Dealing with Bullying

Edited by Justin Healey

Volume | 330

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Dealing with Bullying is Volume 330 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 is the deliberate desire by one or more people to hurt, threaten or frighten someone with words, behaviour or actions. Bullying can be verbal, physical, social or psychological and is one of the major issues facing young people today. It occurs at school, in the workplace, and even online as cyberbullying – it is very common, and it can happen to anyone. Bullying can have devastating impacts on victims, and it can also have detrimental effects on all involved, including bullies.

This book identifies the various forms of bullying, explains its causes and effects, and presents advice on how to develop strategies in schools, workplaces and online to deal with bullying behaviour. Banish bullying – don’t put up with it, deal with it.

The topic is presented in three chapters: Bullying at school; Cyberbullying; Bullying at work.

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.
SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS AND BULLYING

How safe and secure are Australia’s children? The following extract from ‘A Picture of Australia’s Children’ by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare addresses this question in relation to bullying.

Children who are bullied may have higher absenteeism, lower academic achievement, physical and somatic symptoms, anxiety and depression, social dysfunction, and alcohol and substance use. No national data are currently available on bullying due to definition and measurement difficulties.

An essential function of all Australian schools is to promote and provide a supportive learning environment in which all students can expect to feel safe (MCEETYA 2005). School connectedness and supportive social relationships have been associated with positive child outcomes such as lower levels of absenteeism, aggression, substance use and sexual risk behaviour, and higher levels of academic achievement and self-esteem among children (Hopkins et al. 2007; Springer et al. 2006).

School bullying removes that safe environment. In Australia, there is currently no agreed definition for bullying; however, the most commonly cited definition is the “repeated oppression, psychological or physical harm, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons” (DEST 2006).

Bullying typically involves a power imbalance and deliberate acts that cause physical, psychological and emotional harm (Lodge 2008). It can either be direct (for example, hitting and teasing) or indirect/covert (for example, spreading gossip, deliberately excluding or enforcing social isolation, and sending malicious text messages) (DEST 2007). Bullying often occurs because of differences between the bullies and the victims, such as culture, ethnicity, age, ability or disability, religion, body size and physical appearance, personality, sexual orientation, and economic status (Rigby 2009).

Bullying in Australian schools is widely recognised as a problem, with over 20 per cent of males and 15 per cent of females aged 8 to 18 years reporting being bullied at least once a week (Rigby & Slee 1999).

The negative consequences of school bullying include higher absenteeism in children who are bullied, lower academic achievement and consequent lower vocational and social achievement, physical and somatic symptoms, anxiety, social dysfunction, depression, school failure, and alcohol and substance use (Lodge 2008; Spector & Kelly 2006).

ANTI-BULLYING PROGRAMS

Concern about bullying in schools has resulted in numerous schools in Australia and overseas developing and implementing anti-bullying programs (Rigby & Thomas 2002). An evaluation of the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs in reducing bullying among children aged 5 and 12 years, between 1985 and 2001, found reductions in overall bullying behaviour for the majority of schools with anti-bullying programs (Rigby 2002a, 2002b). The largest reported reduction in bullying was found by Olweus (1991) in Norway in the 1980s, with reductions of 50 per cent or...
more in bully or victim problems, reductions in antisocial
behaviour, and improved student satisfaction with school
life and the social climate of the classroom. The Friendly
Schools and Families Program, an evidence-based program
in Australia, has also shown a very significant reduction in
bullying behaviour (Edith Cowan University 2008).

Bullying typically involves a power imbalance
and deliberate acts that cause physical,
psychological and emotional harm.

In Australia, the House of Representatives Standing
Committee on Employment, Education and Training
responded to the issue of bullying in Australian schools
in a 1994 inquiry on violence in schools. The inquiry
found that bullying was a major problem in schools and
recommended the development of intervention programs
to reduce school bullying (House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Employment, Education and
Training 1994).

The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment,
Training and Youth Affairs, through its Taskforce on
Student Learning and Support Services, has developed
a National Safe Schools Framework to help schools and
their communities tackle bullying and violence, among
other issues. Jurisdictions report on their strategies and
efforts to provide safe, supportive learning environments
through the annual National report on schooling in Australia
(MCEETYA 2008c, and earlier years).

HOW TO MEASURE BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

There are a number of important aspects to consider
when measuring bullying, including the severity (type of
bullying and frequency) and the effect that bullying has
on the child, which may vary depending on children’s
resilience.

A widely used instrument to measure bullying behav-
ours in school-aged children is the Olweus Bully/Victim
Questionnaire. This questionnaire measures bully and
victim problems such as exposure to various physical,
verbal, indirect, racial or sexual forms of bullying; various
forms of bullying other students; where the bullying occurs;
pro-bully and pro-victim attitudes; the extent to which the
social environment (teachers, peers, parents) is informed
about and reacts to the bullying; victims’ experiences
and feelings of acceptance by classmates, negative self-
evaluations and depressive tendencies (Jimerson & Furlong
2006; Olweus 1996).

Rigby and Slee (1993) used the Peer Relations Questionnaire
to estimate the prevalence of bullying in schools and to
determine how children feel about bullying, how they
typically react towards bullying in terms of the frequency
or intensity of the bullying, and what they are prepared to
do about it. Information was also collected on how children
are affected by bullying depending on the child’s resilience.

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire collects
information about children’s risk of developing a clinically
significant behavioural problem (Goodman 2001). This
questionnaire has been widely used within Australia and
has good reliability and validity. The questionnaire collects
information from parents on whether their child (aged 4
to 12 years) was ‘picked on’ or bullied by other children or
young people. However, it does not incorporate questions
on the severity, regularity or effects of bullying.

HOW MANY CHILDREN ARE
BULLIED IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS?

Key national indicator: under development

There is currently no indicator or national data source
available for school relationships and bullying, due to
definition and measurement difficulties. Further consult-
ation and research are required in order to identify the
most appropriate tool to use in measuring and collecting
information on relationships and bullying in the Australian
school context.

Victorian data from the Strengths and Difficulties
Questionnaire are presented here in the interim. According
to the 2006 Victorian Child Health and Wellbeing Survey,
around 24 per cent of parents reported that it was either
certainly or somewhat true that their child was bullied
(Vic DHS 2006).
Bullying is ongoing physical, emotional or verbal aggression by one or more people against others. It is widespread and commonly found where children gather. It can have detrimental effects on all involved, including the bully. Schools, early childhood services and sporting or interest groups have a responsibility to ensure a safe environment and should have policies to prevent bullying. Parents can help by believing and supporting their child. This includes helping your child to develop coping techniques and speaking to those in authority where the bullying is occurring.

**Bullying affects everyone involved**
It is now recognised that long-term bullying can be very damaging for all involved. There are three groups involved in bullying who are affected:
- **The child being bullied** – who may experience effects on their health and wellbeing, including their sense of self and place in their world
- **The bully** – who needs to learn more appropriate ways of interaction and peaceful problem solving
- **The audience** – who witness bullying.

We are now learning the power of the audience. They are the ones who can stop the bullying from occurring by telling responsible adults what is going on. It is important that all children recognise that bullying is not acceptable, even if they are not involved, and that they can make a difference to help prevent bullying from occurring.

**Victims of bullying**
The bully can pick on anyone around them. Sometimes, though, they will choose children who seem easy to hurt and who they can successfully intimidate. They may pick on children who:
- Look or are different in some way
- Are loners
- Are stressed, either at home or at school
- Have a disability
- Struggle with schoolwork or other tasks set for the group
- Are not good at sport
- Lack social confidence
- Are anxious

➤ Prefer books to people
➤ Are academic
➤ Are unable to hold their own because they are smaller, weaker or younger.

Occasionally, children provoke other children to bully. Very competitive environments can contribute to bullying.

**Adults may not be the first to know**
Children who are being bullied may not always tell adults first. They usually tell a friend or sibling before they will confide in other family members. Most children will not tell those in authority at the place where the bullying is occurring. They may be afraid or ashamed, or they may not have any confidence that those in authority can do anything about the bullying.

**Look out for signs and effects**
Some signs of a child being bullied may include the child:
- Not wanting to go to the place where they are being bullied and finding excuses to stay at home (for example, feeling sick)
- Wanting to travel a different way, rather than the most obvious or quickest way, to avoid the children who are bullying them
- Being very tense, tearful and unhappy after attending the place where they are being bullied
- Talking about hating the place where they are being bullied or not having any friends
- Being covered in bruises or scratches
- Wearing torn clothes and not being able to explain how this happened
- Going without lunch as lunch or lunch money has gone missing
- Refusing to tell you what happens at the place where they are being bullied
- Changing in behaviour and demeanour
- Gaining or losing weight
- Suffering from an eroding confidence
- Producing varied academic achievements, with poor results in a particular area where previously these were much better.

Your child may show other signs such as unhappiness, being teary or withdrawn, or changes in behaviour. These may include problems with sleeping, bedwetting and general regression. These signs may not necessarily mean your child is being bullied, but you need to check out what is worrying your child. You can do this by spending time encouraging your child to talk to you about their worries. This means listening (without interrupting) and believing your child.

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Parents can help

There are several things parents can do to help. These include:

- Listen to your child and take their feelings and fears seriously
- Try not to take everything into your own hands (depending on the age of the child), as this is likely to make your child feel even less in control
- Help your child to work out their own non-violent ideas and strategies for coping with the problem as a first step
- It is not helpful to call your child names (such as ‘weak’ or ‘a sook’) and don’t allow anyone else to do so
- If the bullying involves verbal teasing, you may be able to help your child to learn to ignore it. Practise at home ways to help your child gain confidence (for example, walking past with their head up)
- Help your child think of ways to avoid the situation (for example, going home a different way or staying with a supportive group)
- Some children are helped by imagining a special wall around them, which protects them so that the hard words bounce off
- Work on building your child’s confidence in things they do well
- Be very careful that your child does not feel that being bullied is their fault
- Encourage your child to have different groups of friends and be involved in different activities so they can see clearly where the bullying is occurring and where it is not. This helps children know where they can feel safe and to know it is not their fault.

At the place where the bullying is occurring

Talk to those in authority about the bullying. All schools, early childhood services and sporting or interest groups should have policies that deal with bullying.

Some suggestions include:

- Make a list of the things that have happened to your child. Be clear and firm about their suffering. Be prepared to name the children who bully. If bullying persists, write down ‘who’, ‘what’, ‘where’ and ‘when’
- Talk to those in authority about how they deal with bullying – what steps they take to prevent bullying occurring and how they protect children
- Talk to the appropriate person about what can be done to help your child. Keep in contact until the problem is sorted out
- If you find it difficult to go to the authorities to talk about this, take a friend with you.

It is important for your child’s ongoing wellbeing to get professional support if bullying is an ongoing problem for your child, or if it happens to your child in a lot of different situations and with different children.

Why children bully

Although the research is not entirely clear, it is generally recognised that bullies engage in this behaviour because it enables them to feel important. They may need to have control over something (or someone) to compensate for other areas in their lives where they feel alone or outcast, or they may be being bullied themselves. Bullies learn this behaviour from their environment.

Bullies also suffer in the long term through poor academic achievements, poor social skills and poor adult relationships. Without support and guidance to change their bullying behaviour, the child bully can take this behaviour into adulthood.

If your child is the bully

If your child is bullying others, it is worth looking at the home environment and reflecting on a few questions:

- How is discipline handled with your child?
- What problem-solving skills are your children exposed to? How is conflict handled?
- Is your child exposed to helpful ways to communicate with other people?
- Is there unhappiness, arguing, relationship problems, conflict, fighting or violence at home that the child might be witnessing? Do they somehow think they are to blame?
- Is your child worried or frightened about something?
- What inappropriate, perhaps violent, interactions is your child exposed to through the media?

Where to get help

- Your child’s school or early childhood service
- Kids Helpline Tel. 1800 551 800
- Parentline Tel. 132 289
- Your doctor
- Your local community health centre
- Youth worker.

Things to remember

- Let your child know that bullying is wrong. Take your child’s fears and feelings seriously, and help work out ways of dealing with them
- Reassure your child that being bullied is not their fault and that something can and will be done about it
- Let your child know that bullying happens to lots of children
- Protect your child by involving the school or club, or those in charge of wherever the bullying is happening
- Help your child to feel good about the other things in his or her life.

This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by, NAPCAN.
WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is common and can happen to anyone. If you are being bullied and need support, it is important that you read this advice from ReachOut.com

If you are being bullied and need support, it is important that you read this fact sheet and go to the Get Help section of the ReachOut.com website.

If you know or see someone being bullied go to the Supportive Bystander fact sheet at ReachOut.com to find out how to help them.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

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. These actions are usually done by people who have more influence or power over someone else, or who want to make someone else feel less powerful or helpless.

Bullying is not the same as conflict between people (like having a fight) or disliking someone, even though people might bully each other because of conflict or dislike.

The sort of repeated behaviour that can be considered bullying includes:

➤ Keeping someone out of a group (online or offline)
➤ Acting in an unpleasant way near or towards someone
➤ Giving nasty looks, making rude gestures, calling names, being rude and impolite, and constantly negative teasing
➤ Spreading rumours or lies, or misrepresenting someone (i.e. using their Facebook account to post messages as if it were them)
➤ Mucking about that goes too far
➤ Harassing someone based on their race, sex, religion, gender or a disability

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.

➤ Intentionally and repeatedly hurting someone physically
➤ Intentionally stalking someone
➤ Taking advantage of any power over someone else like a Prefect or a Student Representative.

Bullying is common and can happen anywhere. It can be in schools, at home, at work, in online social spaces, via text messaging or via email. It can be physical, verbal, emotional, and it also includes messages, public statements and behaviour online intended to cause distress or harm (also known as cyberbullying). But no matter what form bullying takes, the results can be the same: severe distress and pain for the person being bullied.

TYPES OF BULLYING

Face-to-face bullying (sometimes referred to as direct bullying) involves physical actions such as punching or kicking or direct verbal actions such as name-calling and insulting.

Covert bullying (sometimes referred to as indirect bullying) is less direct, but just as painful. It means bullying which isn’t easily seen by others and is conducted out of sight, such as excluding people from groups or spreading lies or rumours. Because it is less obvious, it is often unacknowledged by adults.

Cyberbullying occurs through the use of information or communication technologies such as instant messaging or chat, text messages, email and social networking sites or forums. It has many similarities with offline bullying, but it can also be anonymous, it can reach a wide audience, and sent or uploaded material can be difficult to
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Most people who cyberbully also bully offline. 
Source: National Safe Schools Framework

HOW CAN BULLYING AFFECT YOU?
Bullying affects everyone in different ways. But there are common feelings that come up when you are being bullied.

How bullying can affect individuals:
➤ 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.

How bullying can affect other people:
Bullying can have a negative impact on everyone – it is not just a problem for victims and bullies. If you see or know of others being bullied you may feel angry, fearful, guilty, and sad.
You may feel as bad as those who are being bullied.
You may also feel worried that the bullying could happen to you.
When bullying isn’t stopped or challenged by anyone it can create an environment where bullying is accepted and where everyone feels powerless to stop it.

You have a right to feel safe and to be treated fairly and respectfully. Bullying is a serious problem with serious mental and physical impacts.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS
You have a right to feel safe and to be treated fairly and respectfully. Bullying is a serious problem with serious mental and physical impacts.

Bullying can violate many of your human rights including:
➤ Your right to be free from mental, emotional and physical violence
➤ Your right to education
➤ Your right to a safe work environment.

For more information about your rights go to the Know Your Rights fact sheet at ReachOut.com.

WHY DO PEOPLE BULLY OTHERS?
People bully for different reasons. Those who bully persistently are likely to do so in order to dominate others and improve their social status. They may have high self-esteem, show little regret for their bullying behaviour and not see bullying as morally wrong.
Other people may bully out of anger or frustration, they may struggle socially and could have also been victims of bullying.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO STOP BULLIES?
➤ If you know or see someone who is being bullied, check out the Supportive Bystander fact sheet
➤ If you are being bullied, you should talk to someone you know well and trust; they will give you much needed support and will often have suggestions you hadn’t considered for helping with the situation
➤ You might feel more comfortable taking a friend with you to talk to the bully or when seeking help. If you feel you might get too nervous to speak, write down what you’d like to say on paper or in an email
➤ If you feel safe and confident, you should approach the person who is bullying you and tell them that their behaviour is unwanted and not acceptable
➤ If you are being bullied while at school, it is a good idea to seek help from a friend, or to talk to a teacher or counsellor to see if they can help
➤ If you are being bullied at work, check out the fact sheet on Workplace Bullying at ReachOut.com.

GETTING HELP
If you have been bullied or witnessed others being bullied and need help contact:
➤ Kids Help Line (1800 55 1800) is a free and confidential, telephone counselling service for 5 to 25 year olds in Australia. www.kidshelp.com.au
➤ Lifeline (13 11 14) is a free and confidential service staffed by trained telephone counsellors. www.lifeline.org.au
➤ The 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

This fact sheet was developed in partnership with the Australian Human Rights Commission, 2011.

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Bullying is one of the major issues facing children and young people today. Its negative impacts have been found to affect not only victims, but bullies also. Recent findings suggest that one in four Year 4 to 9 students are bullied every few weeks or more in Australia. Other studies indicate figures somewhere between 33% and 70%. Given that many victims of bullying do not report their experiences to parents or school authorities, even these figures may underestimate the prevalence of this problem.

The exact definition of bullying is contested. Historically, many have defined bullying as behaviour occurring either at school or in transit to/from school. However, peer group bullying can also occur outside these times, both in and out of the home. As the use of communication technologies rapidly grows among young people, various technological environments have also become an increasingly popular forum for bullying, known as 'cyberbullying'.

Despite varied definitions, it is generally agreed that three core elements exist in any bullying behaviour. These include:

➤ A deliberate intent to harm
➤ A power imbalance between the perpetrator and the victim
➤ (Often) repeated behaviour.

Within this, peer group bullying can take many forms, including physical harassment and/or violence, property damage, direct or indirect verbal insults involving socially and emotionally hurtful rumour, innuendo, gesture, exclusion from friendship networks and other forms of negative social interaction (e.g. threats, extortion).

Cyberbullying specifically refers to the transmission of hurtful messages and images by SMS, email or internet, used to cause psychological and social harm to others. Whilst reported rates of cyberbullying in Australia and abroad are not as high as reports of school-related bullying, the increasing use of communication technologies and their unique characteristics, make cyberbullying a notable and concerning form of bullying.

The negative physical, psychological and social impacts of bullying, harassment and violent assault are well documented. Whether it occurs in school, online or outside of school, all forms of bullying, harassment and violence have the potential to engender fear, depression, loneliness, anxiety, insecurity, decreased self-worth, academic lethargy and, in some cases, self-harm and thoughts of suicide. Additionally, physical harassment may provoke physical retaliation, which places victims at risk of further physical and emotional harm.

In the case of cyberbullying, many believe that the unique characteristics of this form of bullying can intensify impacts even further, because public humiliation or embarrassment can occur across a wider audience. Moreover, cyberbullying has the ability to be more invasive as the bully is able to breach the privacy and security of their victim’s home.

Children and young people can fall victim to bullying, harassment or assault at any age. However, the most common age for school-related bullying appears to be during the transition ages from primary to secondary school. For cyberbullying, studies show that incidence in later high school years is also common. For non-school related violence, the age trend is higher again, occurring mostly in later high school years, up to 25 years of age.

While many surveys suggest that young males tend to be the primary perpetrators and victims of ‘traditional’ school-related bullying behaviour, there seems to be some contradiction where cyberbullying is concerned. Recent research has shown that cyberbullying appears to follow the opposite gender pattern. Girls tend to report slightly higher involvement than boys in this more covert style of bullying, both as bullies and victims.

