads all leave a digital footprint. Just as it’s important to be a good citizen in real life, it’s also important to be a good digital citizen.

If you are a victim of cyberbullying it’s important to remember that it’s not your fault, you are not alone and there is something you can do about it. Don’t face it alone – you need to talk to someone you can trust.

1. Protect yourself
- Only give your phone number and other usernames/profile details (e.g. for Instagram, Kik or iMessage) to trusted friends and don’t give someone else’s contact details without their permission.
- Only connect on social media with people you actually know in real life.
- If you don’t want someone else to know your phone number you can use caller ID blocking to hide your number when you call them.
- Keep your PINs and passwords secret. Your mobile holds a lot of private information. Protect it by using the security PIN for the handset, SIM and voice messages.
- Use privacy settings offered by social networks – the eSafety Homepage has specific info for most popular games, apps and social media platforms here: www.esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/games-apps-and-social-networking
- Think before you send a text message, post a photo or make a call. Don’t send anything that you would not want your parents or teachers to see. Don’t forward offensive material you receive about someone else because that could make you a cyberbully.
- “Sexting” (sharing sexual images e.g. photos or videos of yourself or others naked via text messages or social media) is stupid. You’re vulnerable if it falls into the wrong hands. Also, it could be child pornography if the images are of anyone under 18 and the police might have to get involved.

2. What to do if you receive unwanted messages or calls
- Ignore the cyberbully. Don’t respond. Stay calm. They want to upset you and if they get no response they may get bored and go away.
- Save the offensive texts, posts, emails or voice messages – take a screenshot of them. The time, date and offensive content can be used to investigate the cyberbully and take action to ensure they don’t do it again.
- You can also unfriend/block the cyberbully, or change your privacy settings to ensure they don’t have access to your account or information you put online.
- Your mobile service provider can help you deal with unwanted or nuisance phone calls – call them to report such calls.

3. You are not alone
- Get help from a trusted adult, such as a parent or teacher. For more help on how to deal with or report cyberbullying go to the eSafety Homepage: www.esafety.gov.au/complaints-and-reporting/cyberbullying-complaints/i-want-to-report-cyberbullying
- You can also contact the Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 – they are available 24/7.
The benefits and risks of using technology

Technology is an important part of life. It affects how we socialise, connect, play and learn. Students have access to technology 24 hours a day. It can bring enormous benefits such as helping them to learn and preparing them for life after school. Online resources can also promote student wellbeing and develop students’ help-seeking skills.

When used inappropriately, such as for online bullying, technology can cause harm.

Online bullying is different from face-to-face bullying in several ways:

- The person being bullied cannot always tell who the person bullying them is. Those doing the bullying may feel empowered to say and do more destructive things than they would face-to-face.
- Getting rid of offensive material on the internet can be very difficult.
- It can be more public and widespread. What may have been a school issue can escalate and ‘go viral’, reaching a much larger audience.
- It can occur any time of the day or night. This can create a sense of there being no escape.

Students need to be equipped with the knowledge, understanding and skills to use technology in a way that both enhances their wellbeing and keeps themselves and others safe.

What is online bullying?

Online bullying is using technology such as the internet or mobile devices to bully someone.

It can include:

- Sending abusive text messages and emails
- Posting hurtful or threatening material on social media like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Snapchat, or on gaming networks
- Imitating or excluding others online
- Tagging inappropriate or unflattering images
- Threatening another person to do something such as sending revealing images.

Online bullying is generally covert in nature and kept out of sight from adults. This means that it is identified less often than overt forms of bullying.

Signs that someone may be being bullied online include:

- An increased preoccupation with social media or technology
- Visible tiredness
- Being visibly upset after using the computer or mobile phone
- Avoiding the use of technology
- Being more vigilant and checking technology constantly
- Nervousness while using technology
- Being more withdrawn
- A change in engagement or school attendance patterns.

Teaching about online safety

Online bullying can be prevented or reduced by developing and communicating a shared understanding of appropriate online behaviour across the school. Schools that have clear expectations and explicit teaching of safe and responsible online behaviour establish conditions that make online bullying less likely.

Responding to online bullying

School staff need to know how to respond to online bullying if it is reported. This includes referring to education system or school policies as well as considering the following actions.

1. Listen carefully

Find a private place to talk with the student. Let the student tell you about the issue and assure them you will help them.

Avoid the terms ‘bully’ or ‘victim’. Use ‘the student who is bullying’ or ‘the student being bullied’.
If you are concerned that what the student tells you is related to criminal activity, tell the school principal or their delegate who can contact the police or call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

Ask clarifying questions to check your understanding of what the student has told you.

- Take screenshots of relevant material.
- Record the URLs or web addresses of the material.
- Record details of the conversation.


2. **Discuss a plan of action**

Develop a plan of action with the student. This could include supporting the student to:

- Not retaliate or respond to the person who bullied them.
- Block the person who engaged in the bullying or ‘unfriend’ them to stop the bullying.
- Change the privacy and security settings on their social media accounts.

