

Friendly Families

FRIENDLY
Schools



A parents' guide
to dealing with,
& preventing,
bullying &
cyberbullying.

Erin Erceg
Donna Cross

FRIENDLY
Schools

POWERED BY
TELETHON
KIDS

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Introduction

Everyone hopes bullying won't happen to them or to someone they know and care about. Frequent bullying, however, is experienced by one in four children and others may see it happening around them.

While many parents are concerned about the effects of bullying on their children, they may be unsure how to help them prevent or respond to bullying behaviours effectively, especially when bullying is perpetrated via technology, i.e. cyberbullying.

The Friendly Schools initiative addresses the social and emotional learning of young people both formally, through explicit classroom teaching and learning strategies, and informally, through the development of a whole-school culture and organisation, as well as creating structures that reinforce and uphold these essential understandings, skills and competencies.



This booklet has been developed to provide parents with:

- Information about how to support their children and the efforts of their children's school to reducing bullying
- Information about how to talk to their children about face-to-face and cyberbullying
- Shared understandings and common language to help them communicate with their children about bullying and social and emotional learning
- Strategies and actions to use at home that are consistent with those their children are learning at school as part of the Friendly Schools Plus initiative

Overview of sections

Section 1 – Family-school partnerships

When schools and families cooperate and work collaboratively to reduce and prevent bullying a positive outcome is far more likely. The 'Family-school partnerships' section describes why these partnerships are important and gives helpful tips on how to support this process.

Section 2 – Communicating with your children

Talking with your children regularly about everyday topics will increase the chances of them talking to you about more difficult issues such as bullying. The ‘Communicating with your children’ section provides ideas about how to talk to your children and enhance your relationship with them.

Section 3 – Understanding bullying: Cyber and face-to-face bullying

Talking with children about bullying is a way parents can help them to understand and deal with these situations. There are key issues about bullying that all parents should try to discuss with their children. This section provides information and helpful tips to help your children to respond to bullying.

Section 4 – How to approach your children’s school

It is important for parents to form a partnership with the school to deal with a bullying situation. There is often a history of incidents or background for each case of bullying, and communication between the school and the family will fast track the progress towards a positive outcome for everyone. This section assists with tips for making this process most effective.

Section 5 – Bystanders taking action

When bullying incidents take place, other students are often aware and provide an “audience” for the bullying; these students are often called “bystanders”. Bystanders can be part of the problem or part of the solution. This section identifies the different roles that bystanders may play and actions bystanders can take to reduce bullying.

Section 6 – Social and emotional learning

One of the most effective means to reduce bullying among young people is to enhance their social and emotional understandings and competencies in developmentally appropriate ways. This section provides information about how parents can support their children’s development of social and emotional learning skills that can help to prevent or reduce bullying behaviours.



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Section 1 – Family-school partnerships

It is important for children to see their parents and the school working together to help them feel safer, happier and supported at school.

By working together, families and schools can:

- Foster positive attitudes and friendlier schools
- Develop a safe and happy environment for children
- Encourage open communication about bullying
- Let children know that bullying is unacceptable behaviour anywhere in the community
- Provide consistent messages and use common language when talking about bullying at home and at school



The partnership can be most effective when parents:

- Encourage their children to talk about online and offline bullying both at home and school
- Cooperate with class teachers to share valuable information about how their child is feeling
- Talk and work with their children's school to help achieve the most positive outcome for their children
- Become familiar with their child's school's policies related to bullying and cyberbullying to know how the school plans to respond to these situations
- Work in collaboration with the school to support the development of their children's social and emotional learning

When schools and families cooperate to respond to specific bullying incidents, a positive outcome is more likely. Cooperation between schools and families demonstrates to the children involved that the school and families have a commitment to resolve the problem collaboratively, in a transparent and consistent manner.

What is school connectedness?

School connectedness is the extent to which children and their families feel they are accepted, respected, included and encouraged by others at school. Children who feel more connected to their school are less likely to be bullied and/or to engage in bullying behaviours.

How can I help my child feel more connected to school?

Parents are one of the most important influences in their children's lives. You can help your children feel more connected to school by helping them to:

- Develop and maintain positive relationships with teachers.
- Identify at least one school staff member from whom they could seek help or support, if needed.
- Develop a wide group of friends who have positive attitudes toward school and social experiences.
- Participate in extra-curricular activities organised by the school.
- Be involved in planning and decision making activities at their school.
- Be involved in groups outside of their school, i.e. sporting club, art group etc.
- As parents you can become more connected to school by:
 - Attending assemblies, special events and assisting or volunteering in the canteen and on other school-based occasions
 - Reading newsletters and other school information
 - Communicating regularly with your children's teachers to allow for sharing of information



Section 2 – Communicating with your children

Regularly talking with and listening to your children reinforces that they can talk with you about both the positive and the more challenging parts of their day. Make sure to engage them in genuine conversations about a variety of topics that are fun as well as more serious and thought provoking topics.

Reassure your children that they can talk with you no matter what the topic. Try to arrange times when you can walk or sit side-by-side and chat. This is a more relaxed way to have a conversation and enables your children to feel more comfortable talking with you about difficult topics.

Ask yourself:

- Are there times each day when I am able to share some time with my children?
- Do I really listen to my children and what they have to say?
- Do I show my children that I am really interested to hear their opinions and thoughts?

When your children talk with you about day-to-day things, where possible, stop what you are doing and listen. Try to keep in touch with what is happening in their lives.

Here are some tips for talking with your children.