Interestingly, young people are often not exclusively classifiable as ‘bully’ or ‘victim’. At various times they may be bullied, be the bully or act as a witness and bystander to a bullying episode. Similar to other research, a recent...
study conducted by Kids Helpline found that almost one third of cyberbully victims had also bullied others, either offline and/or via communication technology.  

The Kids Helpline experience

Kids Helpline records data on a range of problems and issues facing children and young people. Up until 2008, all bullying-related contacts were classified as either ‘School-related Bullying’ or ‘Harassment/Violent Assault’ when occurring outside of a school context. In July 2008, an additional problem type named ‘Cyber-Harassment and Bullying’ was included. This was in recognition of the increasing number of contacts specifically relating to this new form of harassment.

For the purpose of this report, data from all three problem types has been collectively referred to as ‘Bullying/Assault’. Where data relates only to a specific type of classification above.

During 2009, a total of 2,498 Kids Helpline contacts reported bullying/assault related issues as their primary concern. This included 1,976 reports of school-related bullying, 200 reports of cyberbullying and 322 reports related to harassment/assault. A further 481 reported bullying/assault as their secondary reason for contact. In total, Kids Helpline counsellors engaged in 2,979 counselling sessions with young people reporting bullying/assault – approximately 57 contacts per week.

Between 2005-2009, Kids Helpline received a total of 14,471 counselling contacts where the primary purpose of the contact related to bullying/assault. Breaking a seven-year downward trend, the number and proportion of contacts related to bullying/assault during 2009 were consistent with 2008 help-seeking rates (representing approximately 57 contacts per week).

Between 2005-2009, Kids Helpline received a total of 14,471 counselling contacts where the primary purpose of the contact related to bullying/assault. Breaking a seven-year downward trend, the number and proportion of contacts related to bullying/assault during 2009 were consistent with 2008 help-seeking rates (representing 4.9% of counselling sessions in 2008 and 4.7% in 2009).

Mode of contact

Kids Helpline provides counselling to children and young people via phone, email and real-time web. In 2009, phone was the preferred method for all bullying/assault related contacts (80% overall). Online methods were less common for contacts relating to harassment/violent assault (13%), as shown in the graph below.

Geographic location

Consistent with the geographical breakdown of all Kids Helpline counselling contacts, the majority (69%) of bullying/assault related contacts in 2009 were from metropolitan areas. Contacts from New South Wales (NSW) represented the majority (34%), followed by Victoria (24%) and Queensland (21%).

When looking specifically at cyberbullying, slightly higher contact numbers can be seen in NSW and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) compared with overall Kids Helpline counselling contacts. Where NSW accounted for 33% of all counselling contacts in 2009, it accounted for 38% of cyberbullying contacts. Similarly, although the ACT accounted for only 2% of all counselling contacts, it accounted for 4% of cyberbullying contacts and 3% of harassment contacts.

Age and gender

Despite research results that show young males are more likely than females to be perpetrators and victims of school-related bullying, young females are more likely than males to share their experiences with Kids Helpline. Additionally, females are more likely than males to be the target of cyberbullying. Both of these findings are depicted in the graph above.

Although still the minority, the proportion of males reporting school-related bullying or harassment/violent

Claudia*, 10 years, was experiencing long-term bullying that left her with nightmares and a sense of dread about what she has been experiencing at school. She was feeling very stuck. Claudia was able to talk about her fears around going to school and even going to sleep at night. The counsellor let Claudia know it was not her fault that she was being bullied and she was really brave to take action to change things. They talked about letting the teachers know that the bullying hadn’t stopped.

Claudia decided she would need some help from her mum to talk to the teachers again so they also spoke about making sure that her mum knew about what was going on. The counsellor also made sure that Claudia knew that it was important to tell her mum that she had been having nightmares.

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* names have been changed for privacy reasons

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Barwon*, 14 years, reported that he has been bullied at school for the past 12 months. He also said the bullying continues at home because the people ring him and send him text messages. Barwon is away on holidays at the moment. He said he doesn’t want to go home because of the bullying. He has had thoughts in the past about suicide due to the bullying.

The counsellor first explored how Barwon was currently feeling to ensure that he was feeling safe and not considering ending his life. He indicated that he had been feeling much better while being on holidays as the bullies had not been able to reach him. Barwon was given a clear message that what has been happening is NOT his fault and that he had done the right thing to call. The nature of the bullying behaviour was discussed and Barwon recognised that sometimes his reaction to the bullying made things more difficult because the bullies ‘got a laugh’ when he became angry and upset. They discussed how he might be able to react differently to take the ‘fun’ out of the behaviour for the bullies. The counsellor also suggested the possibility of turning his phone off when he was at home, to give him time out. Barwon indicated that he would think about this.

assault (34% and 36% respectively), is considerably higher than the proportion of all males contacting Kids Helpline (20%). In contrast, the gender breakdown of 2009 cyberbullying contacts is more in line with the proportion of overall counselling contacts for the year, with only 22% represented by males. Regardless of gender, young people aged 10-14 years made up the majority (70%) of 2009 contacts for whom school-related bullying was the primary concern. This reflects a five year trend at Kids Helpline despite the proportion of overall contacts trending towards an older client base.

Similarly, and consistent with other research,10-14 year olds also represented the majority (51%) of cyberbullying contacts. However, contacts relating to harassment/violent assault were dominated by the older cohort 15-18 years. The following graph shows the full age breakdown of contacts.

Cultural background

The total number of all bullying/assault related contacts from Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in 2009 was 145 (6%). Contacts from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds represented 15%.

Indigenous children and young people, although representing only 3% of all Kids Helpline counselling contacts in 2009, represented almost 5% of school-related bullying contacts and 10% of harassment/violent assault contacts.

Severity of concerns

Counsellors rate all counselling contacts into five levels of severity. For school-related bullying and cyberbullying contacts these range from information seeking to a one-off experience to continual and/or frequent bullying. Contacts relating to harassment/violent assault also include threats and client injury as severity categories.

In the past five years, the number of school-related bullying cases reporting the more extreme severity of frequent/continual harassment has increased from 39% in 2005 to 51% in 2009. The first full year of cyberbullying specific data shows the majority (57%) were reported as isolated events. As the graph above shows, this represented only a slightly higher incidence than contacts reporting episodic events of school-related bullying (36%).

For harassment/violent assault contacts, the most frequent severities reported in 2009 were isolated incidents and threats of harm (32% and 33% respectively). Remaining contacts related to prolonged/frequent attacks (18%), injury (8%) and seeking information (9%).

Types of bullying

Qualitative analysis of 1,127 school-related and cyberbullying contacts for which case notes were recorded identified a number of common types of bullying occurring in 2009.

The most common of these include threats, name-calling/teasing, physical violence/assault, spreading rumours and exclusion from peer groups. In instances of cyberbullying, social networking sites and instant messenger were the most common methods used for victimising. SMS was also common. In contrast, analysis
of 170 contacts relating to harassment/violent assault showed quite different themes.

Specifically, the most common types of this form of abuse were found to be:
- Physical assault
- Direct threat to personal safety
- Being followed/chased
- Verbal abuse.

**Impacts of bullying**

Qualitative analysis of client contact notes for all bullying/assault-related counselling sessions in 2009 identified a number of common emotional and behavioural impacts. These findings are consistent with other research undertaken by Kids Helpline over the past decade.

Overall, the most frequent impacts reported included feelings of:
- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Low self-esteem and loss in confidence
- Fear for personal safety
- Anger and thoughts of revenge
- Disengagement from school/class.

During 2009, counsellors also recorded whether children and young people contacting Kids Helpline had recently engaged in deliberate self-injury (as distinct from suicidality). In 100 of the bullying/assault related counselling sessions (4%), young people reported deliberately injuring themselves in a way they believed to be non-lethal. A further 50 contacts (2%) reported having current thoughts of suicide.

**Factors contributing to bullying**

Analysis of 1,297 bullying/assault-related contacts highlighted a number of differences between the contributing factors of school-related bullying (and cyberbullying), compared with non-school harassment/violent assault, as shown in the table on page 9.

**Strategies used by children and young people**

Children and young people use a variety of strategies to try to cope with bullying. Methods such as ignoring, blocking, avoiding and retaliation were commonly reported, with varied reports of effectiveness.

In approximately two-thirds of bullying/assault-related contacts in 2009 for which case notes were recorded, young people had not told an adult about the incident, either because they felt they couldn’t or because they chose for Kids Helpline to be their first contact. Fear that speaking out may worsen the problem and increase retribution from the bully was a common reason given.

For cyberbullying in particular, fear that telling an adult would result in the child having their access to communication device(s) restricted is another common deterrent found in Kids Helpline data and other research.

Of those young people who had told an adult, qualitative analysis showed two groups emerging. The first includes those who report that speaking out has been supportive and helpful. Their contact to Kids Helpline is to talk further about the issue and get additional assistance, ideas and strategies.

The second group includes those who are experiencing ongoing bullying despite having told parents and/or teachers. These young people are contacting Kids Helpline feeling very powerless, and often facing some significant impacts. In 2009, they sadly represented at least 10% of contacts who reported telling an adult.

A trap many parents, teachers and other carers working with children and young people reportedly fell into was to ignore, minimise and/or unintentionally blame the victim. Often there is an inherent message that it is their fault and they should actively do something about it – an approach that can often just intensify their emotional hurt regarding the bullying.

**BoysTown’s response to the issue of bullying, harassment and physical violence**

Based on its own data and that of other contemporary research, BoysTown recognises that bullying is widespread and, in many cases, severe.

In our experience from working with thousands of young people who have experienced bullying, we believe that engendering respect and the valuing of diversity needs to be key ingredients in any effective anti-bullying strategy.

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Andre’s*, mother initiated the call after her 12 year-old son told her that he wanted to kill himself.

Andre said he is bullied at school by various kids because he has buck teeth. This involves being kicked and punched regularly. Andre said the teachers blame him for what happens, saying he is targeted because he reacts. His mother said Andre has had three violent outbursts this week and he picks on his younger sister regularly. Andre advised that he doesn’t want to go back to school because he feels powerless over what is happening. The counsellor discussed a safety plan with Andre’s mum to ensure he was monitored overnight and external assessment sought in the morning to help work out his anger and thoughts of suicide. Andre then spoke with the counsellor and discussed some options to assist him at school but agreed he call back after his appointment tomorrow to discuss this more. They decided it was most important that Andre look after himself first before trying to work on the problem at school.

* names have been changed for privacy reasons

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Hannah*, 10 years, said she is troubled by bullies at school and at home as they live down the road. They are calling her names and hitting her, leaving bruises. She has complained to the teacher and principal but nothing has been done. The teacher has told her to ignore them and to try not to provoke. The counsellor let Hannah know that she believed her, that it was not okay that she was being bullied and that to get her they would try to work out a way to make sure Hannah is safe at home and at school.

Hannah had thought it might be helpful to try to write down all of the things that had happened to her in the last month and try showing her teacher as well as letting her dad know about the problems she is having with the kids at home. The counsellor indicated that she might like to try this. They also worked out a plan for Hannah to play near where the teacher was ‘on duty’ at school so that she would not be hurt there.

More specifically, BoysTown believes:

➤ All children and young people deserve the right to grow up in an environment free from bullying, harassment and violence
➤ Victims of bullying should never be made to feel that they are to blame – it is not their fault
➤ School and community environments should encourage and support care, respect, inclusion, diversity, cooperation and nonviolent resolution of conflict
➤ All children and young people should be encouraged to speak out and be supported to ensure their safety once they have spoken out
➤ Contemporary communication behaviour of children and young people including their preferences for help seeking should be respected in the delivery of support services. As well as face-to-face psychological support, telephone and online counselling together with interactive and informative web sites are critical in supporting children and young people to overcome the impacts of bullying and other harassing behaviour.

BoysTown actively advocates for the implementation of effective anti-bullying prevention and intervention strategies. In recent years, we have contributed knowledge to relevant government inquiries and industry forums.

In 2009, BoysTown also undertook a specialised research project to further understand the issue of cyberbullying, particularly its impacts and the effectiveness of current interventions. It is intended that the findings of this research will be communicated to government, educators, service providers and the community to assist in minimising the impact that cyberbullying can have on the lives of young people.

In direct response to children and young people impacted by bullying, harassment and/or assault, Kids Helpline counsellors continue to offer strength-based empowerment counselling support, advice and referrals. Information and tips are also provided on the Kids Helpline website for both young people and adults seeking support and advice.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO BULLYING/ASSAULT
Harassment/violent assault

➤ Relationship conflict
   ➤ Partners (primarily boyfriend)
   ➤ Friendships
   ➤ Neighbours/work colleagues
➤ Public settings (initiated by strangers).

HELPFUL LINKS/RESOURCES

➤ www.kidshelp.com.au
➤ www.bullyingnoway.com.au
➤ www.cybersmart.gov.au
➤ www.cybersmart.gov.au/cybernetrix
➤ www.cybersmart.gov.au/wiseuptoit

REFERENCES

5. Rigby, K. (no date). What do we know about bullying in schools? Sourced from www.education.unisa.edu.au

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Explanations that are given to account for bullying in a school are important because they help to determine what school authorities do about it. In this article I will examine some of the more common explanations that have been suggested, consider the evidence for each of them and discuss the implications for anti-bullying programmes and practices.

1. Bullying is natural behaviour among children and as they develop they tend to grow out of it

There is some truth in this. Research evidence indicates that between the ages of 7 and 17 years there is a general trend towards fewer young people reporting being bullied by their peers. In part, this may be because with increasing age young people are more reluctant to admit, even to themselves, that they are being bullied. The trend is most evident for physical bullying suggesting that physical self-control increases with age. However, more sophisticated, indirect forms of aggression, such as social manipulation may actually increase.

The most obvious limitation to this explanation is that the tendency for bullying to reduce with age is temporarily reversed when children enter secondary school, in Year 7 in some Australian states, such as NSW, and in Year 8 in others, such as SA. Clearly the social environment may be such as to override any maturation effects that are due to age.

To the extent that it is believed that ‘natural’ development cannot be altered, this explanation is an undesirable one, as it may lead schools to ignore the problem. However, recognising developmental changes may also lead schools to examine ways in which the social maturity of children can be advanced. It may also lead to a recognition that there are age-related ways of bullying among children and age-appropriate methods of dealing with cases of bullying.

2. Bullying is due to individual differences between school children

A good deal of research has been conducted to identify correlates of bullying behaviour and being victimised at school. Generally, the findings are unsurprising: children identified as bullies tend to be stronger than average, more aggressive and lower in empathy; victims tend to be relatively weak physically, introverted and socially unskilled. These differences have been attributed to both genetic factors and to their social upbringing at home.

It should always be remembered that these are generalisations and there are many exceptions. In some schools bullying occurs much less often than others, despite a similar variation in the attributes of individual children. Further, we know that bullying is quite often conducted by groups of children, motivated by feelings of hostility or prejudice towards those they target.

Despite these limitations, it is reasonable for schools to identify children who are prone to become involved in bully/victim problems, either as bullies or victims or bully/victims and to seek to help them by understanding them as individuals and treating them accordingly.

3. Bullying can be explained by socio-cultural influences

It is here assumed that bullying behaviour can be explained by reference to the social or cultural group to which one belongs. These include gender, race or ethnicity and social class. Through a process of acculturation, group members may develop attitudes that incline them to bully those towards they feel socially superior.

It is claimed that boys commonly ‘construct’ a highly masculinised identity that inclines them to act in an aggressive manner towards girls and also towards those who do not conform to the masculine ideal and are accordingly labeled as ‘gay.’ There is consistent evidence that boys bully girls much more commonly than vice versa and that a good deal of bullying targets boys who appear to be effeminate or homosexual. There
is evidence of racist bullying, e.g. of Australian Aboriginal children, in some schools. However, racist bullying is not ubiquitous and evidence of bullying relating to social class differences is sparse.

Although explanations of bullying along these lines can be applied in cases of bullying in which some children are targeted because of their socio-cultural group membership, this explanation does not apply to cases of bullying within such social groups or bullying that is perpetrated by children who can be defined according to socio-cultural criteria.

The main value of this explanation lies in sensitising schools to different forms of social prejudice, especially those related to gender and race, and motivating schools to promote greater tolerance and more inclusive educational policy and practice.

4. Bullying can be explained by the way peer groups influence children

It is proposed that children in schools are most powerfully influenced by the social context in which they interact with others. This context can be described as operating at different levels. There is (i) the general school ethos in so far as it promotes or discourages bullying behaviour (ii) the specific group or groups to which children belong (with whom they habitually interact in their play) and (iii) the group of bystanders who are present when a bullying incident occurs. Typically bystanders are present.

Research indicates that the school ethos may vary greatly between schools, as reflected for instance by the degree to which students hold sympathetic attitudes towards victims. This factor is related to the extent of bullying behaviour in a school. We also know that much bullying is undertaken by students actively or passively under the influence of their close peer group, sometimes because it seems like fun, sometimes because individuals feel pressured by their group to go along. Finally, we know that bullying typically stops if bystanders act to discourage it.

This explanation for bullying tends to neglect factors that predispose individual children to become involved in bullying and also to discount sociocultural factors. But it is helpful in drawing attention to the group context of much bullying and the peer pressures that may motivate, sustain or terminate acts of bullying. Some powerful techniques that are consistent with this explanation include the No Blame Approach and the training of Student Bystanders to discourage bullying when they see it happening.

5. Bullying is due to inappropriate handling of shame: a restorative justice perspective

Bullying is seen as a shameful act, yet one that the bully does not acknowledge as shameful. It is proposed that if perpetrators could see it that way, the bullying would cease. The process of changing the bully's perception requires the cooperation of significant others who are ready and able to convey the shameful nature of the act and, at the same time, sincerely accept the individual who has recognised its shameful nature.

This approach combines a recognition of the individual psychology of the bully, who has lost an appropriate sense of shame, and the use of the potential restorative power of the wider community acting together to bring about the necessary change. Translating this theory into practice, typically requires the use of a procedure known as Community Conferencing at which the victim of the bullying is encouraged to speak out in the presence of the bully and other concerned people, graphically describing the harm that has been done. Restorative action is then required of the bully who must acknowledge the wrongdoing. Normally, this procedure is applied in cases of extreme bullying when a skilled facilitator is available, and when amenable, relevant community members can take part.

Although it is unlikely that this approach can be applied to all cases of bullying, depending as it does on the cooperation of those involved in addressing the problem, it has much appeal, especially to those who see bullying as essentially a moral matter in which the culpability of aggressors needs to be acknowledged as a step towards their meaningful integration in the school community.

Suggestions for addressing bullying in schools

Here are my suggestions for what schools can do in addressing bullying.

1. Adopt or devise a definition of bullying that is acceptable to the school staff. I suggest that a distinction is made between non-malign bullying, as when a child unintentionally hurts another child by what is said or done and malign bullying which is intentionally hurtful. Interest will focus mainly on the latter. A number of elements may be included in the definition, including (i) a desire to hurt (ii) the repeated hurting of another child or children through physical, verbal and/or indirect means (e.g. through exclusion) (iii) the targeted person(s) being unable to defend themselves adequately – due to there being an imbalance of power (iv) a sense of being oppressed on the part of the victim and (v) enjoyment by the bully. Note that individuals or groups may be involved as bullies or as victims. It is important that a definition be agreed upon.

2. The school staff should be informed or reminded that (i) bullying is harmful to the mental and physical health of victims, short and long term (ii) children who repeatedly engage in bullying are likely, if unchecked, to act in delinquent ways when they leave school (iii) there are Departmental policies relating to countering bullying (iv) there is a serious risk involved through litigation initiated by parents if reasonable steps are not taken to counter bullying and (v) research has shown that anti-bullying programs and practices can significantly reduce bullying, especially when undertaken collaboratively and fully by the school community.

