

# Is my child being bullied?

## Simple signs for parents and carers

Knowing the signs of bullying helps us as parents to support our child and intervene at the earliest possible stage of the bullying cycle to minimise its effects. Focusing on the experience of the child and maintaining a warm and safe environment at home can go a long way in reducing the likelihood of bullying and the impact of bullying should it occur.

### What are the signs of bullying?

Signs to look out for that may indicate your child is experiencing bullying include:

- doesn't want to go to school
- refuses to participate in school activities
- starts taking a different route to school or doesn't want to walk to school
- school performance decreases
- disturbed sleep including a relapse to bed wetting
- loss of appetite
- change in temperament including frequent tears, anger or mood swings
- asks for an increase in lunch money or allowance or takes money from home
- shows unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches
- comes home hungry from school
- they come home with damaged clothes, books or other belongings.

Signs of online or 'cyber' bullying can be similar to the signs of face-to-face bullying. However, they can result in additional changes in behaviour including:

- hesitation about going online
- being nervous when they receive an instant message, text message or email
- appearing visibly upset after using the computer, mobile phone or other smart device
- avoiding the use of smart devices such as iPads, computers, phones or tablets
- closes or hides the device screen when you or other family members enter the room
- unusually long periods of time spent online in a tense or unhappy mood
- receiving suspicious or anonymous phone calls, emails or messages.



## What can I do if my child is being bullied?

Many parents feel distressed when they learn their child is being bullied, but there are some simple strategies parents can implement to stop the bullying and minimise its impact.

It is important to understand what your child has experienced including the details of the incidences, in order to make the most appropriate decision for your child's wellbeing. Let your child know that you understand what they are telling you and that you take the information very seriously and will work with them to stop the bullying. If your child's safety is at risk, you should contact your child's school immediately.

### Our top tips:

#### 1. Stay calm and positive

Listen to your child, let them know you believe them and take their concerns seriously. Approach the situation with a confident, positive and resilient attitude. Your attitude will influence how your child views this experience so remaining calm and focusing on finding a solution will reduce the negative impact of what they have been experiencing.

#### 2. Discuss and practice strategies to manage face-to-face bullying

Empowering your child with strategies to resolve the situation themselves can help them develop their resilience and prevent future bullying situations. Some suggested strategies are:

- try ignoring the bully
- telling the bully to stop and then walk away
- not reacting to whatever the bully says or does
- remove themselves from the situation and go to somewhere safe like closer to a teacher

Practicing these strategies at home can help your child to feel more confident in their ability to use them when they need to.

**Remember! Never advise your child to fight with the other child. This can turn a bad situation into an even worse one very quickly.**

#### 3. Discuss strategies to manage online bullying

Strategies such as ignoring the bully or not reacting to negative comments online are also applicable when dealing with online bullying. Other strategies include:

- not responding to comments and saving the example to show a trusted adult
- blocking or deleting the sender
- reporting the abuse to the Internet Service Provider or telephone company who can assist to block calls and texts
- telling trusted adults such as a parent, carer, teacher or the police

#### 4. Report the bullying to your child's school

Encourage your child to speak to a teacher or guidance counsellor at their school. Let them know that you will report it to the school if the bullying continues after they have tried the strategies you have practiced. Reporting the bullying to the school is also a good opening for further discussions about how to educate other students and parents about bullying to reduce the likelihood of other children experiencing bullying at your child's school.