- Be **supportive** and encourage them to talk.
- Show your children you **enjoy** talking with them.
- Let your children know you are **always interested** in what is going on in their lives, not only when they are in trouble or having problems.
- Arrange **opportunities to share time** with your children when you can talk while doing an activity together, for example, cooking, craft, going to the football, family meal times or family meetings.
- **Get down to their level and make eye contact.** When talking with younger children, get down to their eye level by sitting or bending down.
- **Talk shoulder to shoulder.** Older children will often talk more freely when you sit or walk shoulder to shoulder. Travelling in the car is a good place for a chat.
- **Set an example to your children in the way you speak to your family and other adults.** Children learn much from watching people they love and admire.

- Encourage and role model **positive language**, for example: “I really like the way you asked your brother if you could borrow his bike.”
- Use **positive words**. Explain to your children what to say and do rather than what not to say and do. Try: “Please speak to me in a quiet, calm voice,” rather than “don’t yell at me.”
- **Acknowledge your children’s efforts to communicate**. When your children have told you about a challenging issue; tell them you are proud of them for talking to you about it.
- Ask your children their **opinion** on events, issues and general daily proceedings, so they feel their opinion is valued.
- During the evening meal ask everyone to **share** their favourite part of the day or what they hope to achieve tomorrow.
- Sit beside your child while they are on the computer and ask them to **explain** to you how what they are using works.
- **Ask open-ended questions that need a sentence answer**. For example, questions that start with “what” or “how”, rather than ones that can be answered with “yes” or “no”. Try some of these:
 - What happened today?
 - What was the best thing you did at school today?
 - What do you think about...?
 - It sounds like you are pretty unhappy, what has been going on?
 - What do you think you could try to make things better?
 - What can I do to help you to make things better?
- **Allow for “cooling off” time**. When you or your children are feeling very angry or upset, consider using a “cooling off” time before you try to talk.

Active listening

Listen to your children to find out how they are feeling and what is going on in their lives. Sometimes your children may not tell you that they are being bullied, but by listening to them you can tell if they are happy or if something is bothering them. If they are having difficulties online for example, listen for louder or angry computer key strikes or different or negative moods whenever they finish using the computer.

Parents can also teach children how to listen well by demonstrating good listening skills.

How to listen and ask good questions

- Look at the person who is talking and occasionally nod or say “yes” or do something that signals you have understood
- Stand or sit still while you are listening
- Pay attention and think carefully about what is being said
- When the other person stops speaking show you have listened by asking a good reflective question based on what they have just said

Keep listening

As children move closer to adolescence they may appear to not want to talk as much with their parents. This does not mean, however, that they don't want to talk to their parents at all, nor does it mean they have nothing to say. It is important at this time for parents to not give up and keep asking questions and talk on a regular basis. This helps children to feel supported during these changing times. Children who feel their parents are always available when they need them usually feel close to and like being a member of the family. This feeling of closeness between family members helps to protect children from many problems, including bullying.



What is bullying?



Make fun of and tease someone in a mean and hurtful way.



Tell lies or spread nasty rumours about someone to try to make others not like them.



Leave someone out on purpose or not allow them to join in.



Deliberately damage, destroy or steal someone's things.



Hit, kick or push someone around.



Threaten or make someone feel afraid of getting hurt.



Cyberbullying. When an individual or group uses Information Communication Technologies (ICT) to intentionally harm a person.

It is NOT bullying when:



Two people who are as strong as each other argue or fight.



Teasing is done in a friendly, playful way.

Section 3 – Understanding bullying

What is bullying?

Bullying is an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, repeatedly and over time against a person who is less powerful (physically or emotionally) and who cannot easily defend him or herself.

Cyberbullying is when, over a period of time, an individual or a group uses Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to intentionally harm a person, who finds it hard to stop it from continuing.

Cyberbullying – using, for example, a mobile phone and/or the Internet – is when a person:

- sends nasty or threatening emails or messages on the Internet or via mobile phone
- sends mean or nasty comments or pictures about others to websites, e.g. Myspace, Facebook, MSN or to other students' mobile phones
- deliberately ignores or leaves others out over the Internet
- pretends to be someone else online to hurt them or make them look foolish.

Cyberbullying can happen through text messages, pictures, video-clips or emails etc being sent directly to a person, but also when these things are sent to others or posted on the Internet, about that person.

What about Cyberbullying?

The development of ICT has provided a new means to bully. This form of bullying can be more intense than non-cyberbullying because:

- It can occur 24/7 and be difficult to escape.
- It is invasive and you can be targeted while at home.
- The person bullying can be much nastier behind the screen than face to face.
- It can have a large audience – sent to groups or posted on a public forum which can be permanent.
- It is less likely children will tell someone if they are cyberbullied.



Families and school partnerships and cyberbullying

It is now even more important for families and schools to work together as your children use ICT. Incidents of cyberbullying can occur at home or at school.

Why children bully

The reasons why young people engage in bullying are usually complex. We all have different factors which drive our choices including family, friends, school, community and culture.

Students who engage in bullying:

- Are often unhappy and don't feel safe at school. They may feel frustrated and angry and may have difficulty expressing these emotions in an appropriate manner.
- Report being encouraged by others to bully and often feel justified or provoked to bully others.
- Often believe their behaviour improves their social status and gives them an identity or reputation.
- Often find it difficult to stop bullying, as it becomes part of their identity.
- Are usually more aggressive, more easily provoked and may feel a need to dominate others. They may have more power than those they are bullying and they may be more physically strong, assertive or confident.
- Often belong to a group where their friends accept their behaviour and they often have friends who also tend to engage in bullying.
- Have often previously been targets of bullying.
- May be accepted and have some social status amongst their friends, however they are usually not well liked ¹

Warning signs

Warning signs that might indicate your child is being bullied include ^{2,3}

- Being scared or having nightmares
- Losing or having damaged possessions
- Putting themselves down
- Feeling they have no friends or get no party invitations to other young people's homes
- Having difficulty sleeping
- Reluctant to go to school
- Withdrawal from activities and reluctant to say why
- Reluctant to eat or spend time having fun in the same way as before
- Lowered school performance



Sometimes young people (boys more than girls) who are bullied act aggressively towards others. For example, young people who are being bullied sometimes get into trouble for fighting at school.

