



Getting clear about bullying

QUICK TIPS

1. Control your emotional response.
2. Ask questions.
3. Involve them in the solution.
4. Understand that coming together is likely to produce the best outcome.
5. Act like The Lego Movie – everyone is special.
6. Show empathy not sympathy.

Bullying is used frequently and very often, but what actually is it and how does it differ from conflict or one off mean cruel behaviour? This is not to say that inappropriate one-off behaviour choices are not serious.

What is it? Conflict upsets and annoys people. It makes people feel small and not important, but unless there is HARM happening it is not bullying. People can be mean or aggressive to each other, but you cannot be bullied only once, bullying is ongoing and relentless. Bullying is REPEATED. Bullying can be done to one person or to a group, and it can be done by one person or by a group. Bullies use social status, physical means and feelings to bring someone down.

How do I help my child?

Be prepared by talking about bullying in advance.

Limit payoff for the bully and *underpay* with a flippant reaction making the bullying behaviour not worth the effort.

Be vigilant and look out for the signs of bullying, such as shifts in mood or behaviour.

Build alliances, bullies need your child's allies to be separated.

Encourage children to make connections and have multiple people in multiple domains of their lives to communicate with.

It is important for parents, carers and schools to be clear and consistent about their definitions of bullying. Once that clarity has been achieved, bullying can be dealt with in a far more focused and effective way. Before any action can be labelled as bullying, three rules need to be kept in mind – HARM, REPEATED, POWER. An action is only bullying if each of the three rules is represented. Remember there can be no absolute guarantee and not all strategies work all of the time, but on the right occasion one might be perfect. Using five steps will help to more likely have a positive outcome, if your child is faced with a bullying situation.

Bullying is about POWER.