If the social media service fails to remove the material within 48 hours of the student reporting it to them, they can make a complaint to the Office of the eSafety Commissioner.

3. **Involve relevant school personnel**

- Notify relevant school personnel of the matter. This could be the school principal or school executive.
- Provide relevant information you have collected.
- Discuss a planned approach to work through the matter, including the responsibilities of the teacher reporting the bullying, the school executive, the student and their parents or carers.

4. **Implement plan and follow-up**

- Contact parents or carers about the incident and discuss a planned approach.
- Help the student or their family to contact social media platforms to have content removed if this has not already been done.
- Respond to others involved in the bullying. Consider what actions and support needs to be provided to all parties involved in the bullying. Document the chosen approach. Accurate records can assist in identifying patterns of behaviour and effective support strategies.
- Encourage students to report any future incidents if they occur.

- Schedule follow-up meetings with all students over the following weeks and months.

Preventing further bullying can require a sustained effort, particularly if situations are longstanding.

Visit the Office of the eSafety Commissioner to learn more about responding to and reporting online bullying: [www.esafety.gov.au](http://www.esafety.gov.au)

**Resources for educators**


**Professional learning**

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner’s offers a range of resources and training options including the Outreach Program ([www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources/outreach](http://www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources/outreach)).

This includes:


- The Student CyberLeader resource ([http://friendlyschools.com.au/cyberstrong/6-developing-student-cyber-leaders-capacity](http://friendlyschools.com.au/cyberstrong/6-developing-student-cyber-leaders-capacity)) is available to help school staff to train and support student leaders to establish an ethos and environment where all students feel empowered to use technology in positive ways.

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Cyberbullying prevention – tips for parents

Tips from the NSW Department of Education to help parents keep their kids safe online and deal with cyberbullying if it occurs

At a glance

- Talk to your child about cyberbullying before it happens.
- Be aware of what your child is doing online.
- Locate the computer in a shared or visible place in the home.
- Don’t simply ignore cyberbullying.
- Watch for changes in mood and behaviour in your child.
- Report abuse to the relevant authorities.
- All schools have anti-bullying policies – ask about yours.

The statistics around cyberbullying are sketchy, mainly because it often goes unreported. What we do know is that the likelihood of children being bullied online or over the phone increases as they get older and use technology more frequently.

We also know that parents typically monitor their younger children’s online activities more than they do tweens and teenagers. Unfortunately the age when kids are most likely to be cyberbullied coincides with when we’re least likely, as parents, to know about it.

Having published these and other interesting findings in a 2009 research report, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) has created tips for parents to help keep their kids safe online and to give some direction for those who think their child may already be experiencing online bullying.

Say NO to cyberbullying – tips for parents

1. Talk to your child about cyberbullying before it happens. Work out strategies to address cyberbullying that both of you are comfortable with so your child knows what to expect if they do report their concerns to you.
2. Establish one or two other trusted adults your child is comfortable in approaching about their concerns.
3. Be aware of what your child is doing online and explore it with them.
4. Keep the lines of communication open so your child will be comfortable about talking to you if something is worrying them. Help your child to develop the skills they need to interact safely and respectfully online. Guide their online activities and help them learn to communicate appropriately with friends and family.
5. Try to locate the computer in a shared or visible place in the home.
6. Discuss the kinds of sites that are OK to explore and those that are not and have clear rules about online activities.
7. Help your child to block anyone who sends offensive content. Most social networking services allow users to block and report someone who is behaving badly.

What to do if you think your child is being cyberbullied

1. Discuss any changes in mood or behaviour with them. If you are concerned, help your child to stay connected to friends and family they trust.
2. Notify the police immediately if you have serious concerns for your child’s safety.
3. Work with your child to save some evidence of cyberbullying behaviour – it may need to be followed up by the child’s school, internet service provider (ISP), mobile phone carrier or the police.
4. If you need to involve your child’s school, ask them to thoroughly explain their processes so that you can work toward achieving a positive outcome. (NSW public schools have anti-bullying policies which you can ask to see, or can often find on their websites.)
5. Cyberbullying won’t stop if it’s ignored – you can help by listening to your child and working with them to take control of the situation.

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Bullying is among parents’ greatest concerns. And little wonder. It’s the biggest modifiable risk factor for children and adolescents developing mental illnesses. Every few weeks there are reports of children and teens who have taken their lives, allegedly due to bullying and cyberbullying.

One in five (21% of) 14- to 15-year-olds report having been cyber bullied, up from 4% in eight- to nine-year-olds. Bullies post threatening messages, spread rumours and share humiliating images via sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat and Instagram for teenagers, and Moshi Monsters and Club Penguin for pre-teens.

But contrary to public perception, bullying via social media is not as common as traditional forms of face-to-face bullying.

It’s natural for parents to want to protect their children and teens from bullying on social media, but simply taking their devices away is not the solution.