Warning signs that might indicate your child is being cyberbullied

Sometimes it can be hard to tell the difference between behaviours that should be of concern and those that are a normal part of growing up.

When considering warning signs that your child may be being bullied via technology (or otherwise), one of the most important things to look for is a change in behaviour or mood associated with the use of technology, i.e. just after getting off the computer or when a text message is received on a mobile phone.

Some important questions to consider are:

- Does your child seem sad or upset immediately after using their phone, computer or other device?
- Does your child seem more secretive about who they are talking to online or about who is sending them messages?
- Is your child striking the computer keys harder than usual?



Similar to other bullying, cyberbullying is often intended to damage a person's relationships, social status or self-esteem. As a result, the warning signs can be harder to notice compared to other bullying. Since most (about 80%) young people who are cyberbullied are also face-to-face bullied, it is possible that the warning signs are not only related to technology or online bullying.⁴

Think, plan, talk, do: What to do about bullying

Think: What is going on?

- What is happening?
- How do I feel?
- Is the situation really bothering me?
- Am I in danger?

Plan: What can I do?

- Is this a bullying situation?
- Do I need to ask for help?

Talk: Who can I talk to?

- Who is the best person to talk to?
- What do I want from my support person?
- How could I talk about it?



Talking with your children about being bullied

It can be difficult talking with your children about being bullied and it helps to be aware of your children's needs and feelings. In Section 2 of this booklet we discuss ways you can improve communication between you and your children. If your children feel comfortable talking with you, it will be easier for them to discuss difficult issues, such as bullying, with you.

When discussing bullying it is helpful as a parent to:

- Listen and react in a calm, helpful and supportive manner.
- Encourage your children to explain what happened and how they feel about it.
- Consider there may be factors you are not aware of, such as the involvement of others or previous events.
- Remind them they are not in trouble. Don't take away access to technology, as this may encourage them to avoid telling you about future incidents. Instead help them use the technology more wisely.
- Ask them to show and give you the SMS, IM messages, emails or anything else they have kept.
- Tell them bullying is wrong and they have the right to feel safe and happy.

(For more details see 'Helping my children identify bullying?', p. 19)

Develop a plan together

- Ask them how they would like you to help.
- Ask them if they have talked to anyone else about this, such as a friend or teacher.
- Ask them what they have already done to try to stop the bullying and what happened.
- Ask them what they have seen other students do when they are bullied and if any of the positive actions are something they would try.
- Support them to plan safe actions they can take to improve the situation.
- Help them identify trusted people they can talk to including, school staff, friends and other family members.

(For more details 'Developing an action plan' and 'Asking for help', pp. 21-24)

Meet with the school

- Make an appointment with your child's school to discuss the problem.
- Develop a plan with the school and your child.
- Follow-up with the school and your child at regular intervals to find out if anything else is needed to help him or her.
- Ensure they know what support services are available at school.

(For more details see Section 4 – 'How to approach your child's school', p. 27)



Helping my child identify bullying

It is important for parents and children to learn to identify the characteristics of a bullying situation. Working through and discussing together Section 3 of this booklet ('Understanding bullying – what is bullying?') will provide common understandings and language that is consistent with your school's Friendly Schools Plus initiative.

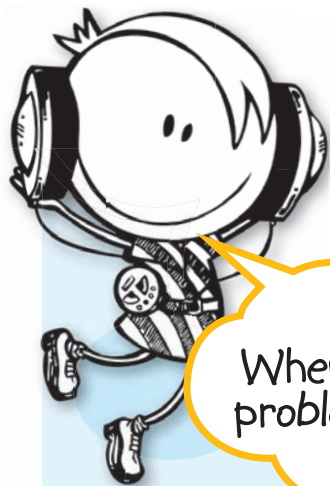
One of the key points in recognising bullying is how the situation makes a person feel. If they feel worried this situation is going to continue, or threatened and afraid that they can't stop it from happening again, then they need to seek help.

To help your child assess a bullying situation the **Think-Plan-Talk model** below can help. It can be used by your children to think through a difficult event and decide what actions they could take to help improve the situation.

Working through these steps with your children will help them to identify bullying situations and build their confidence to respond positively if they are bullied or if they see others being bullied, and to seek help when needed.

THINK What is going on?	PLAN What can I do?	TALK Who can I talk to?
Think about:	Think about:	Think about:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is happening? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this a bullying situation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is the best person to talk to?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do I feel? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I need to ask for help? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I want from my support person?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the situation really bothering me? 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could I talk about it?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Am I in danger? 		

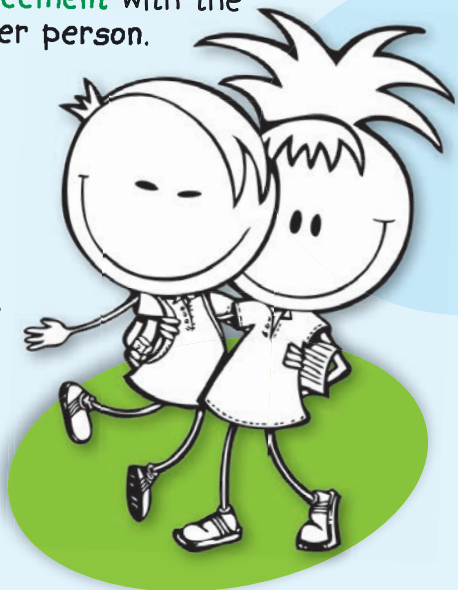




Plan: What can I do?

When I have a problem I can...