3. The school should undertake to discover the nature, extent and effects of bullying among its community members.

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students. 13, 14 This can best be done using anonymous questionnaires, answered by students, school staff and parents. The task of reading and collating the responses from students and teachers should be shared among school staff, paying particular attention to written comments.

4. A committee of school staff should be appointed with clear terms of reference. I suggest these include (i) examining results from the survey and then planning a related presentation and discussion of their implications (ii) suggesting what actions the school should take to improve its response to school bullying (iii) providing a draft of a school anti-bullying policy for discussion and eventual adoption.

5. In the course of its deliberations I suggest that the committee consider (a) what the school can do to prevent bullying from occurring and (b) how the school may deal with actual cases of bullying.

6. Prevention should take into account what teachers can do in classroom meetings with students (i) to inform them about bullying and related school policy (ii) to advise them on how they might best respond to bullying. This may include developing and employing appropriate social skills; getting help from the school when needed; and helping others, for example, as bystanders or as trained mediators.

7. Prevention may also be promoted by other means, for example, by staff modelling pro-social behaviour; appropriate mentoring, supervision and surveillance of student behaviour when needed; providing or encouraging student activities that are cooperative and/or interesting (bullying often results from boredom).

8. Action to deal with bullying incidents. In considering the means of responding to cases of bullying, the committee should become familiar with a range of proposed methods and evaluate their likely effectiveness and support from staff as applied in one’s school. In doing so, consider whether different methods may be applicable to some problems but not others and to some age groups but not to others. In particular, examine the pros and cons of these: (i) the use of rules and consequences – and what consequences can follow (ii) problem-solving approaches, including mediation by staff and/or trained students, the No-Blame Approach, the Method of Shared Concern and Community Conferencing.

9. Consider how the school can work most effectively with parents and the wider community in both preventing bullying and in addressing actual cases should they arise.

10. Produce a well-coordinated plan that is well understood and supported by the school community.

NOTES


13. Questionnaires on bullying are described in the site described above. They include widely used paper questionnaires (The PRQ and the PRAQ). For further information: www.unisa.edu.au. Also contact Dr Barrington Thomas, PO Box 104, Point Lonsdale, Victoria, Australia. 3225.


Source: Bullying – What can we do? A paper for the seminar at the NSW Commission for Children and Young People
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Dealing with Bullying

Issues in Society | Volume 330
What can students do?

STUDENTS ARE IMPORTANT IN CREATING A SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT. BYSTANDER INFORMATION FROM BULLYING NO WAY

First of all, keep yourself safe. Each bullying situation is different. Responses need to be appropriate to the situation and it’s not always appropriate for young people to act alone.

Then, consider that the messages you give out, even in little ways, can make a huge difference. Research has shown that the greatest influence on students’ bystander behaviour is what they think their friends (i.e. you!) expect of them – not what their teacher or parents think.

You can help by some of the following:
➤ Make it clear to your friends that you won’t be involved in bullying behaviour
➤ Never stand by and watch or encourage bullying behaviour
➤ Do not harass, tease or spread gossip about others
➤ Respect everyone and value the differences between people
➤ Be friendly towards others who are new to your school, who are left out or on their own.

If you see someone being bullied, keep safe and choose your response to match the situation:
➤ Speak up and let the person doing the bullying know what they are doing is bullying
➤ Refuse to join in with their bullying and walk away
➤ Support the student who is being bullied to ask for help
➤ Ask a teacher or support person for help. Reporting what happened can help ‘unravel’ a situation.

You can help by being active at school:
➤ Be a leader by telling adults that you want to “take a stand and lend a hand” to stop bullying
➤ Find out how bullying is handled at your school – how is bullying identified, reported and dealt with?
➤ If there isn’t a policy on bullying in your school, get involved in developing one. If there is a policy already, find out what’s happening and work together to make it effective
➤ Ask your teachers to start up conversations about the issues which underlie bullying and bystander behaviours
➤ Join, or start, a student or staff group that promotes non-violence at your school. For example, a school welcomers group, whose task it is to welcome new students into the school and show them around
➤ Ask for help to start up a campaign to reduce bullying
➤ Talk with adults outside of school who can help stop bullying everywhere
➤ Spread the word that bullying isn’t cool!

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Bullying is something that grown-ups need to treat very seriously. Rather than leaving it up to a child to sort out, schools, parents and community groups can work together to fight bullying. Following is an information sheet from the Raising Children Network

Bullying can be devastating for children’s confidence and self-esteem. They need lots of love and support, both at home and wherever the bullying is happening. They also need to know that you will take action to prevent any further bullying.

If you suspect your child is being bullied, you could start with our overview of bullying and how to spot it. Or your child might be the one doing the bullying. Read our article on what to do if your child is bullying others.

TALKING TO YOUR CHILD’S SCHOOL

If your child is being bullied, get the help of your school as quickly as you can. Schools take bullying extremely seriously. Your child’s teachers will be trained in spotting and handling bullying. They will work with you to try to prevent further bullying.

Your school will assess the situation with you. Schools will always focus first on protecting the victim. Then they will look at changing the bullying behaviour and deterring others from bullying. Their suggestions will depend on the circumstances of the bullying and on the children involved.

Ask the school for a copy of its policy on bullying. Also talk to the school about how the policy will be put into action in your child’s situation.

HOW TO INVOLVE THE SCHOOL

➤ Tell your child you will talk to the school
➤ Discuss the problem with the class teacher or year coordinator
➤ Ask for the teacher’s views
➤ Be assertive, not angry or accusatory
➤ End the meeting with a plan for how the situation will be managed
➤ Keep in touch with the school.

If your child is being bullied, get the help of your school as quickly as you can. Schools take bullying extremely seriously.

Contacting the bully or the bully’s parents directly is likely to make the situation worse. It is always safer to work with the school or organisation rather than to try to solve bullying on your own.

IF THE BULLYING DOESN’T STOP

➤ Remember that it is still safer to work through your school than to take matters into your own hands
➤ Inform the school of any further bullying incidents
➤ Keep a record of what happens and when
➤ Write a note to the class teacher. Ask for your
IDEA HOW IT WORKS

Ignore it, and move away. You physically remove yourself from children who are teasing or bullying.

Tell the bully to stop. Standing up to bullies in a calm way lets them know that what they are trying to do is not working.

Avoid high-risk places. By keeping away from situations where bullying occurs, you can avoid the attention of bullies – as long as you are not missing out on activities because of this.

It takes time to change behaviour, so you might not see overnight results. Do let the school know, though, if your child continues to tell you about incidents of bullying.

If you’re not satisfied with the results, ask to see the school’s grievance procedure. If your child is still being bullied and you don’t think the school is doing enough to stop it, consider looking for another school with a better record of addressing bullying.

Give your child as much support and love as you can at home. Let your child know that the situation is not his fault, and it can be fixed.

SUPPORTING YOUR CHILD AT HOME

Give your child as much support and love as you can at home. Continue to offer support at home while you, the teacher and your child come up with a plan for fixing the bullying. Let your child know that the situation is not his fault, and it can be fixed.

You can give support by listening and talking. You can also give your child ideas for coping with the bullying.

If your child is being bullied, you should always step in. But it can also be helpful to give your child some skills to handle any future bullying or negative social behaviour to stop it getting worse. These skills can help your child’s social development.

It might also help your child to know why some children bully. The following suggestions for things to tell your child come from research on why children bully:

➤ ‘They are copying other people, and don’t know it’s wrong’
➤ ‘They don’t know how to be nice to other people’
➤ ‘They have a problem, and they think that making other people feel bad will make them feel better’
➤ ‘They never learned how to say please or talk about problems.’

Sourced from the Raising Children Network’s comprehensive and quality-assured Australian parenting website | http://raisingchildren.net.au
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Your child bullying others

Your child may be bullied, or may even be the one doing the bullying. Stepping in early is the key, advises the Raising Children Network

When it comes to bullying behaviour, your child might be the one affected. Or – shocking as this might be – your child might be the one doing the bullying. Stepping in early is the key to helping your child learn how to get along with others.

If your child’s behaviour includes pushing other children who can’t defend themselves, saying nasty things about them, or generally making them feel bad, it might be time to talk to him about bullying.

Bullying: the basics

➤ Bullying can involve physical violence or it can be psychological. It might involve teasing somebody, or leaving that person out of a group or activity. It can be face-to-face, or might happen by SMS or instant messaging via computer

➤ Both boys and girls use name-calling when bullying. This is common because it’s harder for other people to notice than physical aggression

➤ Boys are more likely to take part in bullying behaviour. Boys are also more likely to be bullied

➤ Some children might not begin a bullying episode, but might join in later or encourage the bullying. This is also bullying.

DID YOU KNOW?

According to research, children who bully:

➤ Are at risk of developing long-term problems with antisocial behaviour

➤ Might also be victims of bullying

➤ Have a higher risk of engaging workplace harassment, child abuse, sexual harassment and substance abuse in later life

➤ Are more likely to have children who bully.

Preventing bullying is about teaching children how to get on well with others, helping them learn empathy, respect and how to support their friends.

Signs that a child is bullying

If your child is bullying, someone will probably tell you – a teacher, another child’s parents, or one of your child’s siblings.

If you suspect your child is bullying, you could look out for the following signs:

➤ Your child talks about the other kids at school in an aggressive or negative way

➤ Your child has money, toys or other things that don’t belong to her.

Neither of these signs means your child is definitely bullying, but you might want to talk to your child’s teacher to find out if there have been any problems at school.

What to do about your child bullying

It’s important to tell your child you think his behaviour is unacceptable and that you want it to end.

➤ Explain to your child what bullying is. Try to be calm about it. Talk with your child about what he’s doing and why he might be doing it

➤ Monitor your child’s use of the internet and mobile phones

➤ Talk to the school (or organisation where the bullying is happening) about its approach to bullying. Ask what you can do from home to support the approach. Call back regularly to check how your child is behaving

➤ Some children bully because they themselves have been bullied. Listen to your child for clues that she might be a victim of bullying

➤ Sometimes children join in a group that uses bullying behaviour to avoid being bullied themselves. If your child is bullying so he can fit in, talk to the school or organisation about strategies he can learn to resist joining in.
It’s best to do something about bullying sooner rather than later. You can have the most influence on your child’s bullying behaviour while she’s still young – the younger she is, the more likely she is to change the way she acts.

You might be tempted to congratulate your child on ‘standing up for himself’, but making positive comments about bullying will encourage him to keep doing it.

What to do if your child continues to bully

If it’s not the first time your child has bullied, and you’ve already tried the suggestions above, you might need to take further steps. If the bullying is happening at school or a sports club, working with the organisation will give you the best chance of changing your child’s behaviour.

➤ The school or club will probably have a policy on bullying, and they’ll use that to decide the consequences for your child. The most effective thing you can do is support the organisation’s decision

➤ You can also set up a ‘behaviour contract’ for your child. The contract is made with you, the school and your child, so she knows you’re all working together. The contract can include things like what will happen if she bullies and what will happen if she stops bullying. You could also include things she could do instead of bullying

➤ Talk to the school about whether your child needs counselling to help him stop bullying, and whether the school can either offer it or refer you to someone else. Counselling is particularly useful if your child is having trouble with self-esteem, dealing with anger or controlling his impulses.

Why children bully: the research

Most children tease others at some stage. As they get older, children learn how their behaviour affects other people’s feelings, so the behaviour tends to stop. Children who haven’t developed empathy might continue the behaviour and become bullies. Some children have a temperament that makes them more likely to bully, while others come from families where violence and ‘put-downs’ are common.
Chapter 2
Cyberbullying

CYBERBULLYING

What is cyberbullying all about? Some answers from Kids Helpline

People everywhere use new technology to keep in touch with friends, organise social events, share photos and have fun. Mobile phones, emails, websites, blogs, online games, Twitter, MySpace, Facebook and other networking sites can be a positive and fun tool to learn, express yourself and keep in touch.

Recently it seems there has been more sad news than happy news about technology and how it can be used to hurt other people. You may have heard news reports about the impacts of cyberbullying and you may even have experienced cyberbullying yourself. From what young people are telling us at Kids Helpline, it is an ongoing issue.

BULLYING VS OTHER TYPES OF CONFLICT

It’s important to remember that not all fighting or arguing is bullying. It is normal to have times when you have conflict and arguments with people. So, it is important to learn how to deal with conflict. Bullying is different to having an argument or a fight.

Bullying involves:

➤ An imbalance of power – for example a group ganging up on an individual or someone much more confident picking on someone who is less confident
➤ Repeatedly picking on someone over the phone, email, website or online forum (for example, sending messages to the same person over and over).

SO, HOW IS ‘CYBERBULLYING’ DIFFERENT TO BULLYING?

Basically, cyberbullying is an extension of bullying that goes on at school but the person doing the bullying uses new technology such as websites, text messages, social networking sites and emails to embarrass, demean, harass, intimidate, or threaten other people.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SAYING TO KIDS HELPLINE ABOUT CYBERBULLYING

Our counsellors have responded to lots of children and young people who are dealing with a range of different ‘cyberbullying’ related issues. We hear reports of cyberbullying that can range from situations such as arguments between friends that get out of control, to groups of young people deliberately targeting other young people.

At Kids Helpline, we recently conducted a survey about cyberbullying to help us understand how this issue affects young people. Here are some of the things they told us:

➤ ‘I was paranoid that people read what they were saying about me and that people judged me because of it’
➤ ‘I still feel scared and like I can’t trust people like they’re going to turn on me... it is very hard for me to make friends even to this day even though it was over five years ago.’

Our survey also asked young people to let us know what advice would you give a friend who is being cyberbullied?

There are four things that can help you identify bullying over a normal argument between friends. Bullying is targeted and persistent behaviour that is intended to:
➤ Demean
➤ Intimidate
➤ Embarrass, or
➤ Harass.

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Here are some responses:
➤ ‘Don’t be afraid of telling, it is the best thing you can do!’
➤ ‘Don’t try and get even’
➤ ‘Blocking is your best friend!’
➤ ‘Don’t take what they say to heart ... there will always be people that love and care for you and they are the ones who really matter.’

WHY IS CYBERBULLYING SO HURTFUL AND WHY DO PEOPLE DO IT?

It seems like cyberbullying is so hurtful because of the way that people can be bullied in front of all of their friends. They often can’t get away from it because the messages come through on their mobile phone, to their email account or to their social networking site like MySpace.

There are lots of reasons that young people bully others. Sometimes it’s about trying to become popular, or to intimidate or make someone afraid of them. Sometimes it’s a reaction to being bullied themselves or because they are jealous of the person they are bullying.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU’RE BEING CYBERBULLIED?

The ways to deal with a problem of bullying, whether it’s at school or on the internet is always different depending on the situation that you find yourself in. It may also depend on who is doing the bullying and how it started. It is important to keep in mind that dealing with bullying is about finding a solution that works for you. Sometimes it can be really hard to reach out for help or tell someone because you are concerned that people won’t understand, know what to do or that it will make the situation worse.

There are important things that can be helpful to remember if you are being cyberbullied:
➤ It is not your fault
➤ There is help available (teachers, parents and counsellors can all be helpful people to talk with about your situation)
➤ You can block the bullies from sending you messages or emails or stay off line for a while
➤ You can get help from the police and take legal action if needed
➤ It can help to keep copies of abusive messages that are sent to you because they can be used later as evidence.

USEFUL THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN COMMUNICATING ONLINE
(to help sort out/avoid some conflict!)

When communicating by text it is important to remember that the people who read it don’t get to hear your tone of voice or see your facial expressions. This can lead to potential confusion and can then result in conflict. Sometimes you may even be perceived as a bully.

Sometimes school conflict can become a bigger problem and people can start to bully other people over something that initially started as an argument.

To help with this, we’ve included some tips to avoid fights and disputes that are occurring online:
➤ Remember that things can be misinterpreted. If you have a reaction to something someone has said in an email or online you might want to think about whether replying online is the most effective way to communicate with them
➤ Be mindful of the people that you involve in an argument. Have a think about whether you need to bring them in and be careful using the ‘reply all’ function
➤ If you are posting photos or videos of your friends be aware they might feel embarrassed so make sure you check with them first
➤ Avoid using sarcasm in texts – people often can’t tell when it’s being used.

REACHING OUT FOR HELP IS REALLY IMPORTANT ... AND SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS WEAKNESS

If you are having issues with anything that has been mentioned it is really helpful to talk to someone you trust. Research tells us that most young people do not perceive bullying as being ‘cool’ and would help out their friends if they knew what was going on. Our survey showed that most of the young people who told someone about being bullied (particularly a friend and/or adult), found it was helpful for them.

HOW CAN KIDS HELPLINE HELP?

Kids Helpline counselling can be a great way to get your head straight before you start to work out what to do. Often the first step we take in working with someone who is being bullied (or cyberbullied) is to really get to know and understand the situation that the young person finds themselves in.

Research tells us that most teenagers are quite aware of how to stay safe online and what options are available to prevent cyberbullying.

Our experience tells us that when young people are being bullied it can bring up strong emotions such as anxiety, fear, guilt and hopelessness. Often the victims do not believe that anything will help. Our counsellors can help you work through these emotions and get some control back in your life.

SOME HELPFUL LINKS
➤ www.cybersmart.gov.au
➤ www.bullyingnoway.com.au
➤ www.cybersmart.gov.au/cybernetrix
➤ www.cybersmart.gov.au/wiseuptoit

REFERENCES

© BoysTown. Kids Helpline Hot Topic: Cyberbullying
Kids Helpline | www.kidshelp.com.au
This fact sheet information from Lifeline explains cyberbullying, and provides tips for parents and people experiencing bullying on how to deal with it.

Cyberbullying is when someone uses electronic communication tools (such as a mobile phone or computer) to bully and intimidate others. This may include slandering, blackmailing, spreading rumors, excluding from interactions, harassing, threatening or insulting someone.

Examples of cyberbullying:
- Spreading rumours online
- Sending threatening emails, text messages or comments to another person
- Trickling someone into revealing private or embarrassing information and sending it to others
- Breaking into someone’s email or social media account and sending false messages to others while posing as this person
- Hiding or changing identity and sending messages which tease, humiliate, threaten, punish, or harass another person
- Creating web pages to make fun of another person.

Effects of cyberbullying:
- Feeling distressed
- Finding it hard to interact and connect in social situations
- Feeling anxious
- Having difficulty concentrating at school, and not being able to do school work
- Feeling depressed
- Having a lowered sense of self-worth and confidence
- Feeling humiliated, rejected and isolated.

Every person’s response to cyberbullying is different. The above are just some examples of how people can be affected.

The bully
One of the biggest problems with cyberbullying is that the bully can hide behind the electronic device they are using, and can also use false screen names to conceal their identity. This makes it difficult, but not impossible, to find out who the bully is.

This can reduce fear of being found out for the bully, and create a false sense of security that makes them willing to do or say things that they would not normally do in public.

Tips for parents
- Work together with children to prevent or deal with current cyberbullying and increase their protection
- Talk about how to work together to deal with a child’s experience of cyberbullying
- Encourage kids to come to you if they suspect they are being cyberbullied. Often kids think that they will get into trouble or have their computer or phone taken from them if they report the abuse
- Know what your kids are doing online
- Keep the computer in a supervised area (i.e. not in the child’s bedroom)
- Have clear household rules guiding internet use
- If your child is being cyberbullied, don’t just focus on this, but also look at other issues which may be going on for them which may also require attention.

Tips for people experiencing bullying
- Talk to your parents or someone else you trust, about what is going on; don’t try to deal with the situation on your own
- Print or save all emails, text messages, or chat conversations where the bully interacts with you
- Report bullying to your parents, school teacher, Internet Service Provider (ISP), or police if it continues
- Use privacy options on Facebook and Myspace
- Change your mobile number, and block your number ID in future to prevent it being recorded when making calls with general phone use
- Change your User ID for instant messaging
- Don’t respond; responding can encourage and aggravate the bullying.