WHO IS CYBER BULLIED?

Students who are bullied online are also likely to be victims of traditional bullying and most know the perpetrator in real life. Like traditional bullying, the highest risk time for cyberbullying is at transition to high school.

Children and teens are also more likely to be bullied on social media if they:
• Spend a lot of time online
• Engage in risky online behaviours such as sharing passwords
• Use social media sites to bully others.

Contrary to public perception, bullying via social media is not as common as traditional forms of face-to-face bullying.

Victims of cyberbullying report high rates of anxiety and depression. But the evidence is mixed about whether cyber or traditional bullying impacts more on mental health. It’s likely that both have a serious impact.

There is also a cumulative effect: the more experiences of bullying (whether cyber or traditional), the worse the mental health risk.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAN BE GOOD AND BAD

Most Australian children (78%) have used social media by the ages of eight or nine.

Usage increases during teenage years, with most 16-17 year olds (92%) accessing it at least once a month, and around half with daily access.

When parents see a problem, it’s sometimes tempting to try to ban children from using social media. But a ban is difficult to enforce, given the reliance on the internet for education.

It may also be counter-productive. Most 14- to 17-year-olds report that the internet is very important to them, saying it improves their wellbeing and relationships.

A recent review of international research confirms that participation in social media can increase teenagers’ feelings of self-esteem, support, and fitting in with a group.

Children relate to each other through social media, for good and for bad.
SETTING UP SAFE PROCESSES

You can help your child from being targeted by adequately supervising them when they’re online, only providing access to social media sites that are appropriate for their level of maturity, and maintaining good lines of communication.

To help decide whether social media sites are appropriate for your child’s age, read the “terms of use” and check the minimum age. You can then help your child to set an appropriate privacy setting.

It’s important to educate your child about internet safety. This includes ensuring they only “friend” people they know in real life, and that they consider the possible impacts of information before posting.

Good cyber-safety resources include the Office of the eSafety Commissioner’s downloadable brochures and the Alannah and Madeline Foundation’s eLicence. School-based education programs have also been shown to reduce cyberbullying.

Try keeping computers only in the common area of the house, friending or following your child online, and occasionally checking their online profile.

Over time, you can give your child more independence as they develop their skills to manage more complicated situations online. But try to maintain good communication so they can come to you with any problems – this includes listening without overreacting.

Look out for signs of distress, such as greater emotional reactivity, avoiding school or social situations, sleep disturbance, or a drop in school marks. If your child is unwilling to speak with you, they may be willing to call a support service such as the Kids Helpline.

WHAT IF YOUR CHILD HAS A PROBLEM?

If the problem involves someone he or she knows in real life, your child might be able to sort out the problem directly. Or you can ask the school for help.

You can help your child decide whether to block or unfriend online users who are causing distress. It’s wise to keep a record of problems, by taking screen shots. Offensive content can be reported to the website or carrier, and if not addressed, can be reported to the Children’s eSafety Commissioner.

If you think your child is in danger, contact the police or Crimestoppers.

Finally, if your child suffers ongoing distress, consider getting professional help from a psychologist, psychiatrist or your GP.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Karyn Healy is affiliated with the Parenting and Family Support Centre of the University of Queensland. She is the co-author of Resilience Triple P, a program for children bullied by peers.

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Cyberbullying and being a good bystander

ADVICE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE ESAFETY COMMISSIONER

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to bully a person or group with the intent to cause harm. Cyberbullying is serious and is never acceptable. It often involves a:

- **Perpetrator** – the person bullying online
- **Target** – the person being bullied
- **Bystander** – someone who witnesses the cyberbullying behaviour.

One way to create a better internet is for everyone to become a supportive or good bystander when interacting online.

**Types of bystanders**
- **Bystander** – Someone who sees cyberbullying happening to someone else.
- **Positive bystander** (upstander) – Someone who takes safe action to help the target of cyberbullying behaviour.
- **Negative bystander** – Someone who sees cyberbullying happening, but chooses to do nothing to help the target.

Some bystanders might also get involved in the cyberbullying, for example by forwarding hurtful texts, posts or messages on social media sites that have been posted by someone else.

**Why is being a good bystander the right thing to do?**
- We have a responsibility to respect and protect the rights of others.
- There is a greater possibility that bullying will stop.
- So the person being targeted can recover and get help.

Bystanders have an important role to play in cyberbullying situations and their actions can help stop the bullying behaviour.

**Complementary activities**
- Research the history of Pink Shirt Day that started in Canada.
- View the #GameOn video series which follows the online experiences of a group of upper primary/lower secondary students.
- Using the Positive bystander tips below, select something positive you could do, or the option that you would feel safest in doing, if you witness:
  a. Someone repeatedly sending mean text messages to another person.
  b. Someone asking their friends to ‘like’ an embarrassing photo of someone you know.
  c. A friend excluding a member of your friendship group from a group chat.

