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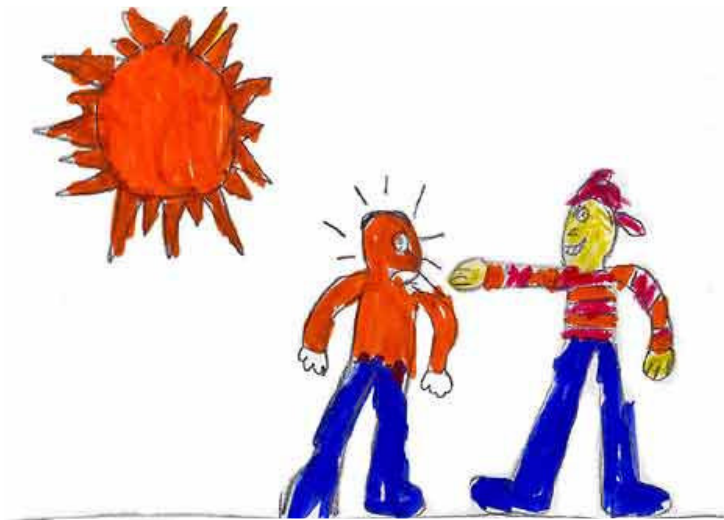


# Bullying

Thoughts

• For: Parents \* Kids \* Coaches \* Teachers \* Leaders \* Babysitters •

**Bullies are just a normal fact of life – or are they? Not any more. Recent episodes of tragic school violence are raising public awareness of the harm caused by bullying and the need for parents, teachers, adults and students to intervene. The Dufferin Parent Support Network provides supports to the parents of school-aged children in Dufferin. With this insert we hope to increase your awareness of the problem and give you some ideas of how you can act to stop bullying.**



Drawing by Garrett, www.bullying.org



## Bullying: What can be done?

By Michael Reist

Bullying affects everyone and is found in many different forms. School is often thought of as the most common place where bullying occurs, but it is also found in the home and the workplace. Bullying occurs whenever anyone uses fear, intimidation or shame to gain power and control over another person.

Why do people bully each other? Human beings are pack animals, and whenever you have a group of people together a pecking order forms. Bullies are trying to raise their status in the group or bolster their own feelings about themselves, and they do this by knocking others in the group down. Forms of bullying run through a huge spectrum - from mild verbal "dissing" to serious physical harm, sometimes causing death.

There are many excellent books, articles and websites that deal with the topic of bullying. The simple fact is there is no single sure-fire solution. There are three main strategies for dealing with bullies: *avoidance, talking back and telling an adult.*

**Coffee House Hours:**  
Monday to Friday 7 am to 10 pm  
Saturday 8 am to 10 pm  
Sunday 10 am to 5 pm



### Top 3 Strategies for Dealing with Bullies

**1. Avoidance:** We may think of avoidance as running away from your problems, and sometimes that may be the case. But maybe the bully doesn't need to be your problem. The bully is his own problem and we are best advised just to get out of the way. As Mr. Miyagi said in *The Karate Kid*, "best block – no be there." Stay out of the bully's physical presence. If you can't do that, then avoid eye contact. Find kids to be with who have no connection to the bully. Adults can play a role here. There is nothing wrong with arranging which sports team your child gets on or which teacher your child has. Coaches and principals can play a positive role here in keeping the match away from the gasoline.

**2. Talking back:** Many bullied kids tend to have a passive temperament that the bully can smell a mile away. If a bullied kid is going to stand up to a bully, he must claim his own personal power and assert it. This is communicated by body language and tone of voice. Stand

## About Bullying

### What is bullying?

Bullying can be defined as 'repeated and systematic harassment and attacks on others.'

Key Elements:

- Power imbalance
- Bully's intent to harm
- Victim's distress
- Repeated over time

Bullying can be perpetrated by individuals or groups and can include many different behaviors such as:

- Physical violence and attacks
- Verbal taunts, name-calling and put downs
- Threats and intimidation
- Stealing of money and possessions
- Exclusion from the peer group

### How prevalent is bullying?

Several countries have conducted studies which have consistently shown that at least 15% of students in schools are involved in bullying and that it occurs once every seven minutes.

- About 9% are victims
- About 7% bully others repeatedly
- More students in younger grades are victimized

- Boys and girls were equally likely to be victims

### Parents involvement

Parents are generally unaware of the extent of bullying and victimization problems. Parents of bullies may inadvertently support this form of behavior if they model the use of power and aggression and fail to monitor, set limits and intervene with consequences for bullying at home. Parents of victims may inadvertently place their child at risk for victimization by not encouraging independence and sociability.

### What can parents do if their children are being bullied?

1. Ask the child directly. Look for signs of victimization; fear of going to school, lack of friends, missing belongings.
2. Work with the school immediately to make sure your child is

safe, and that effective consequences are applied to the bully.

3. Develop your child's special skills and confidence in the context of a positive social group.

### What to do if your child is aggressive or bullies others

1. Take the problem seriously. Children and youth who bully others often have serious problems later in life.

2. Make it clear to your child that you will not stand for this kind of behavior, and discuss with your child the negative impact bullying has on the victims.

3. Ensure that family and child television and computer viewing patterns are non-violent in nature.

4. Co-operate with the school in changing your child's aggression.

5. Praise the efforts your child makes toward non-violent and responsible behavior.

*From the Wellington-Dufferin Task Force on Youth Violence. Re-printed with permission*

tall, head and shoulders back, head high. Look the bully in the eye. Speak loud and clear. Say what you really think and feel. Keep it short. Then walk away. You are claiming your power. This is not a conversation or a debate. I have found it very helpful to have the child rehearse the words beforehand in a short role play. I poke the kid on the back of the neck and provoke a (practice) reaction. It works.

**3. Telling an adult:** This is the best strategy, but it only works if adults are willing to be adults. Many adults are not able to handle the bullying issue because they are unsure of their own personal power and kids sense this. This is why so many cases of bullying go unreported. Adults tend to react in one of two ways: denial (it's part of growing up, toughen up, you must be doing something to provoke it, etc.) or iron-fisted-zero-tolerance punishment. The bullied kid does not want a "big deal" made out of it. He just wants it to stop. Firstly, adults need to earn the trust of kids – that's a huge one! Secondly, if a child reports bullying, then the adult must take it seriously, speak to the bully and make it very clear that it has to stop.

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**Proud Host of the Parenting Café**