

Tipsheet:

Bullying at school



When bullying happens at school, it's hard to know how to help your child. Let's explore what bullying is and what you can do as a parent.

Understanding bullying behaviour

No one deserves to be bullied or treated disrespectfully. Here are some things to know about bullying behaviour:

- Bullying is a deliberate intention to harm somebody else
- The 'bully' may act alone or when there's nobody around to witness it
- Bullying creates a power imbalance between the 'bully' and the 'bullied'
- Bullying happens through repeated acts and is not usually a single event
- Bullies may not have obvious 'behavioural' issues and they may have good social skills
- Typically boys engage in more physical types of bullying
- Typically girls engage in more verbal, emotional or social types of bullying

With thanks to Kids Helpline for enabling Bupa to share this valuable content.





Signs that a child is being bullied

You might start to notice some changes in your child if they're being bullied. Each child responds differently to bullying. However here are some signs you can look out for as a parent:

- Friendship breakups
- 'Losing' things at school
- Withdrawing from others
- Loss or increase in appetite
- Cuts, bruises and/or marks on their skin
- Ripped or stained school clothes
- Avoiding school or social situations
- Feeling stressed, anxious, depressed
- Trouble sleeping, headaches and/or stomach aches
- Lost interest in school work or grades suddenly drop

Talking about bullying with your child

If you're worried that your child is being bullied you might want to try and fix the situation as soon as possible.

It's a good idea to slow things down and try to understand their point of view by listening and letting them know you care before moving onto solutions.

Here are some tips to help:

- Talk regularly about school, their friendships and anything that might be troubling them
- Ask them directly if they're being bullied and let them know you want to work together to help stop it
- Discuss your own experiences of being bullied and how you got through it
- Talk about the importance of not bullying back as this can make the situation worse
- Build them up by focusing on their strengths and what makes them a good person
- Encourage them to call Kids Helpline and talk to a counsellor about their worries and to get ideas on what might help them cope

Working with your child to stop bullying

Your first instinct as a parent might be to step in and take action on your child's behalf. But your child might disagree about what action to take or they might not want you to do anything at all.

Each child is different and so what works for one child might not work for another.

The following are some suggestions you can offer your child if they are being bullied. It can help to try all of the strategies at once.


- Talk to an adult they trust eg. teacher, Principal, school counsellor
- Try and make friends with positive and supportive peers
- Get support from friends, family members or a counsellor
- Get involved in hobbies or sports so they can meet different peer groups
- Try to diffuse the situation like making a joke
- Keep their distance from the bully
- Don't bully the person back as that can make things worse

What you can do as a parent

If you are still concerned that your child is being bullied it may be time to take further action.

Some options to consider might be:

- Keep a record of the incidents
- Report it to the school
- Seek legal advice
- Contact the Police
- Contact the Department of Education
- Report cyberbullying



Supporting your child through bullying can be tough.

Bullying happens to many kids at some point in their life.

Knowing the best way to support your child isn't always easy though!

Bullying can be a complex problem and sometimes there is no simple solution.

If you need some support, call the **Parentline** service in your state or territory to discuss your options with a counsellor. You can also visit **kidshelpline.com.au/parents**

If your child needs support they can call **Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800** or visit **kidshelpline.com.au**