If you are distressed or thinking about suicide or harming yourself seek help immediately. Call Lifeline on 13 11 14, speak to a GP or Counsellor about how you are feeling. You don't have to face your problems alone.

USEFUL WEBSITES
- www.bullyingnoway.com.au
- www.reachout.com.au
- www.kidshelp.com.au
- www.netalert.gov.au
- www.cybersmart.gov.au
- www.cybersmart.gov.au/cybernetrix
  – Internet safety options for secondary schools
  – DVDs of personal experiences

Last reviewed by Lifeline content experts in July 2010. © Lifeline | www.lifeline.org.au
Being digitally connected around the clock brings huge benefits for many of us, but for an increasing number of children this new connectedness also brings with it the frightening world of 24/7 bullying.

Cyberbullying is the official title given to the bullying that occurs via electronic technology: on the internet via online tools such as email, MySpace, Bebo or Facebook, or with the help of mobile technology, such as the mobile phone.

The old-fashioned practice of picking on someone who can’t fight back has turned into SMS harassment or ‘flaming’, social network shaming, cyberstalking and chatgroup exclusion.

... cyberbullying is more associated with thoughts of suicide than any other type of bullying.

The most comprehensive research to date, the Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS), released in May 2009 suggests 10 per cent of students in Years 4 to 9 have been victims of cyberbullying. That number is increasing, reports the study, and the older students are, the more likely they were to have had some connection to the ‘behind the screens’ bullying.

But research by the Australian Catholic University suggests the number of young people being bullied may be much higher, given that many children won’t report it for fear of losing access to the technology.

Loneliness, isolation and anger

For the victims cyberbullying means loneliness, isolation and anger. Even those responsible for the cyberbullying say they feel ‘really bad’, ‘embarrassed’ and ‘sad’.

More worryingly, a recent online survey by Kids Helpline involving 600 respondents found that cyberbullying is more associated with thoughts of suicide than any other type of bullying.

“The emotional impacts can be at a higher level because it is thought that cyberbullying is more pervasive – there is potentially an unlimited number of bystanders and escape is very difficult,” says John Dalgleish, Kids Helpline manager of strategy and research.

Dalgleish says children experiencing cyberbullying may become withdrawn, depressed or upset. They may also withdraw from previous friendship groups; begin not wanting to go to school or shift from being intensely interested in being online, to backing away from the technology.

Beating the virtual thugs

But there are some solutions for those caught in a digital web of intimidation and harassment, even though anti-cyberbullying strategies are just getting underway and research remains limited.

In July 2009, the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) launched the Cybersmart website, which is a resource for parents and children about how to use the internet safely.

Although it has been criticised by some for adopting a somewhat
simplistic approach to the problem, AMCA cybersafety manager Sharon Trotter says the aim is to provide practical, clear steps for people to follow.

“We see cyberbullying as being one of the key cybersafety issues,” says Trotter.

The Cybersmart tips for avoiding and stopping cyberbullying include:

- Ignore it. Don’t respond to the bully and they may go away
- Block it. Reject messages from unwanted numbers on the mobile phone or bar hostile people from social networking sites
- Tell someone. It may be hard, but discuss it with a parent, teacher or contact a helpline
- Keep the evidence. Save texts and emails that may be used as evidence
- Report it. Tell the school, the internet or phone provider, or the police.

**How to treat the technology**

But Trotter says they don’t want people to fear technology. Parents or schools taking phones and internet access away from children who have been cyberbullied can risk further isolating victims from their support networks.

“We really want to encourage parents not to react by taking away the technology because the technology is very important for young people. It’s really a matter of encouraging dialogue and not to just shut it down or take it away,” says Trotter.

**The vast majority of kids are bystanders. The big thing is to turn the bystanders into defenders.**

ACMA will soon launch a campaign to stop cyberbullying. Called ‘Let’s Fight it Together’, it encourages community-wide involvement with the help of the real-life story of a boy who was cyberbullied, and how he drew on the support of family and friends to end the ordeal.

**Importance of bystanders**

The need to encourage the bystanders – that’s more than 80 per cent of us – to speak up and defend those being victimised is also essential.

Flinders University researcher Alison Wotherspoon and colleague Phillip Slee, a professor in Human development, have been working with certain schools in Adelaide to encourage children not to be bystanders.

“The vast majority of kids are bystanders. The big thing is to turn the bystanders into defenders,” says Wotherspoon.

The researchers are using young people’s own stories and ideas to create films to help stop the abuse of the technology.

These projects are running alongside a federal government-supported pilot project by the Alannah and Madeline Foundation to encourage the positive use of information technology in 150 schools across the country.

**At home**

But while schools and government departments can provide important guidance, ultimately the experts say that an ongoing easy and trusting relationship between parents and their children is essential in protecting children from cyberbullying. This relationship needs to include an awareness of the importance of the expanding array of communications technology.

This means parents should familiarise themselves with the gadgets and programs their children are using, and where necessary establish agreements about when and how that technology is to be used.

But just as importantly, it also means that beyond the emailing, texting and social networking, straightforward conversation still has a big role to play.

And in the end, it’s not so different to traditional bullying as it seems.

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First published by ABC Online, 17 September 2009.

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DEFINING COVERT BULLYING

- Students reported that the term ‘covert’ bullying was an adult term not typically used by young people and suggested that young people would think about this form of bullying as a series of discreet behaviours rather than classifying them as covert or overt. Moreover, they suggested that covert bullying is any form of bullying behaviour that is ‘not seen by adults’. Hence, while covert bullying is defined in the literature as a less direct form of ‘hidden’ bullying, the students suggested that covert bullying to them was ‘any form of bullying that is hidden’. Students reported the following examples of covert bullying behaviours are difficult for teachers and other adults to see including: ‘anything behind her back’; hand gestures; weird or threatening looks; whispering; excluding; blackmailing; spreading rumours; threatening; and stealing friends. Other behaviours suggested include damaging social relationships, playing practical jokes, breaking secrets, gossiping, criticising clothes and personalities, abusive notes, facial expressions, and turning your back on a person.

- Cyberbullying was defined by young people as cruel covert bullying used primarily by young people to harm others using technology such as: social networking sites, other chatrooms, mobile phones, websites and web cameras.

- For the purpose of the ACBPS overall, covert bullying was broadly defined as any form of aggressive behaviour that is repeated, intended to cause harm and characterised by an imbalance of power, and is ‘hidden’, out of sight of, or unacknowledged by adults. Covert bullying includes behaviours linked to social aggression, relational aggression and indirect aggression as long as the behaviour remains either unwitnessed, or unaddressed, by an adult.

PREVALENCE OF BULLYING GENERALLY

- Being bullied every few weeks or more often (considered to be frequent) overtly and/or covertly during the last term at school is a fairly common experience, affecting approximately one in four Year 4 to Year 9 Australian students (27%). Frequent school bullying was highest among Year 5 (32%) and Year 8 (29%) students. Hurtful teasing was the most prevalent of all bullying behaviours experienced by students, followed by having hurtful lies told about them.

- The majority of students (61%) who had been bullied in any way had also experienced covert bullying (either on its own or in conjunction with overt bullying). Of students who had experienced covert bullying, 60% had also been teased in ‘nasty’ ways, 24% had been physically hurt, and 13% had been sent nasty messages on the internet. Slightly over half (53%) of students who said that they bullied others had engaged in covert bullying (either on its own or in conjunction with overt bullying).

- Both overt and covert bullying were commonly observed by staff, with about 70% observing or having both these types of bullying reported to them in the term the survey was conducted.

- Less than one in ten students (9%) reported that they generally bullied others every few weeks or more often, with 11% of boys reporting they bullied others more frequently. By comparison, only 7% of girls reported that they bullied others frequently.

- When asked qualitatively why some students bully, most believed it was because the person bullying didn't like the person they were bullying; found bullying fun; enjoyed bullying others; liked to feel tough and strong, in control and popular.

PREVALENCE OF COVERT BULLYING

- Covert bullying appears to be one of the most under-reported of all abuses, perhaps due to the shame associated with the bullying or as a consequence of no or inappropriate responses provided by parents or teachers. Teachers and parents are more likely to intervene on physical (‘overt’) types of bullying behaviour than...
Not all students exposed to bullying behaviours

Across all age groups, 10% or less of the students when looking at exposure to covert and overt bullying. According to the students' self-report, being bullied in ways traditionally considered to be covert, more reported being ignored, not being allowed to join in or being left out on purpose (between 40% in Year 4 and 22% in Year 9) than being made afraid they would get hurt (between 27% in Year 4 and 12% in Year 9). Very few students reported they covertly bullied others (5%). Although just over a half (53%) of students who said they bullied others also engaged in covert bullying (either on its own or in conjunction with overt bullying). Students were asked to report whether they had been perpetrators of any of the covert and overt bullying behaviours listed and the responses were combined. The lowest prevalence for bullying others (26%) was found in Year 4 and the highest (55%) in Year 9. Across all year levels, relatively few (10% or less) of the students reported only covertly bullying others whilst between about 10% and a quarter indicated they had bullied other students using both forms of bullying behaviours.

The percentages of the students who had been both bullied and who bullied others in covert ways increased from 21% in Year 4 to almost half (47%) in Year 9. According to the students' self-report, being bullied in covert ways decreased from 60% in the Year 4 group to 35% in the Year 9 group. Similarly, being overtly bullied was reported at its highest among the Year 4 students (65%) and declined to 48% among the Year 9 students surveyed. Thus the students' self-report of their experiences of bullying behaviours generally decreased from Year 4 to Year 9.

When looking at exposure to covert and overt bullying behaviours in combination, 10% or less of the students reported being targets of covert bullying only, 20% or less of overt bullying only and between 50% (in Year 4) and 28% (in Year 9) of both covert and overt bullying behaviours.

Across all age groups, 10% or less of the students reported they had frequently been exposed to specific types of covert bullying behaviours in the previous term. Not all students exposed to bullying behaviours considered themselves to have been bullied. Of those exposed to only covert forms of bullying behaviours, between 19% and 35% (dependent on the year level) reported they had been bullied. By comparison, between 33% and 61% of those exposed to only overt (more direct) forms of bullying behaviours indicated they had been bullied. The majority of those who experienced both forms of bullying behaviours reported they were bullied (between 64% and 74%).

The main findings of the (screening) quantitative analyses show that Year 4 and 8 students report the highest prevalence of bullying behaviour and that hurtful teasing is the most prevalent behaviour experienced by students, followed by having hurtful lies told about them.

**PREVALENCE OF CYBERBULLYING**

The vast majority of Year 4 through Year 9 students had not experienced cyberbullying, with only 7-10% of students reporting they were bullied by means of technology over the school term. Slightly higher rates of cyberbullying were found among secondary students and students from non-Government schools. Cyberbullying was not observed by or reported to as many staff members as other forms of bullying, but was not rare (20%).

Cyberbullying appears to be related to age, with older students more likely to engage in cyberbullying than younger students.

Where information was available from data previously collected by the CHPRC on bullying behaviours using technology, 10% or less of students reported experiencing these behaviours.

Differences were found in each age group regarding the mode of technology most prevalent for cyberbullying in and out of school. More internet-based bullying through social networking sites was reported than through mobile phones, especially as students get older. Cyberbullying appears to be related to age (or access to technology), with older students more likely to engage in cyberbullying than younger students. Students reported that home cyberbullying is likely to be higher among older students especially if parents don't have the knowledge and skills to help their child.

**COVERT BULLYING AND GENDER OF STUDENTS**

Covert bullying appears to increase in frequency starting in the late primary school years among girls and then early secondary school years among the boys. Covert bullying most often occurs between students of the same gender, with boys more likely to be covertly bullied by another boy (47%) or a group of boys, and girls more likely to be bullied by another girl (48%) or a group of girls. However, nearly a third of boys (32%) and approximately a quarter of girls (28%) were bullied by both boys and girls.

Qualitative data from students suggested girls were more likely than boys to bully in covert ways, with students beginning this behaviour as young as Year 3.

No significant differences were found between the experiences of covert bullying behaviours for the boys.
and girls in the Year 4 and 6 groups in data previously collected by the CHPRC. Nevertheless, a significantly higher percentage of the girls than the boys in the Year 7 group felt that others had tried to have them socially excluded by telling lies about them and trying to make other students not like them. Girls were also more likely to have been sent mean and hurtful messages over the internet. Boys in Year 7 and Year 8 reported experiencing higher levels of threatening behaviour by being made afraid that they would be hurt. While no statistically significant gender differences were found for specific covert bullying behaviours in Year 9, girls were significantly more likely to report experiencing covert forms of bullying behaviours than boys.

- Gender was a significant predictor of bullying others in every year level. Whilst the girls were less likely to report being perpetrators of bullying behaviours, their engagement in covert behaviours only was slightly higher than for boys. In contrast, the prevalence of overt bullying behaviours was higher amongst boys, as was their use of both covert and overt forms of bullying behaviours.

**COVERT BULLYING AND AGE OF STUDENTS**

- As students get older there is an increasing tendency to bully using covert rather than overt bullying behaviours.
- While many teachers reported the prevalence of covert bullying to be highest in the late primary and early high school years, many staff were unsure of how many, and at what age, students were covertly bullied or covertly bullied others.
- Cyberbullying differences were found in each year group (Year 4 to 9) regarding the mode of technology, with nasty messages more likely to be sent via the internet (most often through social networking sites) than via mobile phones, more especially as students get older.

**FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH COVERT BULLYING**

- Peer support was significantly associated with almost every bullying behaviour reported by students. Higher peer support reduced the odds of students being covertly bullied.
- Social competence reduced the odds of being covertly bullied, but was not associated with other bullying behaviours.
- Data from previous CHPRC research found that students’ whose attitudes were in support of bullying were more likely to be covertly bullied and to covertly bully others. Students who had more positive attitudes to those who bullied others (pro-bully attitudes) were more likely to report being bullied (apart from exposure through technology amongst the Year 7 group) but less likely to bully others.
- Previous CHPRC data also found that those with greater expectations of negative outcomes from bullying others were also less likely to report covert bullying others.

In contrast, however, the Year 6 students who perceived more negative outcomes from bullying others were more likely to be excluded (ignored etc), whilst the Year 4 students with positive outcome expectancies were less likely to report being made afraid they would get hurt or that lies were told about them and that students tried to make others not like them.

- Students with a good understanding of social situations, but who lack empathy, find covert bullying works well in schools that do not take action to confront it. Using the peer group as an instrument of aggression requires skills and understanding of group mechanisms and leadership skills. Covert bullying requires a high level of everyday social cognition and social intelligence. No correlation has been found between overt behaviours and social intelligence.

**COVERT BULLYING LOCATIONS**

- Students who provided qualitative data suggested covert bullying is more likely to happen and be nastier during break times and that its prevalence was related to the type of teacher supervision in the school yard. In contrast, students suggested that in the classroom its form is ‘sneaker and more careful’, with the most common form being note passing.
- Bullying tends to reflect the constraints of the situation, such that covert bullying may be more common in the classroom and overt bullying more common in the school yard.
- The majority of students who provided qualitative data also felt that being hurt at school during break times, in ways teachers cannot see, would be worse than being cyberbullied at home.
- Students who provided qualitative data suggested that places where older students cyberbully or were cyberbullied include social networking sites such as MSN, MySpace and Bebo, whereas younger students referred more to bullying by sending emails and messages to phones.

**EFFECTS OF COVERT BULLYING**

- Covert bullying presents a higher effect-to-danger ratio, such that it contributes to the greatest harm, or
effect, largely through social isolation, to the student being bullied, whilst minimising the risk that the student who is bullying will be caught, put in danger or reported for bullying

➤ Across most year levels the most hurtful behaviour identified by students qualitatively was name calling (hurtful teasing) followed by exclusion, with the majority of students reporting it would be more hurtful to be bullied by the opposite sex

➤ Students reported qualitatively that if they were covertly bullied they would feel lonely, scared, angry, hurt, annoyed, embarrassed, stressed, helpless, and would not enjoy school. Similarly, if they were doing the bullying they would feel ‘really bad’, mean, ashamed, embarrassed, guilty or sad

➤ Students who were covertly bullied or who covertly bullied others reported lower levels of connectedness to their school, higher levels of loneliness at school, felt less safe at school and were more likely to experience difficulties such as emotional symptoms, conduct problems, inattention and peer relationship problems compared with students who were not covertly bullied

➤ Important differences were found between Year 7 students who had moved to high school and been covertly bullied and Year 7 students in primary schools who were covertly bullied. The covertly bullied Year 7 students in secondary schools reported feeling much less safe at school (22.6% vs 3.6%); had higher risk difficulties scores (27.9% vs 9%); were more likely to feel lonely (75.8% vs 46.7%); and were more likely to do nothing in response to being covertly bullied (51.3% vs 37.2%) compared to Year 7 students who were covertly bullied but still located in primary schools.

IDENTITY OF PERSON BULLYING IN COVERT WAYS

➤ Most of the students (88%) who experienced covert bullying, knew the person(s) who bullied them (or at least one of the people if they were bullied by more than one person). However, half (48%) of the students in Year 7 in secondary schools and one third (32%) of the students in Year 6 were bullied or also bullied covertly by someone they did not know

➤ Students were most likely to be covertly bullied by students in their own year group or students in the year above them.

➤ Year 9 students (compared with other year levels) were more likely to have been bullied over the internet, both by someone they had met while on the internet (12%) and by someone whose identity they did not know (17%)

➤ Students were most likely to be covertly bullied by students in their own year group (91%) or students in the year above them (50%).

RESPONDING TO COVERT BULLYING

➤ Most students who were covertly bullied indicated that they responded by walking away (75%), staying away from the person(s) or the place where it happened (74%), ignoring the student(s) involved (72%), or becoming angry (72%)

➤ Friends (64%) followed by parents or guardians (57%) and then teachers and other staff members (46%) were the people students most commonly went to for help to deal with a bullying problem. Whereas boys (33%) were more likely than girls (23%) to not ask anyone for help, over half (56-57%) had spoken with friends or a parent

➤ Young people reported losing faith in reporting bullying behaviour because some teachers and other adults are not taking action or not recognising covert bullying as bullying when they see it or when it is reported, especially via cyber means

➤ Seeking help from an adult was not always effective, with more students indicating the bullying situation stayed the same or got worse (45%) instead of improving (28%)

➤ Students reported qualitatively they would not tell an adult if they were being or had been cyberbullied for fear of having their computer or mobile phone removed

➤ School policies that increase the consequences of overt bullying without increasing the consequences of covert bullying unintentionally create fertile ground for the emergence of covert bullying.

STAFF ATTITUDES TO COVERT BULLYING

➤ The vast majority of staff were not accepting of bullying behaviours, and see themselves as having a responsibility to prevent bullying and to assist students who are being bullied

➤ Female teachers (52%) were more likely to consider...
covert bullying to be more hurtful than overt bullying compared with male teachers (31%)

➤ Teachers who lack training to help them understand covert bullying are less able to recognise it, often consider it less serious or problematic, and have less empathy for children who are covertly bullied and are less likely to intervene to prevent it. As a result students don’t tell them how they are feeling or talk about incidences of covert bullying because they feel it doesn’t count

➤ Covert bullying seems to have the greatest amount of suffering with the greatest chance of its occurrence going unnoticed. Hence young people perceive that it is condoned by adults

➤ Overt and covert bullying were both commonly observed by staff. Around 70% of staff observed or had each type of bullying reported to them in the term the survey was conducted

➤ Teachers perceived the prevalence of covert bullying to be highest in the late primary and early high school years, but many staff were unsure of how many students were covertly bullied or covertly bullied others

**Teachers reported being more likely to intervene on overt bullying than covert bullying.**

➤ The majority of staff surveyed had observed a negative impact on students who had been bullied in the current term. Social withdrawal was the behavioural effect most commonly reported by staff (73%). Nervousness at school, depression, and declines in academic engagement and performance had all been observed by at least one half of the staff during the term.