**POSITIVE BYSTANDER TIPS**

**STEP IN**
- Do something positive to help the target.
- Speak out against the cyberbullying behaviour – if you feel safe doing so. Make it clear you find the behaviour unacceptable and ask for any hurtful texts/posts/images to be deleted.
- Encourage the target to get help from a trusted adult. Offer to go with them to make the report.

**HELP**
- If you don’t feel comfortable telling the person bullying to stop, think about ways you can help behind the scenes, such as saving the evidence of the cyberbullying (like screenshots or photos) or helping the person check their privacy settings.
- Make contact with the target (online or offline). Email/message the target to let them know you feel for them and you don’t agree with the person’s behaviour.
- Check out the esafety website at esafety.gov.au for useful tips on dealing with cyberbullying. The Kids Helpline also offers free and confidential counselling services on cybersafety issues, including cyberbullying. Visit kids helpline.com.au or call 1800 55 1800.

**ACT**
- Choose not to comment on, resend or respond to posts that may offend or upset someone else.
- Discuss what you can do with friends to help resolve it. This might include blocking the main people involved or approaching a trusted adult as a group.
- Make it clear to your friends that you will not join in any cyberbullying behaviour.

**REPORT**
- Tell an adult you can trust and has the authority to help. This may be a parent, teacher, school principal, school counsellor, a coach or family member.
- Report cyberbullying to the police if you feel someone’s personal safety has been threatened.
- Report anonymously. For example, type up a note about what is happening and leave it in the letter box or under the door of an adult who can help.
- Report to an administrator of the social media website to ask for content to be removed. Contact the relevant mobile phone company in the case of bullying text messages or calls.

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Office of the eSafety Commissioner. Being a good bystander.
The eSafety Commissioner is a statutory office holder created under the Enhancing Online Safety Act 2015 (the Act) who is responsible for promoting online safety for all Australians.

Staff of the Australian Communications and Media Authority assist the eSafety Commissioner perform the Commissioner’s functions and exercise the Commissioner’s powers.

The Commissioner has a wide range of functions and powers to enhance online safety for Australian children. A key objective of the Commissioner’s office is to reduce Australian children’s exposure to cyberbullying. In fulfilling this the Commissioner will take a preventative approach to encourage and empower children and their carers to take positive measures to address cyberbullying behaviours as they first arise.

The Commissioner recognises the importance of Australian children having the knowledge and skills to engage appropriately and safely with others online. This is an important life skill for participating in the digital environment and applies equally to children who find themselves targets of cyberbullying and children who engage in cyberbullying behaviours.

The Office of the eSafety Commissioner administers a complaints system for cyberbullying material targeted at an Australian child and ensures cyberbullying material is removed as quickly as possible.

Other functions include promoting and co-ordinating activities relating to online safety for children in Australia and administering the online content scheme under Schedules 5 and 7 to the Broadcasting Services Act 1992.

The Commissioner’s general approach to cyberbullying complaints

The Commissioner has the power to investigate complaints and conduct investigations into cyberbullying material as he thinks fit. This includes balancing a person’s right to freedom of expression to the extent necessary, with the rights or reputation of the child at whom the material is targeted.

What action the Commissioner will take will depend on each individual case.

The Commissioner will look to equip children and school communities with strategies and practical advice on how to respond appropriately when confronted by cyberbullying. This also includes advice and guidance on appropriate online behaviour. The Commissioner will work closely with schools, enforcement agencies and other key stakeholders to best achieve this.

In addition, the Commissioner will work with Kids Helpline, a leading provider of both online and phone counselling for young people, to provide 24-hour psychological support to children who have been cyberbullied and need someone to talk to. It is important that cyberbullied children feel they are not alone with this experience.

When the Commissioner makes the decision to investigate a complaint, the Commissioner will work with social media services to get cyberbullying material removed quickly. This may also include the referral of certain complaints to schools or police to assist in the resolution of a matter.

The Commissioner will take a rights-based approach specifically applicable to children where:
The best interests of the children involved are of paramount consideration,
Children’s differing stages of development and understanding are taken into account, and
The emphasis is on diversion and education.

Who can lodge a complaint with the Commissioner about cyberbullying material?
A complaint to the Commissioner can be made by an Australian child who is (or was) the target of cyberbullying material provided on a social media service or a relevant electronic service. Under the Act an Australian child is defined as a child under 18 years old who is ordinarily resident in Australia.

A parent or guardian of the child, or a responsible person authorised by the child, may also make a complaint on the behalf of an Australian child who is the target of cyberbullying.

Complaints about material targeted at a person above the age of 18 cannot be considered. The only exception to this is where the complainant makes a complaint within 6 months of their eighteenth (18th) birthday.

Complaints about cyberbullying targeting adults
Adults who wish to report cyberbullying can lodge a complaint with the Australian Cybercrime Online Reporting Network (ACORN).

When will the Commissioner investigate?
Under the Enhancing Online Safety Act 2015 (the Act), the Commissioner has broad discretion as to whether a complaint will be investigated and how that investigation will be conducted.

