

## Bullying Prevention

This information is taken from the Safe At Schools web page- [www.safeatschool.ca](http://www.safeatschool.ca).

What is Bullying?

Bullying is the abuse of a power imbalance with the intent to harm someone.

Generally, bullying is repeated behaviour; however, depending on the impact on the individual student, it could also be a single event. The person who is targeted usually fears or learns to fear the power of the person who is bullying them.

People who bully may act alone or with accomplices against a single target or a series of individuals to inflict physical, emotional, or social damage. These bullying episodes may occur over a short period of time or go on indefinitely and are frequently organized and systematic.

People who bully often rationalize their behaviour and feel justified in their actions. They rely on bystanders either to do nothing to aid the targets of bullying or to be an ally in their bullying behaviour.

Bullying includes such behaviours as physical assaults, unwanted sexual touching and assault, intimidation, threats, coercion, exclusion, rejection, gossip, spreading rumours and name-calling. It can be carried out in person or through text messaging, Internet sites or other parts of cyber space.

In October 2007, the Government of Ontario introduced a Policy and Program Memorandum (P/PM 144) on Bullying Prevention and Intervention for use by schools across the province. This P/PM includes a definition of bullying:

*Bullying is typically a form of repeated, persistent, and aggressive behaviour directed at an individual or individuals that is intended to cause (or should be known to cause) fear and distress and/or harm to another person's body, feelings, self-esteem, or reputation. Bullying occurs in a context where there is a real or perceived power imbalance.*

This information is taken from the Safe At Schools web

page. [www.safeatschool.ca](http://www.safeatschool.ca)

When examining the issue of bullying in schools, a definition combining essential elements from a number of definitions serves as a useful guide.

- Bullying is aggression in any form: verbal, emotional, psychological, sexual or physical.
- When bullying occurs there is an imbalance of power; the person who bullies intends to subjugate the will of another person.
- Those who bully intend to harm someone physically, emotionally, or socially.
- Bullying is an act against an individual or a series of individuals who fear the bully's power. It is usually characterized by repetition, but not always. In all cases, an imbalance of power exists.
- Bullying is often organized and systematic.
- Students who bully often feel justified in their behaviour.
- In a school, bullying can occur anywhere and can be perpetrated by anyone. Those who bully can be students or adults.
- Those who bully can operate alone or with accomplices.
- Those who bully rely on bystanders or onlookers either doing nothing to stop the bullying or actually supporting the behaviour.
- A target of bullying may be a single individual or a series of individuals.
- Bullying can occur over a short period of time or go on indefinitely.



## Impact of Bullying

Bullying has a profound effect on those who bully, those who are bullied, and those who witness the bullying. More than 30 years ago, Leonard Eron's longitudinal examination of bullying demonstrated that most children identified as "bullies" in Grade 3 were also identified as "bullies" by the end of high school. By the age of 30, one out of four of those who bullied had a criminal record. The males who bullied had greater tendencies to be abusive in their adult intimate relationships than those who did not bully, and the females who bullied were more abusive to their children. The research also discovered a correlation between bullying and a range of social problems, including employment difficulties, alcohol and drug dependency, and divorce.

Other studies indicate that boys and girls who both bully and are bullied are more liable to suffer depression than other students and that girls who both bully and are bullied are more likely to self-mutilate or seriously contemplate, attempt or commit suicide.

Targets of bullying fear an increase in bullying if they tell, and suffer from a sense that nothing can be done about it anyway. Their shame and guilt at their inability to cope with the bullying make them anxious and unhappy. Targets suffer from the isolation and exclusion that removes them from the company of other children. Not surprisingly, they often feel less capable and less assured than those around them and need constant reaffirmation from adults. They may have difficulty forming interpersonal relationships and may present as academically troubled, regardless of their ability. Peter Randall indicates they may also have trouble sleeping, exhibit signs of depression, become physically ill, have trouble focusing on school work, and regularly resist attending school. Targets of bullying may begin taking the long way to or from school to avoid their tormentors, or may begin to steal to pay a bully's extortion.

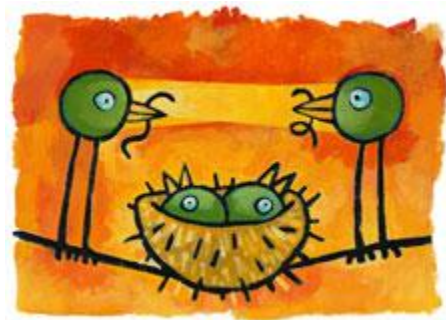
Targets of bullying are often unable to remove the stigma of being a target no matter what they do. They may be put down by other students when working in groups, often picked last when teams are selected, or find that no one wants to work with them. They may be involved in and blamed for fights not of their own choosing. The more they're bullied, the more isolated they become, and the more bullies are able to dehumanize them. As with bullies, targets are at significant risk of developing antisocial behaviours as adolescents and into adulthood. Bullying undermines the bullied child's sense of self and personal safety. Bystanders also suffer negative outcomes as a result of witnessing bullying. They are often stirred up by the emotional content of the experience, frequently align with the student who bullies, learn to "blame the victim," or accept their own implicit failure by failing to intervene. A general lack of adult intervention can lead them to believe that those with power are allowed to aggress against others and achieve added status as a result of their behaviour. They may even take advantage of opportunities to adopt the same antisocial behaviour. For many children who witness bullying, it creates feelings of sadness, anxiety, and the sense that the world is not a safe place. It can greatly affect children's capacity to concentrate and to learn.

Bullying behaviour has a devastating impact on all members of the school community, including the students who bully. Some students who bully have learned attitudes and behaviours which undermine their ability to cooperate, to integrate themselves into their peer group, and to respect others' differences and rights.

This information is taken from the web site - Safe At School.

In her article, *Making A Difference in Bullying: Understanding and Strategies for Practitioners*, Debra Pepler asserts that adults have the crucial role of "social architect" in young people's lives to ensure that their social life is structured to encourage the development of healthy and egalitarian social relationships. Without the consistent involvement of adults, bullying cannot be prevented in a school. In order to send a message to children and teens that bullying is not acceptable, and that adults are resource people to turn to for help when needed, we can:

- listen to children and teens, and encourage them to share their feelings and experiences with respect to their social relationships and to their life at school;
- adjust our response so that it mirrors the child's or teen's assessment of the situation's gravity when a young person confides in us. For example, we may be tempted to minimize certain situations involving



social humiliation, and to take very seriously situations involving physical danger. For young people, the former type of situation is often the most dreaded;

- be aware of the power dynamics at play in students' social interactions;
- get involved in students' social life in order to promote pro-social behaviours; for example, initiate and participate in games and discussions with children and teens;
- make sure we understand and that we help children and teens understand the difference between "tattling" and "telling", or between "snitching" or "ratting" and getting adult help;
- put our school's or our classroom's bullying prevention policies and procedures into practice regularly and consistently.

The solutions to end bullying do not rest solely with the student who is bullied. Students who witness bullying also have a crucial role to play. Adults can be a catalyst for the kind of change in school culture that is necessary to mobilize bystanders and witnesses. Their continued intervention, ongoing involvement and support of all students are an indispensable facet of bullying prevention.