1. Try to **stand up** for myself in a positive way.
2. Get **help** from someone in my **support** group.
3. **Ignore** the situation and keep playing or working.
4. **Talk** to a friend to get some ideas to **make a decision**.
5. **Walk away** and **ignore** the person completely.
6. Try to **talk** with the other person I am having a problem with.
7. Try making a **deal** or **agreement** with the other person.



Developing an action plan

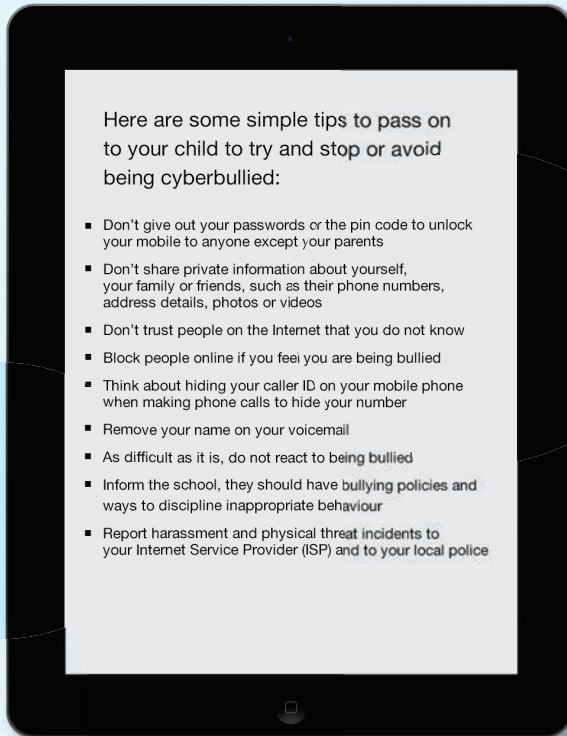
Like most complex problems, there is no one strategy that will stop all bullying. As a first step, it is usually best to encourage your child to talk about what has happened. Below is an example of an action plan that you and your child could develop together.

Some children feel that responding to bullying in a way that suggests helplessness, like crying, or responding with aggression, encourages the bullying to continue.

Children who respond to bullying by staying calm and responding in a way that suggests to the person bullying that they are not affected by it, are thought by other children to be most likely to lessen or stop the bullying.

How can I help my children to avoid or stop being cyberbullied?

Stress that no one should have to deal with being bullied alone and that they should always tell someone they trust if they are being cyberbullied.



Asking for help

“Dobbing” is when a person tries to get attention or to get someone else into trouble.

Asking for help is when someone feels the situation is out of his or her control and they are unable to deal with it alone and needs help.

Asking for help is always ok

If anyone sees someone else in this situation they should also ask for help.



Most young people use the Internet and cyber technology appropriately. It is usually only a few people who do most of the damage.

How can I help my children deal with hurtful comments?

Teasing and other hurtful comments are the most common form of bullying. Parents can help their children deal with hurtful comments by telling them to try the following actions.

- Pretend not to hear or read the comments – walk away
- Ask yourself – is this true, and if so, do I care?
- Breathe deeply and look confident
- Respond – ask them to stop or tell them they are bullying
- Change the subject, ask them a question about something else
- Ask for help from friends
- Ask for help from a teacher

You can also help to stop your children being involved in hurtful teasing by listening and responding to what they say about others. Challenge your children if you hear them saying unkind things about another child or repeating unkind stories they have heard.

In a calm voice ask:

- How can you be sure this story is true?
- How would you feel if this story was told about you?
- How can you provide support and help to the person who the story is about?

Asking for help

Children need to be encouraged to ask for help if bullying continues after they have tried to help themselves.

About one half of children who are bullied do not tell anyone. Children often think that telling someone about a bullying situation is like 'dobbing'. Talk with your children about the difference between dobbing and asking for help.

Dobbing is when a person deliberately tries to get attention or to get someone else into trouble.

Asking for help is when someone feels the situation is out of their control and they are unable to deal with it alone. If anyone sees someone else in this situation they should also try to get help.

Assist your child to identify a support group of people they could talk to if they had a problem. This may include family, teachers, friends or trusted adults.

Many young people talk to their friends when they need help. Your child may be one of those friends. Talk with your child about what they could do if their friends need help. Suggest that your child encourage their friend to take action and go with them to get help.

What if my child is bullying others?

Sometimes children are unaware of the effects bullying behaviour can have on others. It may be useful to use stories or television to show your children examples of bullying behaviours and the effects of these behaviours.

You can help to discourage your children from bullying by:

- Explaining what bullying is and why it is not acceptable.
- Talking about what they think might help them to stop bullying. Ask them what they have tried and how successful it was.
- Discussing how they felt if they have been bullied. Try to understand from your child's perspective. Ask them how they feel about it now.
- Asking questions such as: Did sending the nasty message make you feel better? Could you have tried to communicate your message or feelings in another friendlier manner?
- If your child is having trouble with a friendship group at school, consider helping them to join an activity outside of school to broaden friendship groups and make a fresh start with other children.
- Talking with your children about the impact of bullying on others. Try to help them to understand how the person being bullied may be feeling.
- Asking how they would feel if they were being bullied.

- Making clear rules and consequences, and being consistent in discouraging inappropriate behaviour.
- Closely supervising your children's use of technology
- Praising your children when they use technology appropriately and doesn't engage in negative interactions.
- Discussing with your children why it is important not to laugh at anyone being bullied, not to join in bullying, not to give a person who is bullying lots of attention and to be conscious of their own behaviour towards other students.



Young people who bully others can often be impulsive, insecure, experience identity problems, have higher rates of injury and substance abuse problems, and report a lower overall life satisfaction and depression. Furthermore, these students are often at higher risk for self-harming behaviour and future violent behaviour. Lastly, these children are often experiencing difficulties and are in need of support as much as those young people who are being bullied.