Each complaint will be assessed on a case by case basis having regard to whether the complaint satisfies the relevant provisions of the Act.

As a general guide, a person can make a complaint to the Commissioner where they believe that an Australian child is (or was) the target of cyberbullying material and:
1. The material is provided on a social media service or relevant electronic service,
2. An ordinary reasonable person would conclude that the material was intended to have an effect on a particular Australian child, and
3. That the material would be likely to have a seriously threatening, seriously intimidating, seriously harassing or seriously humiliating effect on the Australian child at whom the material is targeted.

How does the Commissioner decide if material is cyberbullying material?
The Commissioner’s role is to investigate complaints about cyberbullying where the material complained about is likely to seriously threaten, intimidate, harass or humiliate a particular Australian child. The Commissioner only needs to be satisfied that the material is likely to have one or more of these effects on the balance of probabilities (that is, more likely than not).

The Commissioner adopts a flexible approach so that children who are genuinely affected by cyberbullying material are protected. This approach involves looking at a range of characteristics of both the individual child and the relevant material.

Characteristics of an individual child include the child’s background and particular circumstances, any vulnerabilities of the child, and the relationship between the child and the person posting the material. With cyberbullying material, the Commissioner will look at things like the language used, the impact of any audio or visual material, the sensitivity of the material, the number of potential views, and how often the material was posted.

Material which is merely offensive or insulting is unlikely to fall within the scheme.

Can I complain about being cyberbullied on any site or app?
The Commissioner can accept complaints about cyberbullying material targeting an Australian child posted on a wide range of digital platforms. The Act defines a social media service very broadly as a service that: has
chat services (phone or online-based) and online games.

- Photo and video sharing sites and apps.
- Blogging sites and apps
- Messaging apps which allow content to be included with messages
- Social networking sites and apps
- Photo and video sharing sites and apps.

In addition, the Commissioner can accept complaints regarding children who are or have been targets of cyberbullying on email, instant messaging services, phone based SMS texts and MMS pictures and videos, chat services (phone or online-based) and online games.

**How do I complain to the Commissioner?**

Complaints can be made using the online cyberbullying complaint form on the Commissioner’s website.

It is very important that a complainant provide as much information as possible to support their claim about cyberbullying. The Commissioner must see the actual material to be able to make decisions about the appropriate action to take to resolve complaints.

Information is accepted in the form of most file types. To assist in the rapid removal of content a complainant must include a link to where the content can be found on the internet, where possible. For provisions of images or text from websites or mobile apps, providing URLs is recommended. Screenshots or snips from desktop computers, laptops, tablets and smartphones are also accepted. For onscreen content on non-smartphones taking a digital photo of the screen and uploading that photo is the easiest way to provide information. The website gives information on how to gather and provide material on a range of electronic devices.

The complainant will receive email confirmation that their complaint has been received. The confirmation email may also contain information on self-help strategies and access to support services such as the Kids Helpline. Practical advice on how to deal with and respond to cyberbullying more broadly may also be provided.

**What priority will my complaint be given and how long will the complaint process take?**

All complaints received by the Commissioner will be prioritised having regard to the risk of harm to the child targeted by the cyberbullying. The Commissioner will notify the complainant once their complaint is received and will inform the complainant whether or not their complaint will be investigated.

Once an investigation is commenced the amount of time to complete an investigation will vary. This is likely to be dependent on the action the Commissioner decides to take to resolve the complaint including which of the two complaint resolution schemes that the Commissioner oversees will apply to the complaint: the Tier Scheme, or the End-User Notice Scheme.

**The Tier Scheme**

The Tier Scheme has been set up to get serious cyberbullying material taken down as quickly as possible. Services that participate in the Tier Scheme are listed on a public register on the Commissioner’s website.

If a complaint falls under the Tier Scheme it is anticipated that the Commissioner will be able to act as quickly as 48 hours in some cases from the time a matter is referred by the Commissioner to the social media service.

If the cyberbullying material is on a Tier 1 or Tier 2 social media service, a complainant must first make a complaint to that service using the service’s complaints handling tools. The service generally has 48 hours to remove material in response to a complaint.

If a complainant is not satisfied with the resolution from the Tier 1 or Tier 2 service, then they may complain to the Commissioner.

A complaint to the Commissioner about material on a Tier 1 or Tier 2 service must confirm that a complaint was first made to that service about the cyberbullying material. This is in addition to providing copies of the actual cyberbullying material that is the subject of the complaint.

**The End-User Notice Scheme**

Under this scheme, the Commissioner has the power to give a notice to a person posting the cyberbullying material (the end-user) to remove the material, refrain from posting material which targets the complainant, or apologise.

Investigations of cyberbullying material under the End-User Notice Scheme are likely to require more time.

Matters that the Commissioner will need to be satisfied of under the End-User Notice Scheme include:

- The identity of the end-user who posted the cyberbullying material,
- Whether the issuing of a notice is an appropriate action to take in the circumstances.

