

What to do if ... you think your child is being bullied

A Parent Guide



Why do children bully others?

Children bully because:-

- they want to be 'in' with the cool gang
- it feels like fun – they don't realise how much it hurts
- they dislike, or are jealous of, someone
- it makes them feel powerful or respected
- it gets them what they want (money, sweets etc)
- they are bullied themselves and are taking out their hurt and anger on someone who won't fight back
- they are having problems in their life that are making them feel bad.

REMEMBER: People who are happy with themselves do not need to bully other people.

What to do if ... you think your child is being bullied

Get your child to talk about their worries and feelings.

Your child may not tell you that he, or she, is being bullied. However there are some signs to look out for if you think your child might be being bullied.

- Behaviour changes
- Withdrawal
- Not wanting to go to school
- Frequent stomach-aches, headaches or non-specific illnesses

Sometimes these ailments may be real, and sometimes they may be made up. Whether they are, or not, the worry certainly is real so needs to be taken seriously.

Try to get your child to talk to you about what is worrying them. You can use books, TV plots and puppets to help children talk about their worries and feelings.

Praise your child for telling you and reassure them they have done the right thing by sharing their worries.

Use your own listening skills; accept your child's feelings and encourage them to talk about their worries by **listening** carefully. Don't belittle what they are going through – however minor it may seem to you, the feelings are very real for them.

Don't jump in with advice, or immediately try to solve the problem. Listen to their ideas and, unless your child is in danger, agree to let them try out their ideas.

What to do if ... you think your child is being bullied

Practical things you can do and encourage your child to do

- Remind your child how they can manage their feelings by talking, relaxing, taking exercise, distracting themselves by doing an activity they enjoy.
- Bullying destroys confidence, so work hard to help your child feel valued and important.
- Help your child think about what they can do and ask how you can help. If your child feels in danger, you need to make sure they have a plan to help them stay safe (e.g. ways to avoid the children doing the bullying, staying with a group of friends, staying in safe areas, know where to go for help).
- Tell your child you have to involve their teacher, agree how you can do this in the best way (e.g. so that other children aren't aware of your visit, conversation).
- Teach your child 'Fogging', (see over the page).
- Collect evidence, (e.g. keep a diary of who did what and when, what was said, keep any text messages, emails, website posts etc).
- Alert the school, stay calm and give specific details from the notes you have kept. Ask what they will do and also what they advise you to do. Remember that you are partners and both want the best for your child, so do your best not to fall out with the school – this NEVER makes things better!

What to do if ... Deal with bullying by 'Fogging'

Fogging can give us a way to stop the things people might say from hurting us, it can also stop us from 'rising to the bait' (which lets the bully win). People who bully often like the feelings of power they get when the person they are bullying reacts as they want them to. Fogging stops them from getting this pleasure, but doesn't put the bullied person in danger.

Fogging: How to do it

- Remind yourself that
 - The person bullying you has said this to many other people – what they say tells us more about them than you
 - They want to see your reaction – take away their satisfaction!
- Imagine a great fog around you which swallows up insults so they cannot upset you.
- Use a normal, bored-sounding voice and say something neutral
 - 'Yeah, whatever.'
 - 'If you say so.'
 - 'Well, you could be right.'
 - 'Maybe.'



Make sure your body language, tone of voice and words you use all give the same message:

'I'm not really bothered by anything you say, or do.'

Stick with it. It probably won't work the first time.

Helplines and websites:

www.childline.org.uk (Tel: 0800 11 11)

www.bullying.co.uk

www.familylives.org.uk (Tel: 0808 800 2222)