Section 4 – How to approach your children’s school?

Many children do not tell an adult when they are experiencing bullying. This is often due to children being afraid of how adults will respond. Children tell us the worst things their parents can do is to overreact and try to take control of the situation. Your children do need your help but they need you to help *them* to decide what action to take.

Parents need to act as a facilitator for their children, listening non-judgementally and providing support.

Before you approach the school ask your child which, if any, strategies they have already tried, if they were helpful and what they would try next time. Ask them how they would like to approach the problem with the school. Discuss what outcome your child wants from involving the school. Other strategies include:

- **Phone the school and ask who is best placed to help your child.** It may be best to go directly to the classroom teacher, or the year co-coordinator or Deputy Principal.
- **Make a time to talk.** It is best for your child to come with you to the meeting, so ensure the time is convenient for all involved. Try to avoid turning up without an appointment.
- **Explain what you know.** It may help to have some notes or information about the bullying behaviour to show as examples and a record of the timing of these incidents.
- **Describe strategies** your child has tried and how successful they have been to date.
- **Ask for a plan of action.** The plan will most likely vary according to the situation and if technology is involved. The school may wish to consult other staff before deciding on a plan of action. This is quite normal and appropriate.
- **Consider setting a date and time for a follow-up meeting** to talk about how the situation is progressing.
- If your child did not attend the meeting ensure you **discuss with your child what happened** and the agreed strategies. It is important to ensure your child is comfortable with these actions.



Bystander actions

If you see another person being bullied you could...



1. Refuse to join in with the bullying and walk away.
2. Let the bully know that what they are doing is bullying.
3. Ask a teacher or support person for help.
4. Support the person who is being bullied.
5. Support your friends and protect them by being there for them.

Section 5 – Bystanders taking action

What are bystanders?

When bullying incidents take place, other students may inadvertently or deliberately provide an ‘audience’ for the bullying. These students are often called ‘bystanders’.

Bystanders can be part of the problem or part of the solution.

How can I help my children to be a positive bystander?

- Discuss with your children the importance of **NOT** contributing to the bullying by standing and watching and not taking action. This can inadvertently send the message that they approve of the bullying.



- Speak with your children about how to deal with bullying and cyberbullying, so they can help other students they witness being bullied.
- Help your children to **develop a sense of social responsibility** and to realise how they could be reinforcing and maintaining bullying by forwarding hurtful or embarrassing messages, or contributing to aggressive or inappropriate discussions online.
- **Encourage your children** to safely support to the person being bullied when they witness or are aware of another student being bullied. This could be done by:
 - **Talking to the student who is bullying** or posting a message saying that this behaviour is inappropriate and is unacceptable.
 - **Being available, understanding and providing personal support** and help to the student outside of the immediate bullying situation, e.g. by sending a private message to them acknowledging the incident and its inappropriateness, and that they are available to help the person bullied.
 - **Encouraging** them to seek help from peers and adults when needed.

What role can bystanders play in cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying can have an infinite audience and so an unlimited number of bystanders. Cyberbullying often goes unreported by both the targets of the bullying and those who are bystanders ⁵. Students who witness bullying often experience considerable distress ⁶. Those who remain passive may experience feelings of powerlessness and a loss of self-respect ⁷. Conversely, students report feeling good about themselves following their attempts to stop bullying ⁸ and research suggests that if they help once they are more likely to help again.



Section 6 – Social and emotional learning

Social and emotional learning begins at birth and is first experienced in the family home. Throughout their lives children learn from you as a teacher and role-model for the social and emotional skills they need in their world.

The Australian Curriculum outlines these social and emotional skills as Personal and Social Capabilities which are to be taught in every school across Australia. As parents you play an important role in enhancing this learning at home.

Why do our children need social and emotional learning?

To reduce and ultimately prevent bullying it is important to focus on why most children and young people **do not** engage in bullying behaviour. These individuals tend to display greater social and emotional competence than those who bully others. Children and adolescents who demonstrate social and emotional competence are also more likely to have positive relationships and social capabilities that reduce the likelihood of them being bullied. In addition, in the event that they are victimised or a bystander in a bullying incident, they are more aware of how to manage the bullying situation.

Why do most children not bully others?

- **They have good social skills** so they can make friends and be happy about themselves without bullying.
- **They think bullying is wrong** and think their parents would be very upset with them if they bullied.
- **They feel they don't need to bully.** They feel good about themselves.
- **They wouldn't like someone to treat them that way** and therefore wouldn't bully someone else.
- **They are not interested in bullying** as they are busy and involved in other activities.

What is social and emotional learning?

Social and emotional learning is the process of developing and practising important social and emotional understandings and skills. These understandings and skills can be grouped into five key areas ⁹.

***Self-awareness skills* help us to recognise and understand our feelings, while valuing our strengths and abilities. This involves:**

- being able to identify what we are feeling
- understanding why we might feel a certain way
- recognising and having confidence to use our strengths and abilities

***Self-management skills* enable us to handle and direct our emotions in appropriate ways. This involves:**

- managing our emotions so they don't stop us from effectively dealing with situations and pursuing our goals
- striving to achieve our goals despite difficulties

***Social awareness skills* help us to be aware and respectful of the feelings and perspectives of others. This involves:**

- recognising what others may be feeling
- trying to understand a situation from another's point of view
- accepting and valuing people who are different from ourselves

***Relationship skills* help us to deal positively with relationship problems and other social conflicts. These skills include:**

- making friends and maintaining healthy relationships
- dealing effectively with negative social influences and conflicts
- seeking help if we are not able to solve a social problem ourselves

Social decision-making skills help us to consider the consequences of our actions for ourselves and others, and make thoughtful, effective decisions. This involves:

- understanding how a social situation makes us feel
- considering the different choices we have and the positive and negative consequences of each of these choices when making a decision
- making positive choices, while considering how these choices may affect ourselves and others

Self-awareness



Emotions

How we feel about a situation will depend on what we think about the situation, and these feelings will affect what actions we take. Even as adults we can struggle with emotions and responses in difficult situations.