**STRATEGIES TO REDUCE COVERT BULLYING IN SCHOOLS**

➤ Over one half of the teachers surveyed rated the current whole school bullying prevention strategies in place in their school as moderately or very effective in reducing covert bullying (57%) with 21% indicating the strategies were only slightly effective, and 5% indicating they were ineffective

➤ Strategies such as supervising students during lunch breaks were seen as more effective amongst primary school staff, whereas secondary staff were slightly more likely to rate strategies incorporating the school health services or the school behaviour management/pastoral care committee as more effective. Differences were also evident between staff in metropolitan and non-metropolitan schools and Government and non-Government schools

➤ There was slightly less recognition of, and more uncertainty by, teachers about how to address bullying involving technology compared with other forms of bullying

➤ Qualitative data from students suggested a variety of actions that they believe teachers could take to reduce covert bullying including helping young people to talk more with their parents and other trusted adults about these issues using strategies such as classroom meetings, an anonymous ‘worry box’, and separating different age groups of students during break times

➤ The literature review suggested that the most promising interventions appear to be those that take a more whole-school approach, although their success has varied. Effective school policies to prevent and deal with covert bullying will require the development of programs aimed at:

- enhancing a positive school climate and ethos which promotes pro-social behaviours
- providing pre-service and in-service training of all school staff to assist them to recognise and respond appropriately to signs of covert bullying
- creating physical environments that limit the invisibility of covert bullying
- increasing the awareness among young people of how group mechanisms work and strengthening their skills in conflict resolution, and
- developing anonymous, peer-led support structures for students to access when they feel uncomfortable.

**MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL BULLYING**

➤ Government school teachers indicated that they spent more time managing bullying incidents with students or parents each week compared with non-Government school teachers, for both general bullying (22% and 10%) and covert bullying (13% and 4%)

➤ Teachers reported being more likely to intervene on overt bullying than covert bullying.

**SCHOOL NEEDS TO ADDRESS BULLYING**

➤ The majority of staff (67%) felt other teachers at their school needed more training to enhance their skills to deal with a range of issues related to covert bullying, such as dealing with incidents or addressing covert (including cyberbullying) within the curriculum. Actions and motives underlying covert bullying behaviours need to be understood to know how to intervene and prevent

➤ To address covert bullying, schools must first review how teachers are currently intervening to reduce this problem and the impact this is having. If covert bullying is believed to be less harmful, not recognised and/or adequately addressed by school staff, students who are covertly bullied are more likely to believe this behaviour is tolerated or condoned, feel less empowered and less willing to tell, which in turn may establish a normative culture of acceptance of this form of behaviour.

Cross, D., Shaw, T., Hearn, L., Epstein, M., Monks, H., Lester, L., & Thomas, L. 2009. *Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence Study (ACBPS).* Child Health Promotion Research Centre, Edith Cowan University, Perth.

The research reported in this publication is a project of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). The information and opinions contained in it do not necessarily reflect the views or policy of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [www.deewr.gov.au](http://www.deewr.gov.au)
CYBERBULLYING AND THE LAW

If you are being bullied online there are things you can do to try to resolve the issue and prevent further harassment. Advice from Youthlaw (the law as of May 2010)

Cyberbullying is when someone uses the internet or mobile phones to deliberately upset someone else. Bullying that used to take place in the schoolyard can spread on the internet and into your home and bedroom.

Cyberbullying can include taking photos/videos with your mobile, posting embarrassing photos or videos online, distributing DVDs, and emailing amongst friends. It can also include making threats, tricking someone as to your identity, online stalking, spreading personal information or secrets, and bombarding someone with offensive messages. It can take place on any chat site, social networking site, file sharing site, email or sms.

Sexting is the exchange of sexually explicit messages or photographs (nude or semi-nude pictures) electronically, most commonly through mobile phones and social networking sites such as Facebook and Myspace.

What to do if I am being bullied online?

If you are being bullied online there are things you can do to try to resolve the issue and prevent further harassment. If it is very serious, legal action is possible.

➤ Tell the person to stop harassing you
➤ Ignore it. Don’t respond to the bully. If they don’t get a response they may get bored and go away
➤ Block the person. On chat sites or social networking sites you can block the user. This will stop you seeing messages or texts from a particular person
➤ Keep the evidence. This can be useful in tracking the bully down. Save texts, emails, photos, video emails, online conversations or voicemails so that you have proof of the bullying. It is not enough to write it down, the proof needs to be in electronic format
➤ Tell someone you can trust. You may want to talk to your mum, dad or a brother or sister
➤ Tell someone you trust immediately if you think your safety is at risk. It is important that you don’t bottle it up
➤ You can contact the free and confidential Cybersmart Online Helpline service, call Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800
➤ Report it to your school – they should have policies in place about bullying and cyberbullying
➤ Go to a teacher you know, or who you think has understanding. Go with that teacher to the principal. Your school has a responsibility to make students feel safe. It doesn’t matter that the harassment occurred outside of school if it’s making you feel unsafe in school
➤ Report it to your ISP and/or phone provider, or the website administrator – there are actions they can take to help
➤ Report it to the police – if there is a threat to your safety or you are being stalked the police will help. Call Triple 000 or Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000. They will want to interview you and get a statement about what has happened. They will then investigate the matter and may lay criminal charges against the person bullying you. They may help you to make an application for an intervention order by the Childrens’ Court (under 18). The intervention order can prevent someone from publishing material about you on the internet.

What can I do to prevent cyberbullying?

You need to take care to protect your information online. Most problems occur when you post personal information online to a few people and then it is leaked.

➤ Don’t share passwords
➤ Be careful what you post. Don’t give up information that you want to keep private
➤ Monitor your privacy settings. Note that the default settings on facebook and other sites are not very private. Learn how to change the settings
➤ Don’t engage in behaviour that could annoy someone, which could be bullying itself and could encourage bullying. Don’t forward messages or pictures that may be offensive or upsetting to someone. Even though you may not have started it, you will be seen to be part of the cyberbullying cycle
➤ Remember to treat others as you would like to be treated when communicating online
➤ Ask others before posting photos or videos of them
➤ Stand up and speak out! If you see or know about cyberbullying happening to a friend, support them and report the bullying. You’d want them to do the same for you.

What are the consequences of ‘sexting’?

Taking, sending or receiving sexual images of a minor is illegal. If you’re found to have a naked or semi-naked photo of someone under 18 on your phone or your computer, you can be charged with criminal child pornography offences. If you forward the photo to someone else you can be charged with a criminal offence even if you delete it from your own phone. You can be charged even if it is a photo of yourself and you agree to the photo being sent.

The penalties for making and distributing child pornography include jail sentences of up to 16 years, as well as a permanent record on a register of sex offenders. Charges can result in getting suspended and expelled from or working with children.

WHERE TO GO FOR HELP


If you are under 25 you can get free legal advice from Youthlaw by phone: 03 9611 2412, email: info@youthlaw.asn.au

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Law falling behind cyberbullying trend

The former chief justice of the Family Court, Alistair Nicholson, says the law has failed to deal with the growing problem of cyberbullying. Rachel Carbonell reports for ABC News

The call comes after a landmark prosecution of cyberbullying offences in the Melbourne Magistrates Court.

A 21-year-old man was yesterday sentenced to community service under Victoria’s stalking laws for sending threatening text messages to a 17-year-old boy who days later committed suicide. The father of the 17-year-old, Ali Halkich, made an emotional plea for tough new laws following the sentencing.

“We set out to prove that our boy was just a beautiful, healthy child and fell in a dark moment that he couldn’t really understand and believed all the threats, if they were real or not,” Mr Halkich said.

“Unfortunately it only took that brief lapse of concentration and he is no longer here with us.”

Mr Nicholson, now the chair of the National Centre Against Bullying, which is convening a conference on bullying in Melbourne, says there needs to be more specific cyberbullying laws.

“There is a very strong argument that it should be considered a specific offence,” he said.

“You need to have some firm framework in which people can operate and know what they can and can’t do.

“In the state system, you tend to get it in the stalking area and you may also with some of the sexually explicit communications get into breaches of pornography laws.

 “[This leads] to children, quite young people, being placed on sexual offences registers when yet it is some stupid piece of adolescent behaviour that has nothing to do with the sort of behaviour that those registers are aimed at.”

Education Minister Julia Gillard has conceded Federal Government responses to school bullying are not working. Addressing the cyberbullying conference, Ms Gillard said one in four children were targets of bullying and in 50 per cent of cases the response by schools was ineffective.

“She said there were several areas in need of attention.

“These include empowering students about how to become part of the solution to bullying, and also empowering teachers to help them respond to bullying behaviour, how to intervene when they witness bullying rather than just standing by, and how to report it,” Ms Gillard said.

ON THE RISE

Child psychologist Andrew Fuller regularly sees the effects of cyberbullying on young victims at his private practice.

“It really is the same as somebody who has witnessed a really awful kind of event,” he said.

“They are agitated, they are fearful and they are not sure who is on their side and who’s not.”

He says there is a common belief among cyberbullies that they are legally immune.

Students under the age of 16 victimised by ‘sexting’, cyberbullying or any other type of sexual harassment will for the first time have recourse to Australia’s anti-discrimination laws. In a major rethink that will make it easier to prosecute other students and teachers guilty of sexually harassing children under 16, the federal government last week signed off on an extensive revamp of Australia’s antiquated Sexual Discrimination Act.

The overhaul follows growing concern about the impact of cyberbullying and sexting, including cases where sexual images of students or footage of sexual assaults are widely circulated by peers using mobile phones and the internet.


Professor of child and adolescent health at Edith Cowan University, Donna Cross, has been researching cyberbullying for three years. She says the number of children who report being cyberbullied has increased from 15 to 25 per cent over that time.

“About 10 per cent of young people tell us that they are cyberbullied,” Professor Cross said.

“Many young people hide behind a keyboard and there is this phenomenon of digital Dutch courage, where kids will say and do things online that they’d never do in real life.”

“But if we ask them have you ever had somebody send you a nasty picture or a nasty message over the internet or your mobile phone, up to 25 per cent of young people indicate that they have had this behaviour.”

Professor Cross says she believes the solution to cyberbullying will come from schools, but she says legislation is also important.

“Our laws are miles behind the behaviours that young people are engaged in so if people are relying on regulations or a regulatory environment to stop this behaviour, I think that it will be very ineffective in the short term,” she said.

Psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg also wants specific cyberbullying laws, but in the meantime he says that children need to be taught good cyber citizenship.

“Many young people hide behind a keyboard and there is this phenomenon of digital Dutch courage, where kids will say and do things online that they’d never do in real life,” he said.

One of the key messages that will be delivered at the bullying summit is that educators need to better involve children and teenagers when developing policies to deal with the problem.
What is cyberbullying?

Bullying is defined by Parentline as the deliberate psychological, emotional and/or physical harassment of one person by another person (or group) at school or in transition between school and home. It can include exclusion from peer groups, intimidation, extortion, embarrassment, harassment and violence (or threats of violence).

‘Cyberbullying’ is an extended form of traditional bullying, the key difference being that the ‘weapon’ used to bully in cyberbullying cases involves new technology such as mobile phones or the internet. The anonymity of these technologies means that cyberbullies are often emboldened and the fear factor for victims can increase.1 Research has shown that in many cases it is not an ‘either or’ for bullies, cyberbullying is simply another tool that bullies will use in addition to traditional bullying methods.

Many parents are caught by surprise when they hear about the variety and complexity of how cyberbullying can be perpetrated. These online attacks can range from one person calling another names, right through to groups of students deliberately targeting other students on websites, masquerading as fake friends to set young people up to be embarrassed or having whole groups set up on the internet for the purpose of excluding, demeaning or harassing others.

What cyberbullying is not?

Some conflicts between children and young people are a normal part of growing up and are to be expected. Because of this, it is common for adults to mistake bullying and/or cyberbullying for normal childhood conflict. It can help to remember that bullying and cyberbullying are different from single instances of teasing or fighting as they involve repeated instances plus the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person (or group).

Why do people bully?

There are lots of different reasons people bully. Some reasons identified by young people include:

➤ They might get power and strength from bullying others
➤ As a way to be popular and get known at school
➤ Because they are scared, so they try to scare others to hide their feelings
➤ Because they are unhappy and take it out on others, using it as a way to try and be happier
➤ Because they were being bullied themselves.

Where and how does cyberbullying occur?

A recent online survey conducted by BoysTown among 548 young people across Australia found the most typical forms of cyberbullying include name calling, abusive comments, spreading rumours, threats of physical harm, being ignored or excluded, having opinions slammed, online impersonation and being sent rude or upsetting images.2 Common situations for cyberbullying to occur are shown in Figure 1.

How prevalent is cyberbullying?

The incidence of cyberbullying is somewhat difficult to determine because of the different ways cyberbullying is defined (i.e. loose definitions which include all forms of cyber aggression and not just bullying), as well as the apparent under-reporting of the abuse.

One national study conducted recently by Australia’s Child Health Promotion Research Centre (CHPRC)3 found that 7-10% of students aged Year 4 to 9 reported being cyberbullied. Other studies recorded the overall incidence of cyberbullying to be around 20% of young people.4 Counsellors at Kids Helpline started to notice an increase in cyberbullying related contacts in early 2008 and since July 2008 have collected specific data on cyberbullying. Of the 50,979 counselling contacts received by young people during 2008, a total of 2,147 (4.2%) recorded either bullying or cyberbullying as the main reason for contact. Consistent with other research findings, girls have been found to experience cyberbullying slightly more often than boys.5 Both the online survey and data from Kids Helpline suggests that most cyberbullying occurs in late primary school and early high school. During the 2008–2009 year, the most common age group to contact Kids Helpline...
regarding cyberbullying were 10-14 year olds (50.4%), followed by 15-18 year olds (32.6%).

While many of the dynamics remain the same across the ages, cyberbullying in the primary school years usually focused on appearances while cyberbullying in the secondary years tends to focus on the way people act, especially if they do not fit the norm.

**What are the impacts of cyberbullying?**

The reactions many young people have to being cyberbullied are similar to those provoked by traditional bullying. Because of the more covert nature of cyberbullying however, some researchers have speculated that cyberbullying may induce more severe reactions in children and young people than what traditional bullying would do.6

For example, cyberbullying can involve the public humiliation or embarrassment of a child across a wider audience, plus the bullying behaviour can be more invasive as the bully can infiltrate the victims’ home and privacy through the use of the internet and the mobile phone.

Overall, the most frequent impacts of cyberbullying on children and young people appear to be consistent across internal and contemporary research both in Australia and internationally.7

Such impacts can include:

- Low self-esteem and loss in confidence
- Anxiety
- Sadness or depression
- Fear
- Anger
- Embarrassment
- Decreased academic achievement due to difficulties the affected child has in concentrating or being in a classroom with bullies
- Truancy behaviour by the child to avoid the bullying behaviour
- Poor mental health and persistent feelings of being physical ill
- Self-harming/suicidal thoughts and behaviours
- Negative impacts on the quality of their relationships with family, peers, and authority figures.

It is important to try to understand the impact of each young person’s situation of bullying and treat it as their own unique experience as not every young person will respond to cyberbullying in the same way. Research does suggest that cyberbullying is common and in some cases can be severe.

**Signs to look for to help recognise cyberbullying**

Like other types of bullying, the covert nature of cyberbullying can make it difficult for parents to detect when it is occurring. Some children also feel shame associated with the bullying and/or may feel afraid to tell others because they believe the situation will get worse or they’ll get in trouble or be punished. For this reason, parents need to look for any overt changes in a child’s behaviour, which could give a clue that they may be being bullied.

These signs may include:

- Sudden aversion to socialising with friends
- Disinterest or avoidance of school
- Dropping out of sports or other recreational activities
- Extreme sleeping behaviour (either lots more or lots less)
- Abnormal nail biting or other minor or severe self-harming behaviours
- Abnormal changes in mood and/or behaviour.

**Things parents can do**

The powerful impact of feeling scared, powerless, ashamed and other emotions that can result from being cyberbullied, particularly when occurring over a long period, has the capacity for long-lasting effects on children.

Ways that you can protect a child from any long-lasting negative impacts of cyberbullying include:

- Being aware of bullying
- Intervening as early as possible
- Assisting the child to reduce or stop the harassment
- Helping the child acknowledge and cope with the emotions of cyberbullying and buffering the impact that cyberbullying has on their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Unfortunately there is no one strategy or ‘quick fix’ that works for all children. Children and young people have different strengths and capabilities that need to be considered when developing strategies to deal with cyberbullying.

Listed below are several possible strategies and tips that you may like to consider when deciding how best to help a child or young person cope. Use them as a guide, and be creative – the child/young person knows themselves and the situation better than anyone else. Together you can work out what may work best.
Take lots of time to hear, listen and understand

➤ Discuss cyberbullying with the child and encourage them to tell you if they’re feeling bullied
➤ Continually watch for any abnormal behaviour/mood changes
➤ You may experience very strong emotions yourself as the child describes the story – try to stay calm and become aware of your own reactions. It will help the child if you are able to hold on to your own feelings and not act too quickly
➤ Take complaints from the child seriously, do not brush them off
➤ Try to ascertain what ‘meaning’ the child takes from the bullying, for example whether they believe what the bully says about them
➤ Assure the child that it is not their fault.

Help the child or young person understand the power dynamic of bullying

Help the child understand why children engage in bullying, especially the power dynamic. Talk about ways to not give the bully power. For example, in an online chatroom situation emotional retaliations on behalf of the victim in response to the bullying can show that the child is upset which can continue to give the bully power.

Work with the child or young person to develop options, solutions or ways to respond to the bully

➤ Ask about the situations when the bullying occurs, how the child reacted and things they might have already tried to stop the bullying
➤ Ask for the child’s opinion and help them come up with problem solving ideas
➤ Involve the child in making decisions will help to hand some of the personal power back to them
➤ Encourage them to calmly and assertively retract from any bullying situation and not to fight back
➤ Be careful in suggesting they ignore the bullying – this can often lead to further taunting and victimisation
➤ Specific online and mobile phone strategies could include:

- encourage your child to avoid opening emails from cyberbullies or responding to bullies on MSN or SMS
- if the site permits, suggest they ‘block’ the bully or remove them from their friend list
- suggest they change their online username or mobile number
- consider reporting bullying incidents to the website manager
- gently suggest your child takes some time off from the computer or their mobile phone (respecting the fact that they may not wish to)
- Follow-up after your child has tried the solution and if it didn’t work, see if they want to try another strategy.

One common fear expressed by children and young people is that they will be banned from using the internet or their mobile if they tell someone about cyberbullying. It is important to talk to the child about what they feel would be a helpful approach and make sure that you aren’t doing things that might be construed as punishing them, the victim.

Try to buffer the impact of the cyberbullying by increasing other positive experiences

➤ Assist the development of self-esteem and self-confidence by helping the child to develop a broader sense of themselves – highlight their strengths, reassure them that they are loved and valued in the family, encourage and support their interests
➤ Create opportunities for them to expand their support networks outside of the bullying setting
➤ Help the child experience a sense of personal power and control in other areas of life such as involving them in some decision-making at home
➤ Reduce the child’s focus on the bullying by increasing the amount of other enjoyable and fun things in their life.

