

## **Bullying – what can parents do?**

Bullying is when a person deliberately and repeatedly hurts someone else. The hurt can be physical or emotional. Bullying includes hitting, pushing, name calling, leaving people out and teasing. If anyone feels scared or hurt when they are with someone, they may be being bullied. Bullying is a form of aggression that can escalate into violence. Children who are being bullied need adults to intervene and provide support.

Parents can look for the following warning signs to help determine if their child could be a victim of bullying:

### **The child:**

- gets hurt or bruised;
- is scared or has nightmares;
- loses or has damaged possessions;
- puts him/herself down;
- doesn't want to go to school;
- has no friends or party invitations;
- often feels sick; or
- acts aggressively.

### **Parents can help their children deal with bullying by:**

- asking their child what is wrong;
- reminding children that they have a right to feel safe;
- letting their children know what bullying is and how to spot it;
- teaching them that speaking up about bullying is okay;
- teaching children how to stand up for themselves (e.g. teaching them to look a bully in the eye and say 'stop bullying me');
- teaching children not to laugh at anyone being bullied, not to join in bullying, not to give a person who is bullying lots of attention and not to leave people out of games;
- telling the school and demanding action;
- seeking help for their child to improve his/her social skills. A child who has been bullied can be at greater risk than others of being bullied again (even when the first bully has been dealt with). Children who have been bullied can benefit greatly from additional help, including debriefing about the bullying, and, in particular, making sure they have the social skills necessary to function effectively at school.

### **To deal with children who are bullying others, parents can:**

- increase supervision when the child is with other children;
- explain what bullying is and why it is not acceptable;
- try to get them to understand what it is like for the person being bullied,
- ask how they would feel if they were being bullied;
- talk about what they think might help them to stop bullying;
- show them how to join in with other children in a friendly way;
- make clear rules and consequences, and be consistent in addressing inappropriate behaviour;
- praise children when they play cooperatively with others;
- consider enrolling the child in a group program that helps children learn to manage their behaviour.

**To get help for their child, parents can phone the APS Psychologist Referral Service on 1800 333 497.**

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