Learning to recognise, name and describe emotions is the first step to managing them. Children need our support to learn about their emotions and how to manage them.

Tips for talking about emotions with your child

- Talk to your children about how they feel about every day things going on around them and encourage them to use descriptive words to describe how they feel.
- Talk about how you feel and demonstrate the use of different language to describe how you feel to demonstrate how feelings can change throughout the day.





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Emotions and literature

A great way for children to explore emotions is through literature, no matter what their age. Stories that describe people expressing their emotions can help your child to relate the characters and how they are feeling. This can also help your child to develop empathy for others and experience with a range of different feelings.

Watching television or movies together and identifying the responses and emotions of the characters or discussing your own emotional responses to the stories is another good way to explore emotions.

Strengths and capabilities

You can help your children develop their sense of identity and self awareness through discussion and support.

The following tips may help:

- Help your children to think about their abilities and what they are capable of in a realistic way, e.g. you throw really well for someone your age.
- Encourage your children to try new activities.
- Help them to find ways to deal with problems rather than telling them what to do. Ask questions like, “What could you do?” and “What do you think?”
- Listen to your children and show them that you value what they have to say.
- Foster their growing need for independence. Begin with basics like caring for their own belongings, making their own bed and feeding their pets.

Self-management

When our children are young we need to play a significant role in helping them with self management. We monitor closely and often support them to regulate how they behave and how they manage day to day activities.

As our children grow older we support them to take responsibility for their own behaviour, organisation and belongings.

Managing emotions

Children who have trouble managing their emotions can experience difficulties in a challenging social setting. Feelings such as anger, frustration and jealousy can be difficult to manage. Children need to learn ways to recognise and manage these emotions. Children who cannot express their emotions appropriately or manage these emotions are more likely to engage in aggressive behaviours towards others.

Children need to learn how to say what they want or feel without being aggressive.

Assertiveness

Being assertive is about saying what you think, feel and want in a confident way. It means saying what you want without shouting, glaring, being angry or putting others down. It also means saying what you want without backing down, putting yourself down or letting others make you feel bad.

Assertive children:

- Can express their feelings calmly and are able to work out when it is the right time to do this;
- Can accept feedback from another child;
- Are able to protect themselves, without being hurtful to other children;
- Are able to ask for help when they have difficulty dealing with a situation themselves;
- Act with self-respect and confidence; and
- Realise that sometimes they have to take risks and stand up for themselves.

How can I help my child to be assertive?

Explain to your child that speaking assertively or behaving assertively is about deciding what you want to do and saying clearly what you want to happen, protecting your own rights without imposing on the rights of others.

It is about not being too hard or too soft:

- Speaking in a firm but friendly way
- Standing tall, making eye contact
- Standing up for yourself politely
- Smiling or looking calm
- Feeling confident and in control
- Feeling okay about yourself

Social awareness

To develop social awareness children need to learn how to understand others. They need to learn to take the perspective of and empathise with others.

Being empathetic means being able to identify with, understand and care about how another person feels in a certain situation.

Many children have not yet had the life experiences to enable them to directly understand or relate to what another person might think, feel or believe in a certain situation.



Some children who bully others lack empathy for the person they are bullying. Helping them to think about how it would feel to be bullied can help them to realise the harm and pain they may be causing.

The use of stories and other literature, cooperative games, role-plays and problem solving can be very helpful to encourage children to identify and understand their emotions, consider the perspectives of others, negotiate tricky situations and make well-reasoned decisions.

How can I help my child to get along better with others?

Being polite

Explain to your children that being polite and courteous makes other people feel respected and valued and they are more likely be respected by others in return.

Social mistakes

Everyone goes through a process of learning social skills and sometimes we will make mistakes. Help your children to recognise that they will sometimes make mistakes and be bossy, use inappropriate behaviour or not use their manners. Use these social mistakes as an opportunity to reflect with our child on what happened and how it could be handled better next time. Teach children how to acknowledge their mistake, apologise and make positive changes.

Share and take turns with others

There are different types of sharing that children need to experience, sharing possessions (toys, clothing etc), sharing environments (bathroom, playground etc) and sharing themselves (helping, caring for others, playing together).

Sharing some tips for children about sharing:

Sharing possessions

- Put away or use privately anything that you can't or don't want to share because it is special to you.
- Offer to share your things with children who would enjoy them too.

- If someone asks to use something of yours, say “yes” and show them how to use it and take care of it properly.
- If you and another child both want to use something that neither of you own, take turns for equal amounts of time.

Sharing environments

- If you have to share equipment remember that the best way is to take equal turns. (A timer can be handy.)
- If there is only one set of something that you and others want to use at the same time, you can either have one turn at a time or divide up the tasks and work together.
- When you are sharing a space with others it is important to try to be aware of how everyone else is feeling around you.



Sharing themselves

- Sharing yourself means being with others who want to spend time with you.
- Sharing a game is a great way to make new friends.
- It is good to have lots of friends and to spend time with different people.
- Try to make sure everyone who wants to be involved is involved when you are organising an activity.

Relationship skills

Bullying is a relationship problem, but the relationship between the individuals involved is not a healthy relationship. Children need to understand there are different types of relationships and these can be healthy or unhealthy.