Enlist the assistance of others

➤ Notify the school of the bullying behaviour – find out what the school’s anti-bullying policies are and what options are available to you. If you’re not happy with the actions of the school, make this clear to relevant local education authorities
➤ If you believe the cyberbullying situation is serious enough you may also wish to report the incident to the police
➤ Seeking assistance from one of the following services can also help you to talk through strategies:
  - Parentline Queensland and Northern Territory – 1300 30 1300
  - Parentline Victoria – 13 22 89
  - Parent Helpline South Australia – 1300 364 100
  - Parent Line New South Wales – 13 20 55
  - Parent Help Centre Western Australia – 08 92721466 or 1800 654 432
  - ParentLink ACT – 02 6205 8800.

HELPFUL LINKS

➤ CyberSmart www.cybersmart.gov.au
➤ Connect Safely www.connectsafely.org
➤ Bullying NoWay www.bullyingnoway.com.au
➤ Cyber Quoll www.cybersmart.gov.au/cyberquoll
➤ Hectors World http://hectorsworld.netsafe.org.nz
➤ SuperClubsPLUS www.scplus.com

REFERENCES


Cyber Bullying information sheet © BoysTown 2009
Parentline | www.parentline.com.au
Cyberbullying is commonly defined as the use of information and communication technologies to support repeated and deliberate hostile behaviour intended to harm others. It is sometimes used as an extension to other forms of bullying, and can result in the target of bullying experiencing social, psychological and academic difficulties.

Children and young people can also be affected by hostile behaviour that does not fit the definition of cyberbullying. For example, a one-off insensitive or negative remark or joke online or via text is not cyberbullying by definition. However, the impact can be widespread due to the rapid dissemination and the relative permanency of the message sent. For the purposes of brevity, both cyberbullying and other hostile cyberbehaviours will be referred to as cyberbullying for the remainder of this section.

This section aims to help teachers to identify and address school-based issues arising as a result of cyberbullying between students. It may also assist teachers who feel they are the victims of cyberbullying from colleagues, parents or students.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS AND FORMS OF CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying can be conducted through many different media including:
- The sending of abusive texts or emails
- Taking and sharing unflattering or private images, including naked or sexual images
- Posting unkind messages or inappropriate images on social networking sites
- Excluding individuals from online chats or other communication
- Assuming the identity of the victim online and representing them in a negative manner or manner that may damage their relationship with others
- Repeatedly and for no strategic reasons attacking players in online gaming.

Like other forms of bullying such as verbal abuse, social exclusion and physical aggression, cyberbullying has the potential to result in the target of bullying developing social, psychological and educational issues.

While cyberbullying is similar to real life bullying it also differs in the following ways:
- It can be difficult to escape and can be invasive – it can occur 24/7 and a person can be targeted while at home
- It can involve harmful material being widely and rapidly disseminated to a large audience, for example, rumours and images can be posted on public forums or sent to many people at once
- It can provide the bully with a sense of relative anonymity and distance from the victim, so there is a lack of immediate feedback or consequences.

IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS OF CYBERBULLYING

Identifying incidents of cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can happen to anyone, not just those generally considered more vulnerable. Confident, outgoing individuals can also be targeted.

Research has identified that girls are more likely to report that they have been victims of cyberbullying than boys, potentially because they engage in a higher level of technology-assisted social communication such as SMSing, emailing and social networking.

One or more of the following signs and changes in behaviour could indicate that a student is being cyberbullied:
- Decline in academic performance and social interaction
- Dislike and avoidance of school sometimes resulting in higher absenteeism
- Complaints of feeling unwell though parents report no specific illness
- Having less to do with friends
- Increased social exclusion and peer rejection
- Falling behind in homework
- Poorer physical health and sleepiness
- Increased negative self-perception
- Increased reluctance to participate in regular school activities, including classroom discussions
- Becoming withdrawn, appearing depressed or anxious, having mood swings, crying for no apparent reason
- Suicidal thoughts – this should be reported to the administration and the parents/carers immediately for appropriate action.

The above signs should be considered in light of the student’s usual behaviour.

Some of the signs above may also be indicators of more general social issues, specific mental health issues, or may even reflect developmentally appropriate behaviours for young people as they seek to establish their identity. Exploring any significant concerns with students and parents/carers is an important first step towards identifying issues and developing strategies to overcome them.

Responding to incidents of cyberbullying

If a school has a cyberbullying policy or procedure, it should refer to that in the first instance. In the absence of any policy or procedure a school may follow its standard...
anti-bullying procedure to deal with cyberbullying issues. If the school does not have an effective anti-bullying procedure it can follow the steps outlined below as an interim measure. Schools are encouraged to develop their own anti-cyberbullying policies and procedures. More detailed information to guide this process is provided in Policies and Procedures in the Schools section on the ACMA Cybersmart website www.cybersmart.gov.au/schools.aspx, including links to specific state and territory resources for use or adaptation by schools.

Interim cyberbullying protocol
1. Ensure the student is safe and arrange support, including the involvement of student wellbeing. Support from student wellbeing staff should be provided on an ongoing basis with the agreement of the student and parent/carer to assist the student to work through the effects of the cyberbullying and to help them develop and implement effective coping strategies
2. Contact the student’s parents to alert them to the issue, and ongoing concerns regarding the welfare of the student, and request a meeting to discuss the issue and how best to deal with it
3. Reassure the student that the school is taking the incident seriously and that the reported bullying will be acted on
   - Gather basic facts about the suspected cyberbullying and, if possible, identify the students involved
   - Implement appropriate responses to address the bullying using evidence-based responses such as restorative justice approaches to conflict resolution. Such approaches seek to address bullying issues while providing support to both the victim and the bully to strengthen the school community and respect individuals. Examples of evidence based approaches to address bullying are provided at Bullying. No Way! www.bullyingnoway.com.au/ideasbox/things-work/info-manage-2-1.shtml
4. Bear in mind that advising students to completely disengage from their online activities is not always helpful as this can also isolate them from supportive friends
5. Provide the following strategies to the student and parent to assist with managing the issue in the future.
   - Don’t respond to any further messages/postings from the bully and, if possible, block further correspondence from them (block their mobile number or email address)
   - Report any further correspondence from the bully to the parent/carer and an agreed school contact (the child must feel comfortable talking to this person and feel heard and respected by this person)
   - Keep evidence of any bullying to assist with tracking down the bully and potentially reporting the matter to police (screen captures, bully’s screen name, text and images). If the student’s parents are concerned that the student will continue to look at the saved material and become more distressed, ask them to store the material in a folder with password protection
   - Report any concerns to the administrator of the service used, including the mobile phone provider (if SMS is involved), website administrator (if social networking or chat services are involved), or internet service provider, as most have measures to assist with tracking and blocking the bully. Some block the bully’s access to their services entirely as bullying is often a breach of website terms of use
   - If the student is distressed by the bullying, ensure they are provided with options for psychological support including school counselling and the Kids Helpline www.kidshelp.com.au or phone 1800 551 800. Ensure they have appropriate and supportive contact people at schools and help them to develop strategies to manage their distress. Ensure parents/carers are informed.

THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN ADDRESSING CYBERBULLYING

All members of the school community should agree on a clear definition of cyberbullying and hostile online behaviour. This definition needs to be understood, accepted and shared within the whole school community, including an identification of unacceptable online behaviours and the consequences for such behaviours. It should reflect the school’s ethos that cyberbullying is unacceptable, harmful and will be acted upon.

The key components required to establish a schoolwide system to minimise and address cyberbullying include:
➤ Establishing a cybersafety team
➤ Establishing a cybersafety contact person
➤ Developing appropriate policies and procedures
➤ Educating students
➤ Educating parents
➤ Educating staff.

Establishing a cybersafety team

The establishment of a specific cybersafety team can greatly assist with the implementation of a holistic and consistent approach to cybersafety practices within the school, and to assist students to understand and manage
the appropriate use of personal information online.

The cybersafety team would lead cybersafety issues, auditing schools policies and procedures and establishing and embedding new policies and procedures to enhance schoolwide cybersafety behaviours. This is explored further in Policies and Procedures in the Schools section on the ACMA Cybersmart website www.cybersmart.gov.au/schools.aspx.

Establishing a cybersafety contact person

It may be useful for schools to establish a cybersafety contact person that students can report online concerns with. This role should be promoted to staff, students and parents and ideally would provide non-judgemental guidance to students and liaise between students and parents on issues concerning student safety and wellbeing. The student welfare officer may fulfil this role and the person may be a member of the cybersafety team.

Developing appropriate policies and procedures

Schools are encouraged to develop practical policies with simple rules for the prevention of cyberbullying.

These should include:

➤ Appropriate online behaviour
➤ Clear consequences of hostile online behaviour
➤ Methods for redressing inappropriate behaviour
➤ ‘Bystander’ reporting rules
➤ The provision of clear reporting and support mechanisms for those involved in cyberbullying.


Educating staff

Cyberbullying poses unique challenges because, while it is more likely to occur outside the school environment, educators may be more likely to observe the impact than parents or carers as educators view children with their peers and can identify changes in behaviour.

Staff are likely to benefit from being provided with awareness of the key signs to look for that may indicate a child is a victim of cyberbullying as listed on Page 35. To ensure a consistent and holistic approach to cybersafety, staff may benefit from having cyberbullying policies promoted to them, and providing them with clear and practical guidelines for dealing with cyberbullying.

Staff may also benefit from professional development in the area of cybersafety. The Cybersafety Outreach section provides professional development for teachers free of cost. Bookings can be made through the website.

Staff are also at risk of cyberbullying and may be encouraged to participate in the development of teacher-specific anti-cyberbullying policies.

Professional development (PD) for educators

In consultation with key stakeholders and education bodies, the ACMA has developed a free and accredited Cybersafety Outreach – Professional Development (PD) for Educators program. The program is available as a full-day workshop or as three x 2hr sessions and provides teachers with a comprehensive understanding of a modern student’s technology profile, digital literacy, positive online behaviour, personal and peer safety and the school and teachers’ legal obligations to minimise and address risks.


Educating students

Teacher resources in the Schools section on the ACMA Cybersmart website www.cybersmart.gov.au/schools.aspx, provides links to comprehensive resources to educate children and young people about responsible and safe online behaviour and managing negative behaviours to minimise cyberbullying.

Educating parents

To deal holistically and effectively with problems involving cyberbullying, the partnership between parents and the school is vital to support all students involved, whether they be victims, bystanders or offenders.

Schools can direct parents to specific cyberbullying information for parents provided on the ACMA’s Cybersmart website www.cybersmart.gov.au. A brief newsletter outlining the school’s education and policy commitment to cyberbullying, which includes a list of possible warning signs and a link to the supporting parent information is a simple way to promote cross-school-home communication about cyberbullying prevention. Providing a single point of contact for parents and carers to discuss concerns with the school provides an effective way to identify and deal with cyberbullying concerns quickly.

Internet safety awareness presentations

As part of its Cybersafety Outreach program, the ACMA offers free general internet safety awareness presentations for parents, students and teachers. Each presentation is approximately 60 minutes, excluding question time.

These presentations are easy to understand, thorough, non-technical and informative. They cover a range of issues including:

➤ The ways children use the internet and emerging technologies
➤ Potential risks faced by children when online such as cyberbullying, identity theft, inappropriate contact and exposure to inappropriate content
➤ Tips and strategies to help children stay safe online.

TECHNOLOGIES USED FOR CYBERBULLYING

The following listing provides information about technologies used for cyberbullying. For more information about technologies and sources young people are using, see the Current Technologies section of the Gateway on the ACMA Cybersmart website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TECHNOLOGY</th>
<th>CYBERBULLYING ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING THIS BEHAVIOUR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chat rooms message boards on the internet</td>
<td>✳ Sending or posting nasty or threatening messages which may be anonymous.</td>
<td>✳ Block communications with offensive individuals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ A group picking on or excluding individuals.</td>
<td>✳ Don’t respond to messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Misusing personal information gained by pretending to be someone’s ‘friend’ to spread</td>
<td>✳ Keep a record of inappropriate postings, including time, date, user names for reporting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rumours, secrets and to gain power over others</td>
<td>✳ Report misuse of personal information to the chat room or message board site host.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Report any incidence of bullying or upsetting hostile behaviour (including exclusion) to parents, school or a trusted adult or the Kids Helpline <a href="http://www.kidshelp.com.au">www.kidshelp.com.au</a> or phone 1800 551 800.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emails and text messages via computer or mobile phone</td>
<td>✳ Sending nasty or threatening messages or emails.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Forwarding offensive content including jokes, videos, images and sound.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Sending computer viruses.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Accessing someone else’s account to forward personal emails or delete them.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Constantly calling or texting a person and making derogatory and/or rude remarks and/or</td>
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<td></td>
<td>threatening and hostile remarks.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>✳ Taking and sharing unflattering images with other mobiles or uploading onto the internet.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Using text or voice chat to harass or scare someone.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Sending a hostile attachment.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Using someone else’s account to forward rude or unpleasant messages via their contacts list.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Ganging up’ – a group deciding to pick on or exclude someone during IM.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instant messaging (IM) on the internet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>WebCam</td>
<td>✳ Making and sending inappropriate pictures and content.</td>
<td>✳ Block communication with people who make you feel uncomfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Persuading or threatening young people to act in inappropriate ways.</td>
<td>✳ Turn off your webcam – claim it is broken if necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Using inappropriate recordings to manipulate young people.</td>
<td>✳ Report any incidence of bullying or upsetting hostile behaviour (including exclusion) to parents, school or a trusted adult or the Kids Helpline <a href="http://www.kidshelp.com.au">www.kidshelp.com.au</a> or phone 1800 551 800.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social networking sites on the internet</td>
<td>✳ Posting nasty and abusive comments.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Posting images, videos or sound that may embarrass or frighten a person.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>✳ Groups excluding a person from a network.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Creating a fake profile to bully, harass or create trouble for a person.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Accessing another person’s account details and using their page to post negative materials, send unpleasant messages or make private information public.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Video hosting sites on the internet e.g. YouTube</td>
<td>✳ Posting embarrassing or humiliating video clips.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virtual worlds on the internet</td>
<td>✳ Interacting negatively with someone else’s avatar.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaming sites on the internet</td>
<td>✳ Pretending to be someone else’s avatar.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✳ Name calling and making abusive comments.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Playing games with people in your local area using</td>
<td>✳ Picking on other users e.g. by repeatedly killing their characters or demeaning their lack of skill.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>handheld consoles</td>
<td>✳ Denying access to a team game.</td>
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Chapter 3

Bullying at work

Workplace bullying: good practice, good business

ELIMINATING DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT FROM YOUR WORKPLACE

A FACT SHEET FROM THE AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

One definition of workplace bullying is “the repeated less favourable treatment of a person by another or others in the workplace, which may be considered unreasonable and inappropriate workplace practice. It includes behaviour that intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates a worker”.

Source: ACTU/Q/CCI/Qld Govt Dept of Workplace Health and Safety

Bullies usually utilise power attributed to their status, skills or position in the workplace, and both men and women can be the targets and/or the perpetrators. Workplace bullying can occur between a worker and a manager or supervisor, or between co-workers.

Bullying behaviour can range from very obvious verbal or physical assault to very subtle psychological abuse.

This behaviour may include:
- Physical or verbal abuse
- Yelling, screaming or offensive language
- Excluding or isolating employees
- Psychological harassment
- Intimidation
- Assigning meaningless tasks unrelated to the job
- Giving employees impossible jobs
- Deliberately changed work rosters to inconvenience particular employees
- Undermining work performance by deliberately withholding information vital for effective work performance.

There are a range of psychological and physical illnesses and injuries that can be caused by exposure to bullying in the workplace, including anxiety disorders, stress, depression and insomnia.

Bullies usually utilise power attributed to their status, skills or position in the workplace.

Using international research, the Beyond Bullying Association, estimates that between 400,000 and 2 million Australians will be harassed at work (in 2001), while 2.5 to 5 million will experience workplace harassment at some time during their career.

Workplace bullying has serious economic effects on Australian organisations. A recent impact and cost assessment calculated that workplace bullying costs Australian employers between 6 and 36 billion dollars every year when hidden and lost opportunity costs are considered.

The effects on a workplace can include decreased productivity, increased staff absenteeism, staff turnover and poor morale. Financial costs can include legal and workers’ compensation and management time in addressing cases of workplace bullying.

Many people refer to bullying as harassment or discrimination. However, while the effects are essentially the same, bullying may not be unlawful under federal and state anti-discrimination legislation unless the bullying is linked to, or based on, one of the attributes covered by various federal anti-discrimination legislation (age, sex, race, disability, etc).

Everyone has the right to work in an environment free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and violence. Under Occupational Health and Safety Acts, employers and employees have a legal responsibility to comply with any measures that promote health and safety in the workplace. Because of this duty, employers need to eliminate or reduce the risks to employees’ health and safety caused by workplace bullying.

If you are being bullied you should report it via your workplace complaint procedures – this can be to your employer, a supervisor/manager or health and safety representative. You could also seek advice from your union or other relevant organisations such as JobWatch.

It is in everyone’s interest to ensure that workplaces are free from damaging and costly behaviour such as bullying.

This fact sheet is part of Good Practice, Good Business – information and resources for employers to address discrimination and harassment in the workplace. Available online at www.humanrights.gov.au/info_for_employers.

Workplace bullying information sheet
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DESCRIPTIO: WHAT’S WORKPLACE BULLYING?
(Based on Stale Einarson and Paul McCarthy)

Workplace bullying involves the repetitive, prolonged abuse of power. Unwelcome, unreasonable, escalating behaviours are aggressively directed at one or more workers and cause humiliation, offence, intimidation and distress. It places their health, wellbeing, safety and career at risk, interferes with job performance and creates a toxic working environment. Workplace bullying can attack anyone, in any career, at any level, within any organisation, at any time.

Statistics:
About one in six people are bullied at work; in some industries the figure is higher, ranging from 25 per cent, 50 per cent to 97 per cent (Duncan and Riley study).

Types of bullying behaviours:
According to experts Einarsen and Zapf there are five main types:
➤ Work-related
➤ Personal attacks
➤ Social isolation
➤ Verbal threats
➤ Spreading rumours.

Bullying can be:
Aggressive: Screams, threatens and blames is easily noticed.
Passive: Subtle, camouflaged, hard to identify, divisive, undermining.

The bullying behaviours continuum:
➤ Bantering
➤ Teasing
➤ Verbal abuse
➤ Blame
➤ Humiliation
➤ Personal and professional denigration
➤ Overt threats
➤ Harassment (e.g. racial, gender, sexual)
➤ Discrimination (e.g. age, gender, cultural, religious)
➤ Manipulation of job specifications
➤ Unrealistic workload
➤ Micro-management
➤ Cyberbullying or notes
➤ Professional and personal exclusion or isolation
➤ Sabotage career and financial status
➤ Whistleblower attack
➤ Blackmail
➤ Overt aggression/violence
➤ Criminal assault and murder.

Some reasons why bullying occurs and why bullies get away with it:
➤ If you need to belong to a group, you’re expected to follow the leader
➤ If a leader wants everyone to treat others with respect and dignity, they create a co-operative, collaborative work climate
➤ If the leader is a bully or condones bullying, everyone follows
➤ Like the animal world, a tribe is threatened by vulnerable members. They remind them of their own fears and could handicap their survival. Thus people fear, reject and despise others who show vulnerability
➤ Most people follow the majority. Few people have the guts to stand up and say ‘this is not fair, you cannot treat another human being like this’ (Refer to Stanley Milgram, Philip Zimbardo)
➤ People who challenge wrongdoing upset the system, which prefers to remain dysfunctional
➤ People who show their anger and distress threaten bullies
➤ Targets give their power to bullies when they think they’re safe. Many don’t act when they should because they believe that they will receive justice at work, when they won’t. By the time they act, it is too late, they are injured or their organisation fights back, fearing liability and exposure of incompetency.