Matters that the Commissioner may take into account in determining whether it is appropriate to give an end-user notice include: the apparent age of the end-user posting the cyberbullying material; whether the behaviour and its impact on the child are ongoing; the content of the material; whether there have been previous complaints involving the same child and end-user; and the prospect of the relevant school addressing the behaviour.

Referral by the Commissioner to a school in many circumstances may be the most effective and proportionate action to resolve a complaint.

If material is considered to be so serious that it merits escalating to law enforcement agencies the
Commissioner will look to refer the matter as quickly as possible.

**Your personal information**
The Office of the eSafety Commissioner’s Privacy Policy ([www.esafety.gov.au/about-the-office/privacy-foi-and-legal](http://www.esafety.gov.au/about-the-office/privacy-foi-and-legal)) describes how the Office manages and protects the personal information it collects and holds. It includes information about how you can request to access and correct your personal information, how you can make a complaint about the Office’s handling of your personal information and the Office’s contact details.

To learn more about why the Office of the eSafety Commissioner is collecting personal information as part of this process, and the purposes for which that information will be used, please see the Collection Notification ([www.esafety.gov.au/about-the-office/privacy-foi-and-legal](http://www.esafety.gov.au/about-the-office/privacy-foi-and-legal)).

**Are complaints kept private?**
All personal information provided to the Commissioner will be kept in accordance with the Commissioner’s privacy policy and the *Privacy Act 1988*.

However, the Commissioner has broad powers under Part 9 of the Act to disclose information to teachers or school principals, and parents or guardians. Under Section 92 of the Act the Commissioner may disclose information and/or refer a matter to a law enforcement agency such as the police, depending on the seriousness of the matter.

Section 80 of the Act, lists certain authorities, who may receive complaint information from the Commissioner in order to assist the Commissioner in handling a complaint.

These authorities include:
- Australian Communications and Media Authority;
- National Children’s Commissioner;
- Secretary of the Department administered by the Minister administering the *Classification (Publication, Films and Computer Games) Act 1995* or an APS employee in that department whose duties relate to that Act;
- Australian Federal Police;
- Director of Public Prosecutions;
- An authority of a State or Territory responsible for enforcing one or more laws of the State or Territory;
- An authority of a foreign country responsible for regulating matters relating to the capacity of children to use social media services and electronic services in a safe manner.

The Commissioner will generally seek permission prior to disclosing personal information related to cyberbullying complaints, as practicable. In disclosing information about a complaint, the Commissioner may impose conditions that need to be complied with in relation to the information disclosed.

**Review of a decision**
Under section 88 of the Act a decision by the Commissioner to refuse to give the provider of a social media service a social media service notice that relates to material provided on the service is reviewable by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. An application for review can only be made by: the person who made a complaint under section 18, the person who was the target of the material provided on the service, or a person who has the consent of the target of the material.
WORKSHEETS AND ACTIVITIES

The Exploring Issues section comprises a range of ready-to-use worksheets featuring activities which relate to facts and views raised in this book.

The exercises presented in these worksheets are suitable for use by students at middle secondary school level and beyond. Some of the activities may be explored either individually or as a group.

As the information in this book is compiled from a number of different sources, readers are prompted to consider the origin of the text and to critically evaluate the questions presented.

Is the information cited from a primary or secondary source? Are you being presented with facts or opinions?

Is there any evidence of a particular bias or agenda? What are your own views after having explored the issues?

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MULTIPLE CHOICE 56
Brainstorm, individually or as a group, to find out what you know about bullying and young people.

1. What is bullying, and who can it affect?

2. What does the term ‘bystander’ mean in relation to bullying?

3. What is the difference between overt and covert bullying? (provide examples of each)

4. What is the definition of ‘trolling’ in relation to cyberbullying, and what are some examples?
Complete the following activity on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

“Unfortunately, bullying is common, with around 1 in 6 Australian school students aged 7 to 17 reporting they have been bullied at least once a week.”

headspace, Understanding bullying – for young people.

Consider the above statement, and in the spaces below write one to two paragraphs about how bullying can occur in each of the following situations. Include in your answers at least two ways in which people could be bullied in each situation. Consider all the different types of bullying and provide possible scenarios, responses and prevention strategies.

DURING SCHOOL SPORT

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IN THE CLASSROOM

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ON THE WAY TO SCHOOL

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Complete the following activity on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

Commonwealth legislation governs online stalking and harassment behaviour and makes it a crime to use a carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence.

Form into groups of two or more people to discuss cyberbullying. In your group, address the following topics and in the space provided below compile a list of your findings and include examples. Share your findings with other groups in the class.

What is cyberbullying, and what is the legislation that governs it?

What are the different forms of cyberbullying?

Who can be affected by cyberbullying? (also include when and where)

What can be done to stop cyberbullying?
Complete the following activity on a separate sheet of paper if more space is required.