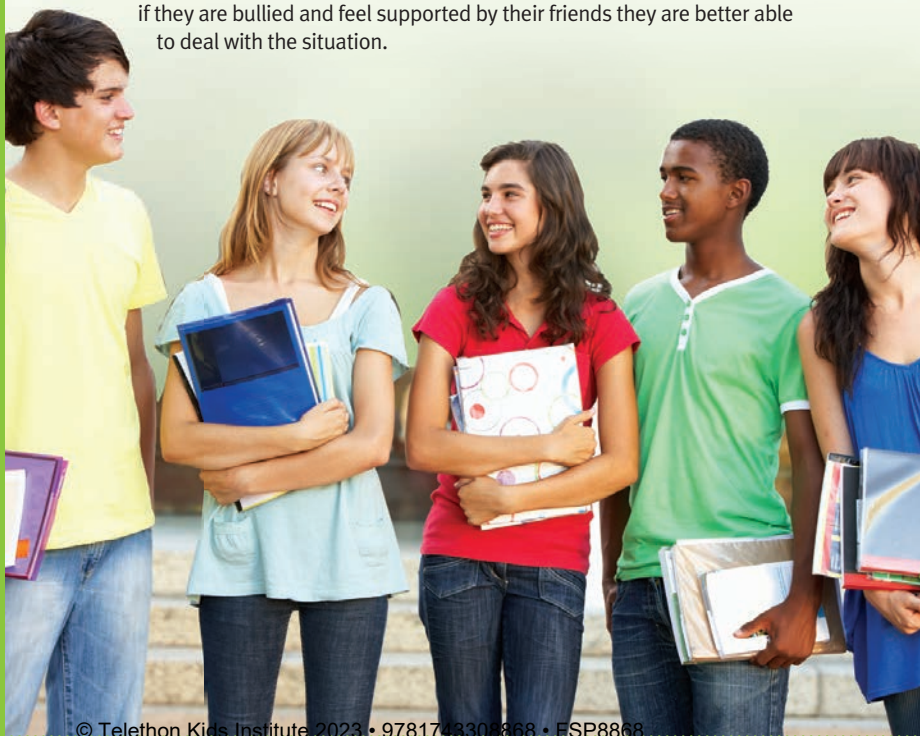
Healthy and unhealthy relationships

In a healthy relationship the people involved care about and respect each other. They like each other for who they are. In unhealthy relationships one or more of the people involved don't respect each other's feelings and tend to have lots of conflicts and problems getting along with each other.

Friendships

Friendships play an important role in how children enjoy and cope at school.

Importantly those who have close friendships are less likely to be bullied and if they are bullied and feel supported by their friends they are better able to deal with the situation.



Children who have friends:

- Feel happier at school
- Are less likely to be bullied
- See their classmates as friendly and caring
- Develop positive attitudes to school and learning
- Are able to cope better if they are bullied



How can I help my child make friends?

- Encourage your children to make friends by inviting friendly children to play at your home.
- At home, encourage your children to talk with their extended family (uncles, aunts, cousins and grandparents), as well as family friends and neighbours to practise making conversation.
- Help your children develop a range of interests and hobbies such as sport, scouts, dance, drama or music to help them make new friends outside of school.
- Model positive interpersonal skills and point them out in others during teachable moments, such as those provided by movies or television programs.

How can I help my child join in with others?

You can help your children learn how to approach other children and ask them to join in their conversations or games. Sometimes children will just stand near other children which may lead to them being invited to join the other children. However, it is an important skill to practise asking to join in, in a friendly and polite way.

Help your children understand that they should not approach strangers in an unfamiliar setting, and that sometimes other children may not be receptive to their initial approach. Children need to learn that sometimes it takes a bit of time for everyone to get used to each other.

Steps for joining in:

- Look for other children who seem friendly and are either by themselves or in small groups.
- Stand and watch them for a while and find out who they are and what they are doing.
- Wait for a good time to ask to join in, e.g. in a break in the game or a pause in the conversation.
- Smile and introduce yourself and ask them if you can join in. Making a positive comment about what they are doing sometimes helps to get conversation started.
- If they let you join in, start doing what they are doing and try to fit in with their activity or conversation.
- Try to learn the names of the other children, get to know them a bit and tell them a bit about yourself.

Dealing with fights and arguments

We all have arguments and disagreements every now and then. Children who learn skills to deal with these situations improve their chances of being able to work and play cooperatively, and of being liked by other children.

How can parents talk to their children about dealing with arguments?

Explain that arguments happen to everyone at some time, and that this doesn't necessarily mean that you don't like the people you have argued with or that a friendship has ended. Usually in arguments both people think they are right.

What tips can I give my children to help them deal with arguments?

- Try to stay calm and talk through the problem using a normal voice.
- If either person is getting too angry or upset, say, "We are getting too angry or upset. Let's talk about this later." Then walk away.
- Make sure you do talk about it later, when you have both calmed down.
- Point out your view and talk about your feelings, e.g. "I felt bad when you told the rest of the team I was useless at soccer".
- Let the other person explain their point of view. Listen without interrupting.

- Apologise if necessary and try to find a way to be friends.
- Get advice and other help from someone you trust.

The influence of peers

Peers can influence each other in both positive and negative ways.

How can I help my children cope with negative influence from their friends or peers?

Children learn about social skills and how to develop relationships by being part of a group. However, sometimes children can feel pressured by the group to do things or behave in ways they do not agree with or feel comfortable with, such as bullying. Explain to your children:

- It is good to have friends and to be part of a group;
- Peers can sometimes try to persuade you to go along with a decision that you may not agree with;
- They don't have to do what their friends want to do to keep the friendship.

Discuss with your children possible responses they can try if their friends are pressuring them into bullying others



General bullying situation

- “I still want to be your friend but I don’t want to bully people”
- “It’s better to be friends with everyone”
- “How would you feel if someone did that to you?”

Leaving someone out

- “Why not just let them join in?”
- “I don’t see the need to make them feel bad”
- “I don’t want to be mean to them, that’s not fair”
- “Why can’t we all be friends?”