What makes a target?
➤ Wrong place/wrong time
➤ Has an unresolved dispute with the bully
Many organisations don’t understand the connection between leadership and culture on staff wellbeing.

What’s the role of the organisation?
Many organisations don’t understand the connection between leadership and culture on staff wellbeing.

➤ They don’t understand that bullying is a sign of interpersonal difficulties and therefore professional incompetence
➤ They don’t realise that bullying damages people and profits
➤ They forget that work safety and wellbeing lead to improved performance and productivity!
➤ They don’t confront change without bullying
➤ They bully instead of dealing with conflict
➤ They don’t want to know about any interpersonal, work or safety difficulties
➤ Their social capital audit and financial accountability is low
➤ Their management skills are limited
➤ Job descriptions can be inaccurate
➤ They misuse nepotism and favouritism
➤ They empower the ‘boys club’ or ‘girls group’ at the expense of others
➤ Their staff training to develop social wellbeing is negligible
➤ Their responsibility to respect each employee’s perspective is restricted
➤ They allow bullying to take the focus off other difficulties
➤ They use bullying to disguise incompetence, fraud, malpractice or criminal behaviours
➤ They allow others to bully and support bullying, including peers/bystanders/witnesses/onlookers and subordinates (upwards bullying).

Managers who bully or condone it:
➤ Lacks assertive leadership skills

WHO ARE THE BULLIES?
Ken Rigby’s research into school bullying reveals two types of bullies, the malicious and the non-malicious. The same types go to work. The secret is to remind ourselves that most people can bully or be bullied!

A. The serial bully:
➤ Psychopath, sociopath or anti-social personality disorder
➤ Bully instinctively
➤ 1 per cent of the population are psychopaths (less women)
➤ 3-5 per cent have an anti-social personality disorder.
Refer: Tim Field, John Clarke, Robert Hare.

B. Ordinary people:
➤ They bully under certain conditions, e.g. achieve goals, survive at work, promotion, impress their manager, avoid confrontation
➤ There’s limited research about ordinary bullies who theoretically do 94 per cent of bullying
➤ Most employees who bully don’t realise that their
Dealing with Bullying Issues in Society

Vol 330

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By Evelyn M. Field

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1. Toxic behaviours are harmful and humiliating
   - They don't wish to hurt targets consciously
   - Some experience real emotional distress when confronted
   - Some can be bullied and bully in turn
   - Most ordinary bullies don't realise that they achieve more by being respectful and fair than employing passive or aggressive power games
   - Some are set up as payback or manipulated to bully.

2. Few bullies are:
   - Investigated from a historical perspective (previous bullying or previous jobs)
   - Investigated from a systemic perspective (who else is being bullied by them at work)
   - Have their performance appraisals compared to their staff relationships
   - Checked against witness reports or videotaped
   - Referred for a psychiatric/psychological referral (unlike their targets).

3. The impact of workplace bullying
   - The organisation loses money
     - The loss to organisations has been calculated at between $AUD 17 and 36 billion for Australia, a relatively small population! (Workplace Bullying Project Team, Griffith's University, 2001).

   - Some examples:
     - Lost productivity
     - Bullies are inefficient
     - Poor team work
     - Brain drain – good employees leave
     - Employees waste time defending and protecting themselves
     - Bystander fear and distress
     - Frustration and apathy
     - Negative public relations
     - Expensive mistakes
     - Can't identify fraud and unethical behaviours or waste resources disguising them
     - Unnecessary administration, Workcover and other costs, etc.

   - The economy as a whole also suffers
     - This includes general community costs such as unemployment benefits, expensive mistakes (e.g. bullying leading to machinery breakdown) family breakdown, car accidents, illness, medical costs and hospital care.

4. How can the bully be affected?
   - Become extremely upset, hurt and defensive
   - Hate being labelled a bully, ashamed at exposure, deny their behaviours
   - Wrongly blamed by a manipulative, oversensitive target
   - Lack prosocial skills, becomes more aggressive and disruptive
   - Angry at being blamed for doing what they’ve always done or did unconsciously because they were under pressure or following company role models
   - May blame others, manipulate and lie to cover up their lack of expertise or productivity
   - Unfairly treated by a faulty dispute resolution system at work
   - Denied natural justice
   - Some bullies make it to the top of the ladder, hurting people on their way up. But sometimes they’re toppled. Their bullying behaviour boomerangs back on them!
   - Bullies’ actions are becoming too expensive for some organisations to correct, they’re less likely to be tolerated and protected in the future
   - Families may reject a bully’s aggression and payback e.g. an expensive divorce
   - Many can’t release their anger in healthy, assertive ways, (possibly Type A’s) (may be more prone to heart attacks).

5. How do you prevent and reduce workplace bullying?
   - Take responsibility and ensure a safe workplace
   - Validate targets’ concerns
   - Treat bully with respect
   - Use collaborative approaches to resolving differences, not adversarial ones
   - Employ laws of natural justice.

   Targets – bullying is bad – but you have options!!!

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W orkplace bullying is one of a number of causes of work-related stress. Estimates of the proportion of the Australian workforce subject to bullying/harassment and the costs it imposes vary considerably. As no surveys have been conducted of Australian workplaces on the incidence of bullying, researchers in Australia have used survey findings from other countries to estimate the numbers of people subjected to bullying. Estimates of annual prevalence rates range from a low of 3.5 per cent in Sweden (Leymann 1997) to 21.5 per cent in the United States of America.

1,500,000 employees were estimated to be the victims of bullying in Australia in 2000 with estimated costs to businesses of somewhere between $17 and $36 billion.

Sheehan et al. (2001) applied a low and a high rate to Australia. The more conservative prevalence rate of 3.5 per cent was applied to the working population of 10 million in Australia, to estimate that 350,000 persons were bullied in Australia in 2000 and cost businesses somewhere between $6 billion and $13 billion.

A higher prevalence rate of 15 per cent was derived by using the approximate mid point of two international estimates – a survey of 5,300 employees in over 70 organisations in the United Kingdom which provided a bullying prevalence rate of 10.5 per cent (Cooper and Hoel 2000) and a survey conducted of the population of the state of Michigan in the United States which yielded a prevalence rate reported as 21.5 per cent (Jagatic and Keashly 2000). At this higher rate, 1,500,000 employees were estimated to be the victims of bullying in Australia in 2000 with estimated costs to businesses of somewhere between $17 and $36 billion.

Using the results of international research, the Beyond Bullying Association in Australia has estimated that somewhere between 2.5 million and 5 million Australians experience some aspect of bullying over the course of their working lives (AHRC 2010).

Indirect costs to businesses include declines in labour productivity and intra-sector opportunity costs. Intra-sector costs of bullying include: the costs of victims not taking up training or promotion opportunities due to stress; negative impacts on worker innovation and creativity which reduces company growth and profits; and the negative impact of publicised cases of bullying on the brand name and goodwill of a company.

Direct costs result from absenteeism, staff turnover, legal and compensation costs, and redundancy and early retirement payouts. Hidden direct costs include management time consumed in addressing claims for bullying, investigating allegations of bullying through formal grievance procedures and workplace support services such as counselling. Other costs include the loss of productivity resulting from: reduced performance of victims who continue to work; replacing victims with initially less experienced and so less productive staff; and internal transfers, and loss or absenteeism of co-workers (Sheehan 2001).

As well as the costs imposed on employers, victims of bullying also bear significant costs. These costs can include: isolation and withdrawal; fear of dismissal or loss of job; promotion opportunities; stress and anxiety; low self-esteem; other mental health symptoms; and a number of physical symptoms.

Other costs to the economy include public sector costs such as the health and medical services needed to treat bullied individuals; income support and other government benefits provided to victims of bullying who become unemployed; and the legal costs associated with pursuing formal complaints.
JURISDICTIONAL APPROACHES TO REGULATING WORKPLACE BULLYING

The following analysis focuses on differences in the definitions and treatment of bullying among Australia’s different jurisdictions without identifying which jurisdictions impose higher costs on businesses. The diversity in definitions and regulatory treatment creates uncertainty and imposes unnecessary costs, especially for businesses operating in more than one jurisdiction, according to this report extract from the Productivity Commission.

Differences in definitions of bullying as a psychosocial hazard

Individual jurisdictions have developed their own definitions of workplace bullying (Table 11.4) and, as a result, there is no single nationally accepted statutory definition which has been adopted by all jurisdictions. Notwithstanding the number of different definitions, all jurisdictions, except Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania, use reasonably consistent definitions embodying the words ‘repeated unreasonable behaviour’ that creates a risk to health and safety.

Some particular notable differences among those using the above phrase include:

► The Commonwealth and the ACT define bullying as being directed at persons in a workplace, while New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory define bullying as being directed at workers/employees.
► While these jurisdictions define bullying as repeated, New South Wales leaves open the interpretation that isolated incidents could be regarded as bullying (WorkCover NSW 2009b).
► Western Australia and the Northern Territory also include ‘inappropriate’ behaviour in their definition of bullying behaviour.

Table 11.4: Definitions of Bullying Included in OHS Acts, Codes of Practice and Guidance Notes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Definition of Bullying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cwlth</td>
<td>‘repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or group of persons at a workplace, which creates a risk to health and safety.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW</td>
<td>‘repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or group of workers that creates a risk to health and safety.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>‘repeated unreasonable behaviour directed towards a worker or group of workers that creates a risk to health and safety.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLD</td>
<td>‘repeated behaviour, other than behaviour amounting to sexual harassment, by a person, including the person’s employer or a co-worker or group of co-workers of the person that: (a) is unwelcome and unsolicited (b) the person considers to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening (c) a reasonable person would consider to be offensive, intimidating, humiliating or threatening.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>s. 55 (A) of OHS Act ‘any behaviour that is repeated, systematic and directed towards an employee or group of employees that a reasonable person, having regard to the circumstances, would expect to victimise, humiliate, undermine or threaten and which creates a risk to health and safety.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WA</td>
<td>Code of practice ‘repeated unreasonable or inappropriate behaviour directed towards a worker, or group of workers, that creates a risk to health and safety.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tas</td>
<td>Guidance note ‘persistent and repeatedly aggressive behaviour (that) goes beyond a one-off disagreement, ... increases in intensity and becomes offensive or harmful to someone, ... can include psychological and physical violence.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NT</td>
<td>Guidance note ‘repeated, unreasonable or inappropriate behaviour directed towards a worker, or group of workers, that creates a risk to health and safety.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>Guidance note ‘repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed towards a person or group of persons at a workplace, which creates a risk to health and safety.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a) ‘Repeated’ refers to the persistent or ongoing nature of the behaviour, not the specific type of behaviour, which may vary. ‘Unreasonable behaviour’ means behaviour that a reasonable person, having regard to the circumstances, would expect to victimise, humiliate, undermine or threaten. ‘Risk to health and safety’ includes the risk to the emotional, mental or physical health of the person(s) in the workplace.

b) Repeated refers to the persistent or ongoing nature of the behaviour and can refer to a range of different types of behaviour over time. Systematic refers to having, showing or involving a method or plan.

Source: OHS Acts, codes of practice and guidance notes.

Individual jurisdictions have developed their own definitions of workplace bullying.

Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania use quite different definitions:

► Queensland clearly states bullying does not include sexual harassment.
► Queensland and South Australia use the concept of what behaviour a reasonable person would find humiliating or threatening to define bullying.
► South Australia defines bullying as ‘systematic’
► Tasmania specifies that the behaviour can include psychological and physical violence.
How Have Cases of Work-Related Bullying Been Handled in the Courts?

Along with attempts at improving the prevention of work-related stress through inspections, regulators have used prosecutions to both punish businesses and individuals who have breached their OHS responsibilities, and to provide greater clarity as to the responsibilities under OHS Acts.

Analysis of case law in Australia shows that New South Wales and Victoria have been the most active in terms of prosecution in clarifying the application of the law relating to bullying and harassment. There are a number of examples of courts having accepted evidence of less overt forms of bullying in actions for unfair dismissal, breaches of employment contracts and psychological injury. As most areas of bullying and stress are less tangible and attributable than physical harm, the acceptance of less overt forms of bullying is likely to increase the sense of responsibility and uncertainty faced by employers.

The CPSU complained that prosecution policy fails to aim for precedents in issues such as fatigue, stress and bullying, focussing instead on catastrophic incidents (sub. DR19). However, there have been a number of cases where employers have been prosecuted for contravention of major OHS Acts for allowing bullying to take place.

One notable example of prosecution of employers being liable for bullying occurred in 2004 where a company and two of its four directors were prosecuted for a breach of the Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000 (NSW) in relation to the ‘initiation’ of a 16-year-old labourer (Inspector Maddaford v Coleman (NSW) Pty Ltd & Or [2004] NSWIRComm 317). The two directors were found to be personally liable under the Act even though they were not directly involved in the incident. It was argued that the risk of bullying was foreseeable and that it was not sufficient for employers to be reactive to cases of bullying. The implication of this decision is that employers need to be proactive in preventing bullying in order to meet their obligations under OHS legislation to provide a safe and healthy working environment.

WorkSafe Victoria has successfully prosecuted a number of individuals and companies for bullying behaviours. For example, it took action against a radio announcer who had repeatedly verbally abused and issued threats of violence against his fellow employees in 2002 and 2003 (WorkSafe Victoria vs Ballarat Radio Pty Ltd and R. Mowatt (August 2004)). The radio announcer was convicted and fined $10,000 on two counts of relating to intimidating co-workers and for failing to take care for the health and safety of others in the workplace. The broadcasting company was fined $25,000 for failing to provide a safe workplace and $25,000 for failing to provide instruction, training and supervision in relation to bullying.

In a more recent case, a company and four employees were prosecuted for the bullying of a female employee at a café operating in an inner city suburb of Melbourne. In the ruling made in February 2010 it was determined that the female employee had committed suicide in September 2006 as a result of the persistent and relentless bullying she faced in the workplace.

The four staff members, including a director, were convicted for failing to provide reasonable care for the health and safety of persons in the workplace, and were fined a combined total of $115,000, while the company which owned the café was fined $220,000. The magistrate said that the acts of the defendants carried a high risk of serious injury and their culpability was far too significant to warrant non-convictions.

As a result of the decision, the Victorian Government announced that there would be a renewed focus by WorkSafe Victoria inspectors on bullying. As part of the response, WorkSafe Victoria will assist employers to train staff, promote the development of anti-bullying strategies and investigate cases that can result in charges being laid.

New South Wales and Victoria use prosecution more extensively than other jurisdictions to clarify the application of the law, especially the general duty of care upon employers to provide healthy and safe workplaces, as to responsibilities to address psychosocial hazards, particularly bullying and occupational violence.

The Occupational Health Safety and Welfare Act 1986 (SA) also outlines actions which should not be constituted as bullying. These include ‘reasonable actions’ taken by employers to discipline, counsel, demote, dismiss or retrench workers.

Other ‘reasonable actions’ also include decisions made by employers on ‘reasonable grounds’ not to award or provide a promotion, transfer, or benefit to a worker.

Differences in regulatory requirements to detect and manage work-related stress

Bullying

South Australia has provisions under its OHS Act which gives inspectors the powers to take reasonable steps to resolve a case of bullying or abuse at work between the existing parties themselves or refer the matter to the Industrial Commission if it remains unresolved.

All jurisdictions provide material on the negative impacts of workplace bullying to employers and employees in the form of guidance notes.

Differences in regulatory requirements to detect and manage work-related stress

Only Queensland (Prevention of Workplace Harassment Code of Practice 2004) and Western Australia (Violence, Aggression and Bullying at Work 2006) provide codes of practice on bullying. Both provide information on: how to manage bullying and how to manage this hazard through risk management; consultations; and monitoring and
review of processes (Queensland) and policies (Western Australia).

The Queensland code also looks at the impact of workplace harassment; and the legislation that covers workplace harassment. The Western Australian code also provides information on: provision of information and training; and ways to respond to bullying including dealing with complaints and their investigation. In addition, Queensland provides guidance notes to particular industries (restaurant, road freight and take away food retailing industry) on dealing with harassment.

Codes of practice provide guidance to duty holders about how to meet their obligations under OHS legislation and do not generally constitute legal obligations.

New South Wales and Victoria share guidance material for employers and employees on preventing and responding to bullying at work. This guidance note defines bullying behaviours, outlines the risk management process in identifying, assessing and controlling bullying behaviours and provides alternative responses to managing bullying behaviour. As a result of the development of common guidance material on the topic in these jurisdictions, systems set up by an organisation in one of these jurisdictions to manage bullying and harassment could be replicated in the other jurisdiction. These arrangements potentially reduce costs of managing psychosocial hazards for firms operating in both jurisdictions.

There is some debate about the relative merits of codes of practice and guidance material in achieving compliance outcomes in relation to bullying (and harassment).

Codes of practice provide guidance to duty holders about how to meet their obligations under OHS legislation and do not generally constitute legal obligations.1

Hence, it may be misleading to place too much emphasis on the significance of having a code as distinct from guidance material in ensuring compliance. On the other hand, a study by Johnstone, Quinlan and McNamara observed that having psychosocial issues regulated through a separate code of practice (in Queensland and Western Australia) rather than guidance material, sent a strong signal both to employers and to inspectors, in terms of giving them stronger direction to monitor compliance behaviour (2008, p.30). A review conducted by SafeWork SA in 2008 concluded that a definition of inappropriate behaviour should be retained in South Australia’s Act and that guidance material or codes of practice were not a viable substitute for the definition, as it provides a heightened awareness among employers and employees of the consequences of inappropriate workplace behaviour.

ENDNOTES
1. The exceptions are a few compliance codes operating under Victorian and Queensland legislation which have deemed to comply status.
Courage comes in various guises. Admittedly, the stories of courage in my armoury of police tales have mostly involved conflict: on the one hand, offenders with guns, knives and machetes and, on the other, ordinary citizens who have stumbled upon scenes and accidentally or deliberately become heroes.

But the one that sticks in my mind is the guts of a young lad, just 16, who walked into my police station one day and told me about the continual hurt to which he had been subjected at the hands of several bullies who worked at the supermarket where he had a casual job.

Through his flood of tears and emotion, I heard his dilemma. Management had refused to listen to his story; for complex reasons he had no one to talk to at home or school. He decided to tell his story to the police.

His account was substantiated and the supermarket bullies were disciplined. So was a manager who had turned a blind eye. Unfortunately the teenager quit, an all-too-familiar outcome. Inquiries revealed that the management had lacked the necessary skills and the business had no systems or guidelines in place to prevent risk or deal with complaints about the behaviour of colleagues.

It was not a big community and this well-mannered young man was liked. Word spread quickly around the neighbourhood and the store management was shamed and humiliated—a modern-day version of Middle Ages miscreants being placed in the stocks and pelted with rotten tomatoes.

The courage of this teenager dealt a hefty right hook to the supermarket brand—not unlike the bruising that a building company will cop later caused him to vomit.

With other matters confounding the case, the situation became pretty untidy, there was adverse publicity for the company and the whole shemozzle ended up in the national workplace relations tribunal. Settlement includes the public apology and a confidential payout.

Sadly, harassment, bullying and unattractive behaviour still exist in the workplace .

Just for a moment forget the payout. Think instead of the humiliation the public notice, expected within a week, will bring for the company.

US studies suggest that a corporation’s image accounts for up to 4 per cent of its stock price. Companies that do not heed good governance, plan for risk or understand the basics of good human resources practice gamble with their own stock. Eventually, shareholders become restless and noisy, and regular customers unfaithful and scarce.

Human behaviour is intriguing and unpredictable. There is enough material in temperament for a PhD thesis. Putting staff in an office or factory environment, with no cultural guidelines, and asking them to work together to achieve a desired outcome is, in itself, a risk.

Let risk run unchecked and reputation chaos willloom with the loss of good people, shareholder scepticism and wariness, public scrutiny and probing questions from a relentless media.