“Schools implement a wide variety of anti-bullying programs. These are most effective when part of a multi-faceted, systematic, whole-of-school approach, owned by the entire school community and continually revisited and renewed.”

National Centre Against Bullying, *School responses to bullying.*

Form into groups comprising three or more people to research and investigate the anti-bullying policies and programs of two schools, including your own. Explain, compare and contrast the anti-bullying policy of each school and their separate approaches to: bullying prevention, the reporting of bullying, and response process for bullying incidents. Also include any relevant information on plans, programs, lessons and activities.

**SCHOOL 1:**

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**SCHOOL 2:**

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Complete the following multiple choice questionnaire by circling or matching your preferred responses. The answers are at the end of this page.

1. Which of the following are forms of cyberbullying? (select all that apply)
   a. Sexting
   b. Impersonation
   c. Online shopping
   d. Cyberstalking
   e. Flaming
   f. Outing
   g. Catfishing

2. What is the term used for someone who stands up to a bully?
   a. Anti-bullier
   b. Victim
   c. Upstander
   d. Target
   e. Troll
   f. Bystander

3. Which of the following statements is most correct in relation to cyberbullying?
   a. It is now the most common form of bullying in Australia.
   b. It is now the second most common form of bullying in Australia.
   c. It is now the third most common form of bullying in Australia.
   d. It is now the least common form of bullying in Australia.
   e. It is not prevalent as a form of bullying in Australia.

4. What is the penalty if someone is found guilty of cyberbullying under the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Telecommunications Offences and Other Measures Act) – (No. 2) 2004?
   a. There is no penalty. Cyberbullying is not a crime.
   b. Community service
   c. Imprisonment up to 3 years
   d. Imprisonment up to 10 years
   e. Life imprisonment

5. Respond to the following statements by circling either ‘True’ or ‘False’:
   a. Research suggests 1 in 5 Australian school students have experienced online bullying.  True / False
   b. If you receive unwanted or nuisance phone calls your mobile service provider is unable to do anything to help you. True / False
   c. Studies have shown that both bullies and victims experience anxiety and depression equally. True / False
   d. Bullying at school is just a normal part of life and doesn’t hurt anyone. True / False
Research generally suggests around one in four children who bully are more likely to come from family environments characterised by less cohesion, expressiveness, organisation, control and social orientation (ibid). (p.15)

Schools implement a wide variety of anti-bullying programs. These are most effective when part of a multi-faceted, systematic, whole-of-school approach, owned by the entire school community and continually revisited and renewed. Nevertheless, any work of this kind requires persistent effort and can never be regarded as complete (National Centre Against Bullying, School responses to bullying). (p.21)

In Australia approximately one student in five is bullied at school every few weeks or more often. Many of these students suffer serious emotional and psychological harm, such as persistent anxiety, depression and suicidal thinking, and are unable to concentrate on their school work. It is clear they need help (Rigby, K, I don't want to be teased – why bullied children are reluctant to seek help from teachers). (p.23)

Students commonly report it is hard for them to find teachers they can trust and with whom they can share their personal concerns. Arguably relationships would improve if more teachers were seen as actually having the skills to provide effective help (ibid). (p.24)

If a child is not communicating, there are signs that indicate they could be being bullied at school. These signs include trying to avoid school or social situations, greater sensitivity and mood swings, changes in eating and sleeping, and unexplained physical symptoms. If children are demonstrating any of these patterns, parents could gently ask children how things are going in various areas of their lives (Healy, K, What should parents do if their child is bullied at school?). (p.28)

The largest and most powerful group in a bullying situation is the bystander, but the majority of onlookers remain as bystanders, failing to stand up, support or assist the victim (Bully Zero Australia Foundation, Respond to bullying). (p.31)

Cyber bullying is the deliberate use of social media platforms, information and communication technologies, new media technologies i.e. (email, phones, chatrooms, discussion groups, applications, instant messaging, blogs, video clips, cameras, hate websites/pages, blogs and gaming sites) to repeatedly harass, threaten, humiliate and victimise another with the intention to cause harm, reputation damage, discomfort and intimidation (Bully Zero Australia Foundation, Cyber bullying is a crime). (p.35)

Cyber bullying can include: harassment, flaming/trolling, denigration, impersonation, outing and trickery, exclusion, cyber-stalking, sexting, and pornography (ibid). (pp. 35-36)

Online bullying is different from face-to-face bullying in several ways: the person being bullied cannot always tell who the person bullying them is. Those doing the bullying may feel empowered to say and do more destructive things than they would face-to-face; getting rid of offensive material on the internet can be very difficult; it can be more public and widespread. What may have been a school issue can escalate and ‘go viral’, reaching a much larger audience; it can occur any time of the day or night. This can create a sense of there being no escape (NSW Department of Education, Anti-bullying online). (p.41)
Bullying
Bullying is an ongoing misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behaviour that causes physical and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power over one or more persons. Bullying can happen in person or online, and it can be obvious (overt) or hidden (covert). Bullying in any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved, including bystanders. Types of bullying behaviour include: verbal or written abuse, violence, sexual harassment, homophobia, racial discrimination and cyberbullying. Single incidents and conflict or fights between equals, whether in person or online, are not defined as bullying.