Teasing

- “I don’t think it is fair to tease someone about that”
- “I don’t like to call people unkind names”
- “I would feel terrible if someone did that to me, so I am not going to”

Threatening

- “I don’t want to be involved in this”
- “Threatening people is wrong”

Gossip or rumours

- “How do you know this story is true?”
- “That is probably gossip”
- “I don’t want to be involved in spreading gossip”

Physical

- “I don’t want to be involved in fighting”
- “I’ve got something else on at that time”
- “I don’t see the point in hurting someone else”

Decision-making skills

Social decision-making helps us consider the consequences of our actions for both ourselves and others, and make thoughtful, effective decisions. This includes:

- Understanding how a situation makes us feel.
- Considering the different choices we have and the positive or negative consequences of each of these choices.
- Making positive choices that will not harm ourselves or others.

The following model may help you to talk through decisions with your children.



Decision-making model

Create some situations relevant to your children and give them some practice using the decision making model.

- Stop: Assess what is happening. Is it bullying?
- Feel: How do I feel about what is happening?
- Think: Do I think I need to do something about this? Do I need to ask for help?
- Decide: What choices do I have and what might the consequences of these choices be?
- Plan: Work out the safest, most effective way to proceed.
- Do: Carry out the plan safely.



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Section 7 – Where can I go for further information?

Friendly Schools website: www.friendlyschools.com

Other websites:

Bullying No Way: www.bullyingnoway.com.au

Bullystoppers: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/>

bullystoppers/ Cybersmart: <http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/Parents.aspx>

CyberQuoll: <http://www.cybersmart.gov.au/cyberquoll/html/parents.html>

Kids Helpline: www.kidshelp.com.au, 1800 55 1800 (toll-free number)

Parent support services:

Western Australia

Parenting WA Line is a free 27 hour telephone service providing information and advice for people caring for children up to 18 years of age, Tel: (08) 6279 1200, 1800 654 432 (free call). Online: <http://www.communities.wa.gov.au/parents/Pages/default.aspx>

The Family Helpline is a 24 hour counselling and information service for families, Tel: (08) 9221 1100; 1800 643 000 (country free call).

Tresillian Parent Helpline provides assistance with any aspect of parenting for children up to 5 years of age. Tel: 1800 637 357. Online: <http://www.tresillian.net/>

Lifeline provides a general crisis help and referral service, Tel: 13 11 14, Online: www.lifeline.org.au.

Australian Capital Territory

Parent Link provides information, advice, guidance and a referral service, Tel: (02) 6205 8800, Online: www.parentlink.act.gov.au/

Tresillian Parent Helpline provides assistance with any aspect of parenting for children up to 5 years of age. Tel: 1800 637 357. Online: <http://www.tresillian.net/>

Lifeline provides a general crisis help and referral service, Tel: 13 11 14, Online: www.lifeline.org.au.

Northern Territory

Parentline, information service for parents of children living in the Northern Territory. Tel: 1300 30 1300 (cost of a local call). Online: www.parentline.com.au/

Tresillian Parent Helpline provides assistance with any aspect of parenting for children up to 5 years of age. Tel: 1800 637 357. Online: <http://www.tresillian.net/>

Lifeline provides a general crisis help and referral service, Tel: 13 11 14, Online: www.lifeline.org.au.

New South Wales

Parentline, information service for parents of children living in New South Wales, Tel: 1300 1300 52, <http://www.parentline.org.au/>

Tresillian Parent Helpline provides assistance with any aspect of parenting for children up to 5 years of age. Tel: 1800 637 357. Online: <http://www.tresillian.net/>

Lifeline provides a general crisis help and referral service, Tel: 13 11 14, Online: www.lifeline.org.au.

Other crisis support numbers for families and parents can be found online at: http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/mch/parent_help.asp.

Queensland

Parentline, information service for parents of children living in the Queensland. Tel: 1300 30 1300 (cost of local call). Online: www.parentline.com.au/

Tresillian Parent Helpline, Tel: 1800 637 357. Online: <http://www.tresillian.net/>

Lifeline provides a general crisis help and referral service, Tel: 13 11 14. Online: www.lifeline.org.au.

South Australia

Parents HelpLine information service for parents children living in South Australia. Tel: 1300 364 100 (cost of local call). Online: <http://www.parenting.sa.gov.au/>

Tresillian Parent Helpline, Tel: 1800 637 357. Online: <http://www.tresillian.net/>

Lifeline provides a general crisis help and referral service, Tel: 13 11 14. Online: www.lifeline.org.au.

Tasmania

Parent Line, to assist parents with stressful situations and concerns. Tel: 1300 808 178. Online: http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/service_information/services_files/parentline

Tresillian Parent Helpline provides assistance with any aspect of parenting for children up to 5 years of age. Tel: 1800 637 357. Online: <http://www.tresillian.net/>

Lifeline provides a general crisis help and referral service, Tel: 13 11 14. Online: www.lifeline.org.au.

Victoria

Parentline: telephone information, advice and referral service for parents. Available 8am to midnight 7 days a week. Tel: 13 22 89 Online: www.parentline.vic.gov.au/

Tresillian Parent Helpline provides assistance with any aspect of parenting for children up to 5 years of age. Tel: 1800 637 357. Online: <http://www.tresillian.net/>

Lifeline provides a general crisis help and referral service, Tel: 13 11 14, Online: www.lifeline.org.au.

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Friendly Families



While parents can have concerns about the possible effects of bullying on their children, many indicate they are unsure of what they can do to help their children to prevent or respond effectively to bullying, especially cyberbullying.

This book provides families with information and ideas to help them to talk with their children about bullying, including cyberbullying behaviour, and to help their children build effective social skills. The actions suggested in this book are consistent with the Friendly Schools Plus learning provided to students at school to reduce bullying behaviour.



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