Sadlys, harassment, bullying and unattractive behaviour still exist in the workplace, but mainly only where companies pay lip service to robust principles and processes. All of this has much to do with organisations being authentic about people and culture matters. Good practice at the top is wonderfully contagious. It is always about leadership.

Organisations that are focused on reputation enhancement, growth, customer satisfaction and a harmonious workforce invest in risk reduction and early diagnosis of problems.

Arguably this is specialist work, beyond standard HR practice. The cost of putting into place mechanisms to set behavioural expectations or deal swiftly with suspected indiscretions and behavioural shortcomings is a mere droplet compared with the price of litigation and subsequent reputation damage to a brand.

Studies show that each workplace behaviour complaint can cost a business between $40,000 and $70,000—and that’s before the lawyers join in.

There are not many winners in disputes involving internal complaint response (or lack thereof). Who knows, perhaps a wily production house will reap a bonanza through a TV mini-drama centred on the current $37 million David Jones damages claim—but at what cost for each tear shed by the real-life players?

We are yet to hear the end of the DJs saga but the question has to be asked: were the mechanisms in place?

It takes courage to be like the lad who walked into my police station all those years ago, but it only takes commonsense, leadership, wisdom and good governance for a chief executive or a board to ensure that a workplace is safe and harmonious.

Stuart King is the managing director of Kings Workplace Solutions, specialists in workplace conflict resolution and organisational risk management. He was a Victoria Police officer for more than 30 years.
The reported suicide of ambulance officer Christine Hodder after she was allegedly bullied at work is, sadly, only the latest in a string of disturbing reports on the escalation of workplace bullying.

Recent reports from NSW alone reveal bullying at all levels in the workplace, with cases involving nurses, public servants and even high-profile professionals and executives featuring in the news.

Bullying may be happening in your workplace, but you may not know it. Many people feel humiliated about reporting it, do not know who to report it to, or do not think anything will be done.

To make things more complex, harassment and violence is often involved. Harassment can be a single instance of offensive or humiliating behaviour, relevant to some characteristic of the individual, such as race or sex. Bullying, by contrast, is unreasonable behaviour which is repeated, including things such as spreading malicious gossip, physically and socially isolating the target, undermining them, making undue public criticisms and claiming others’ work as one’s own. It is done over time and frequently in subtle ways. Often, there is no proof and no witnesses.

Workplace bullying is a health and safety issue, and needs to be recognised as such. Occupational health and safety is not just about protecting workers from disease, but ensuring their wellbeing at work. Doing so is in the best interest of the employer. The costs of prolonged litigation are extreme.

But it should not just be about the fear of litigation. Bullied and harassed workers cannot perform at their best: absenteeism and turnover go up, satisfaction and commitment go down. For the target, bullying means anxiety, fear, depression and it can lead to suicide.

But the message is not getting through to employers: failing to tackle workplace bullying adequately means much greater costs for organisations through the workers’ compensation process, increased premiums, and damage to reputation. In Australia, claims for compensation over stress account for only 7 per cent of the total number of compensation claims but 27 per cent of the total cost.

The government organisations that administer workplace safety legislation, however, have begun to recognise bullying as an important issue. Hopefully, the Federal Government’s plans to standardise occupational health and safety legislation across the states will firmly and specifically tackle bullying as an issue that affects many workers and their families.

Solving workplace bullying is not just about weeding out the ‘bullies’. Anyone is capable of using bullying behaviour, and unfortunately some workplace cultures promote it.

The person displaying bullying behaviour needs to be seen in the context of their organisation and the demands placed on them: competitiveness and increasing pressures on workers concerning working hours, deadlines and performance all have an impact.

This is not to shift all the blame onto organisations – but to highlight that we need to avoid always vilifying the ‘bully’. A balanced solution would involve making organisations resilient to bullying behaviour, rather than just busting the bully or attempting to rehabilitate the target. Post-crisis intervention – the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff – is not good enough when there are ample signs bullying is likely to occur.

Similarly, preventing workplace bullying is not just about policy. Zero-tolerance policies are just window-dressing unless they are backed up with a genuine commitment to prevent problems as well as to fix them. That commitment needs to be communicated. At the very least, responsible organisations should be investing in training on bullying awareness and in developing innovative strategies to enable appropriate reporting.

Individuals who think they are being bullied should seek information, document the behaviour, and seek internal advice through their human resources or health and safety representatives.

We all have a responsibility to raise awareness of this issue and make sure it is not ignored. Bullying can happen to anyone, regardless of race, gender or other personal characteristics. We must start seeing it as equally offensive as sexual harassment and discrimination.

And then we have to challenge our employers, our governments, and our workmates to help build a solid fence at the top of the cliff.

Dr Carlo Caponecchia is a lecturer in the school of risk and safety sciences at the University of NSW.
EXPLORING
ISSUES

ABOUT THIS SECTION

‘Exploring issues’ 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.

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

Does the source have a particular bias or agenda? Are you being presented with facts or opinions? Do you agree with the writer?

The types of ‘Exploring issues’ questions posed in each Issues in Society title differ according to their relevance to the topic at hand.

‘Exploring issues’ sections in each Issues in Society title may include any combination of the following worksheets: Brainstorm, Research activities, Written activities, Discussion activities, Quotes of note, Ethical dilemmas, Cartoon comments, Pros and cons, Case studies, Design activities, Statistics and spin, and Multiple choice.

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WORKSHEETS AND ACTIVITIES

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### BRAINSTORM

Brainstorm, individually or as a group, to find out what you know about various forms of bullying.

1. Provide a general definition of bullying.

   

2. Provide a definition of cyberbullying.

   

3. Provide a definition of covert bullying.

   

4. Provide a definition of face-to-face bullying.

   

5. Provide a definition of workplace bullying.

   

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Copy this page and complete the following written activities.

1. Provide examples of situations which involve bullying at school.
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
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   _____________________________________________________________

2. Provide examples of situations which involve bullying online (cyberbullying).
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________

3. Provide examples of situations which involve bullying in the workplace.
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
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   _____________________________________________________________
   _____________________________________________________________
Copy this page and complete the following written activities.

4. Provide examples of the impacts of school bullying on victims.

5. Provide examples of the impacts of cyberbullying on victims.

6. Provide examples of the impacts of workplace bullying on victims.
DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

1. Form a group and discuss the reasons why bullying occurs. List your combined conclusions on a copy of this page and use it as a reference when you present your findings to the class.

2. Form a group and discuss the ways in which bullying can adversely affect both the victim and the individual being bullied. List your combined conclusions on a copy of this page and use it as a reference when you present your findings to the class.
You may wish to consider the following statements together in pairs, or use them as starting points for group discussions.

1. Bullying is one of the major issues facing children and young people today. Its negative impacts have been found to affect not only victims, but bullies also. (Kids Helpline, p.7)
   
   What are these negative impacts on bullies and their victims?

2. Bullying is natural behaviour among children and as they develop they tend to grow out of it. (Dr Ken Rigby, p.12)
   
   Discuss the childish aspects of bullying.

3. Bullying can be explained by the way peer groups influence children. (Dr Ken Rigby, p.13)
   
   Discuss the relationship between peer pressure and bullying among children.

4. First of all, keep yourself safe. Each bullying situation is different. Responses need to be appropriate to the situation and it’s not always appropriate for young people to act alone. Then, consider that the messages you give out, even in little ways, can make a huge difference. Research has shown that the greatest influence on students’ bystander behaviour is what they think their friends (i.e. you!) expect of them – not what their teacher or parents think. (Bullying No Way, p.15)
   
   Discuss this statement in relation to bullying and bystander behaviour.

5. Contacting the bully or the bully’s parents directly is likely to make the situation worse. It is always safer to work with the school or organisation rather than to try to solve bullying on your own. (Raising Children Network, p.16)
   
   Discuss ways in which parents can be effectively involved in dealing with school bullying.

6. It’s important to remember that not all fighting or arguing is bullying. It is normal to have times when you have conflict and arguments with people. So, it is important to learn how to deal with conflict. Bullying is different to having an argument or a fight. (Kids Helpline, p.20)
   
   Discuss the difference between certain types of conflict and bullying. Provide hypothetical examples.

7. There are lots of reasons that young people bully others. Sometimes it’s about trying to become popular, or to intimidate or make someone afraid of them. Sometimes it’s a reaction to being bullied themselves or because they are jealous of the person they are bullying. (Kids Helpline, p.20)
   
   What other reasons can you think of for people to bully?

8. It is in everyone’s interest to ensure that workplaces are free from damaging and costly behaviour such as bullying. (Australian Human Rights Commission, p.39)
   
   Compile a list of the direct and indirect costs of workplace bullying, and discuss.
Complete the following multiple choice questionnaire by circling or matching your preferred responses. The answers are at the end of the next page.

1. Which of the following constitutes bullying behaviours?
   a. Calling names
   b. Spreading rumours
   c. Threats
   d. Hurting someone physically
   e. Damaging another's property
   f. All of the above

2. Which of the following behaviours is considered to be the least common form of bullying?
   a. Physical
   b. Verbal
   c. Social
   d. Psychological
   e. Cyberbullying

3. What signs may indicate to parents that their child is being bullied?
   a. Falling academic results
   b. Loss of confidence
   c. Not wanting to go to the place they are being bullied
   d. Being covered in bruises or scratches
   e. Wearing torn clothes without explaining how this happened
   f. Joining sporting teams
   g. Becoming withdrawn

4. Which of the following are not used in cyberbullying?
   a. Instant messaging
   b. Online chatrooms
   c. Mobile phone text messaging
   d. Emails
   e. Blogs
   f. Television
   g. Mobile phone photographs
   h. Social networking sites

5. Which of the following are direct costs of workplace bullying to businesses?
   a. Absenteeism
   b. Staff turnover
   c. Legal and compensation costs
   d. Redundancy and early retirement payouts

6. Which of the following are indirect costs of workplace bullying to businesses?
   a. Declines in labour productivity
   b. Costs of victims not taking up training or promotion opportunities due to stress
   c. Negative impacts on worker innovation and creativity which reduces company growth and profits
   d. Negative impact of publicised cases of bullying on the brand name and goodwill of a company
MULTIPLE CHOICE

7. Which of the following are personal costs of workplace bullying to victims?
   a. Isolation and withdrawal
   b. Fear of dismissal or loss of job promotion opportunities; stress and anxiety
   c. Low self-esteem, and other mental health symptoms
   d. Physical symptoms

8. Match the following forms of bullying to their correct definitions:
   a. Physical bullying
   b. Verbal bullying
   c. Social bullying
   d. Psychological bullying
   e. Covert bullying
   f. Cyberbullying
   g. Sexting
   h. Stalking
   i. Face-to-face bullying
   j. School bullying
   k. Workplace bullying

   1. Sometimes referred to as direct bullying. Involves physical actions such as punching or kicking, or direct verbal actions such as name-calling and insulting.
   2. Psychological, emotional, cyber, social or physical harassment of one student by another at school or within the school community.
   3. The exchange of sexually explicit messages or photographs (nude or semi-nude pictures) electronically, most commonly through mobile phones and social networking sites such as Facebook.
   4. Continual harassment of one person by another or persistent and unwanted attention. The offender often wants to form or keep a relationship, but going about it in an inappropriate way.
   5. 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.
   6. Repeated unreasonable and inappropriate actions and practices that are directed to one or more workers. It includes behaviour that intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates and may interfere with job performance, and/or cause an unpleasant working environment.
   7. Bullying carried out through the use of technology (e.g. chatrooms, social networking sites, mobile phones, emails)
   8. The use of physical actions by individuals or groups to bully and harass, e.g. hitting, tripping, poking, pushing. Also includes the repeated and intential damage of someone's belongings.
   9. Using negative words, repeatedly and intentionally to upset someone. Examples include name-calling, insults, homophobic or racist remarks, and verbal abuse.
   10. Includes lying, spreading rumours, playing nasty jokes, repeatedly mimicking someone and deliberately excluding someone.
   11. When someone (or a group of people) repeatedly and intentionally use words or actions which cause psychological harm. Includes intimidating, manipulating and stalking someone.

MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS

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Children who are bullied may have higher absenteeism, lower academic achievement, physical and somatic symptoms, anxiety and depression, social dysfunction, and alcohol and substance use. (p.1)

Bullying in Australian schools is widely recognised as a problem, with over 20% of males and 15% of females aged 8 to 18 years reporting being bullied at least once a week. (p.1)

Concern about bullying in schools has resulted in numerous schools in Australia and overseas developing and implementing anti-bullying programs. (p.1)

There are three groups involved in bullying who are affected: the child being bullied, the bully, and the audience. (p.3)

Bullying is not the same as conflict between people (like having a fight) or disliking someone, even though people might bully each other because of conflict or dislike. (p.5)

Bullying can happen anywhere. It can be in schools, at home, at work, in online social spaces, via text messaging or via email. It can be physical, verbal, emotional, and it also includes messages, public statements and behaviour online intended to cause distress or harm. (p.5)

One in four Year 4 to 9 students are bullied every few weeks or more in Australia. (p.7)

The most common age for school-related bullying appears to be during the transition ages from primary to secondary school. (p.7)

Females are more likely than males to be the target of cyberbullying. (p.8)

There is consistent evidence that boys bully girls much more commonly than vice versa and that a good deal of bullying targets boys who appear to be effeminate or homosexual. (p.12)

The greatest influence on students’ bystander behaviour is what they think their friends expect of them – not what their teacher or parents think. (p.15)

Sometimes children join in a group that uses bullying behaviour to avoid being bullied themselves. (p.18)

Counselling is particularly useful if a child is having trouble with self-esteem, dealing with anger or controlling their impulses. (p.19)

When communicating by text it is important to remember that the people who read it don’t get to hear your tone of voice or see your facial expressions. This can lead to potential confusion and can then result in conflict. Sometimes you may even be perceived as a bully. (p.21)

The old-fashioned practice of picking on someone who can’t fight back has turned into SMS harassment or ‘flaming’, social network shaming, cyberstalking and chatgroup exclusion. (p.23)

10% of students in Years 4 to 9 have been victims of cyberbullying. (p.23)

Parents or schools taking phones and internet access away from children who have been cyberbullied can risk further isolating victims from their support networks. (p.24)

Frequent school bullying was highest among Year 5 (32%) and Year 8 (29%) students. (p.25)

Covert bullying appears to be under-reported as teachers and parents are more likely to intervene on physical or overt bullying. (p.25)

Some students believed it was because the person bullying didn’t like the person they were bullying; found bullying fun; enjoyed bullying others; liked to feel tough and strong, in control and popular. (p.25)

Cyberbullying appears to be related to age, with older students more likely to engage in cyberbullying than younger students. (p.26)

Slightly higher rates of cyberbullying were found among secondary students and students from non-Government schools. (p.26)

Covert bullying seems to have the greatest amount of suffering with the greatest chance of its occurrence going unnoticed. Hence young people perceive that it is condoned by adults. (p.29)

Taking, sending or receiving sexual images of a minor is illegal. If you’re found to have a naked or semi-naked photo of someone under 18 on your phone or your computer, you can be charged with criminal child pornography offences. (p.30)

Students under the age of 16 victimised by ‘sexting’, cyberbullying or any other type of sexual harassment now have an avenue of recourse due to the federal government’s changes to the Sexual Discrimination Act. (p.31)

Cyberbullying may induce more severe reactions in children and young people than traditional bullying. (p.33)

One common fear expressed by children and young people is that they will be banned from using the internet or their mobile if they tell someone about cyberbullying. (p.35)

Girls are more likely to report that they have been victims of cyberbullying than boys. (p.35)

The establishment of a specific cybersafety team can greatly assist with the implementation of a holistic and consistent approach to cybersafety practices within the school. (p.36)

Workplace bullying can occur between a worker and a manager or supervisor, or between co-workers. (p.39)

Workplace bullying has serious economic effects on Australian organisations. A recent impact and cost assessment calculated that workplace bullying costs Australian employers between $6-$36 billion dollars every year. (p.39)

About 1 in 6 people are bullied at work; in some industries the figure is higher, ranging from 25%, 50% to 97%. (p.40)

The loss to organisations due to bullying has been calculated at between $AUD 17 and 36 billion for Australia. (pp.42,43)

New South Wales and Victoria have been the most active in terms of prosecution in clarifying the application of the law relating to bullying and harassment. (p.45)

Studies show that each workplace behaviour complaint can cost a business between $40,000 and $70,000. (p.47)

Workplace bullying is a health and safety issue, and needs to be recognised as such. Occupational health and safety is not just about protecting workers from disease, but ensuring their wellbeing at work. (p.48)
Bully
A bully can be an individual, or a group of people. It can be someone your own age or someone older, and can include friends, boyfriends or girlfriends, a brother or sister, or an extended family member. A bully can also be an older person, or someone in a position of power such as a teacher, parent or boss. Often a bully will have a low self-esteem or has been a victim of violence themselves and they are using bullying as a way of making themselves feel more powerful.

Bullying and harassment
Bullying can happen anywhere – at school, at work, at home, on social networking sites (e.g. Facebook), on mobile phones, in sporting teams or between neighbours. Bullying involves someone (or a group of people) with more power than you, repeatedly and intentionally using negative words and/or actions against you, which causes you distress and risks your wellbeing. Bullying behaviours may include: not allowing someone in a group; acting in an unpleasant way near someone; giving nasty looks; making rude gestures; calling names; being rude and impolite; spreading stories; rumours and teasing; ‘mucking about’ that goes too far; any form of harassment or discrimination based, for instance, on disability, gender, sex, race or religion; hurting someone physically; or stalking.

Bystander intervention
One of the ways in which school bullying can be reduced – by encouraging students who observe bullying taking place at school to act in such a way as to discourage 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
Cyberbullying is a form of covert bullying and is carried out through the use of technology (e.g. on the internet through emails, blogs and social networking sites, as well as 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 put 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.

Face-to-face bullying
Sometimes referred to as direct bullying. Involves physical actions such as punching or kicking, or direct verbal actions such as name-calling and insulting.

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
The no blame 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.

Restorative justice
Refers to structured processes designed to repair the harm and teach and encourage more socially responsible behaviours after incidents such as bullying. Restorative justice 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 at 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.

Sexting
The exchange of sexually explicit messages or photographs (nude or semi-nude pictures) electronically, most commonly through mobile phones and social networking sites such as Facebook.

Stalking
Stalking is a special type of harassment. It is defined as “continual harassment of one person by another” or “persistent and unwanted attention”, and 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.

Workplace bullying
Repeated unreasonable and inappropriate actions and practices that are directed to one or more workers. It includes behaviour that intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates and may interfere with job performance, and/or cause an unpleasant working environment. Workplace bullying behaviours range from social bantering to teasing, verbal abuse, blame, humiliation, personal and professional denigration, overt threats, harassment (e.g. racial, sexual), manipulation of job specifications, unrealistic workload, aggressive emails or notes, professional and personal exclusion or isolation, sabotage of career and financial status, attacks on whistleblowers, blackmail, overt aggression/violence, and criminal assault.
Websites with further information on the topic

Better Health Channel  www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
Bully Blocking  www.bullying.com.au
Bullying in schools and what to do about it (Dr Ken Rigby)  www.kenrigby.net
Bullying. No Way!  www.bullyingnoway.com.au
Children, Youth and Women’s Health Service  www.cyh.com
Lifeline  www.lifeline.org.au
Cybersmart  www.cybersmart.gov.au
Headspace  www.headspace.org.au
Kids Helpline  www.kidshelp.com.au
National Centre Against Bullying  www.ncab.org.au
Reach Out!  www.reachout.com.au

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THANK YOU
✿ Dr Ken Rigby
✿ BoysTown/Kids Helpline
✿ Raising Children Network.

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