Bystander behaviour
A bystander is someone who sees or knows about maltreatment, harassment, aggression, violence or bullying that is happening to someone else. Supportive bystander behaviours are actions and/or words that are intended to support someone who is being attacked, abused or bullied. The actions of a supportive bystander can stop or diminish a specific bullying incident or help a victim to recover from it.

Covert bullying
Any form of aggressive behaviour that is repeated, intended to cause harm, characterised by an imbalance of power and is hidden from, or unacknowledged by, adults. It can include the spreading of rumours or attempts at socially excluding others.

Cyberbullying
A form of covert bullying carried out through the use of technology (e.g. on the internet through emails, blogs and social networking sites and via mobile phones). It has many similarities with offline bullying, but can be anonymous and reach a wide audience. Most people who cyberbully also bully offline. Cyberbullying has a number of unique features: it allows for a potentially infinite audience to view or participate; it is often anonymous as perpetrators can hide behind false identities; it has a permanency of expression as information shared online can be difficult to remove and may be recorded and archived; it may be difficult to escape from the bullying as people often use technology every day and in the case of mobile phones can be constantly contactable; content can be duplicated easily; and content is often searchable.

Discrimination
Occurs when people are treated less favourably than others because of their race, culture or ethnic origin; religion; physical characteristics; gender; sexual orientation; marital, parenting or economic status; age; ability or disability and that offends, humiliates, intimidates or creates a hostile environment. Harassment may be an ongoing pattern of behaviour, or it may be a single act. It may be directed randomly or towards the same person/s. It may be intentional or unintentional (i.e. words or actions that offend and distress one person may be genuinely regarded by the person doing them as minor or harmless).

Method of shared concern
A non-punitive method of dealing with bully/victim incidents which aims at empowering students who have contributed to the bullying or become aware of the bullying to act so as to resolve the problem. It is a multi-stage process, starting with individual interviews which lead on to group meetings. This method assumes that the bullying is strongly influenced by the relationships the students have with each other.

No blame approach
This approach provides teachers with a way of encouraging empathy and dealing with individual bullying or harassment behaviours. The teacher acts both as facilitator and intermediary between the parties.

Overt bullying
Often easier to see than the covert form, overt bullying includes direct aggression with intent to distress, upset and hurt. It includes behaviours such as verbal abuse, making fun of someone or belittling, threats, physical or verbal attacks, personal insults and humiliation.

Restorative justice
Refers to structured processes designed to repair the harm and teach and encourage more socially responsible behaviours after incidents such as bullying. Examples include: the formal apology; the method of shared concern; restitution; and community conferencing.

School bullying
Psychological, emotional, cyber, social or physical harassment of one student by another at school or within the school community. This includes inside school and within its grounds, in transit between school and home, local shopping and sporting centres, at parties or local parks and in cyberspace. The playground is the most common place for bullying to occur.

Stalking
Defined as the continual harassment of one person by another, or persistent and unwanted attention. Stalking is often due to the stalker wanting to form or keep a relationship, but going about it in an inappropriate way. Examples include: hanging around someone’s house; following someone around; and making constant unwanted contact, in person or via phone or email.

Harassment
Behaviour that targets an individual or group due to their identity, race, culture or ethnic origin; religion; physical characteristics; gender; sexual orientation; marital, parenting or economic status; age; ability or disability and that offends, humiliates, intimidates or creates a hostile environment. Harassment may be an ongoing pattern of behaviour, or it may be a single act. It may be directed randomly or towards the same person/s. It may be intentional or unintentional (i.e. words or actions that offend and distress one person may be genuinely regarded by the person doing them as minor or harmless).
Websites with further information on the topic

Alannah and Madeline Foundation  www.amf.org.au
Australian Institute of Family Studies  https://aifs.gov.au
Bully Zero Australia Foundation  http://bzaf.org.au
Bullying. No Way!  www.bullyingnoway.gov.au
headspace  www.headspace.org.au
Ken Rigby  www.kenrigby.net
Kids Helpline  www.kidshelpline.com.au
National Centre Against Bullying  www.ncab.org.au
Office of the eSafety Commissioner  www.esafety.gov.au
Raising Children Network  www.raisingchildren.net.au
ReachOut Australia  www.au.reachout.com
Student Wellbeing Hub  https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au
Think U Know (Australian Federal Police)  www.thinkuknow.org.au
Youth Beyond Blue  www.youthbeyondblue.com

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ILLUSTRATIONS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

THANK YOU
▷ ReachOut Australia
▷ Office of the eSafety Commissioner
▷ Australian Human Rights Commission
▷ Alannah and Madeline Foundation/National Centre Against Bullying.

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