

## Top Tips for Managing Bullying

### Encourage Your Child to Talk

Encourage your child to talk about the bullying, and when they do, listen carefully and give them your undivided attention. Try not to interrupt with too many questions and hold off on offering advice. Your child needs to feel heard and to have their feelings validated – if you respond with logic they might feel like you're not listening.

It can be distressing to listen to how upset your child is but try to remain calm. If your child can see you're distressed they may not come to you again.

### Help Your Child Think of Solutions

After you've listened to your child's problems and validated their distress ask whether they'd like help coming up with a solution. Try to avoid rushing in with all the answers – if your child can come up with their own solution it will help them feel more in control.

Brainstorm ideas and look at the pros and cons of each option. Ideas for bullying that's occurring in the playground might include: pretending not to care and walking away, finding someone else to play with, playing near a teacher in the playground, avoiding areas where the bully plays. Cyber-bullying can be managed by: blocking the cyber-bully or deleting them from contact lists, deactivating Facebook for a short-period, reporting it to the school.

Adolescents in particular may decline your offer to help. If this happens, avoid pushing the issue but ask if there's someone else they'd rather talk to, like an older sibling or family friend.

### Speak to Your Child's School

Ask about your schools bullying policy and develop a plan for managing future bullying incidents. Organise a follow-up meeting so the effectiveness of the plan can be revised.

If you're unhappy with the schools response keep track of bullying incidents in a diary. Documentation might help the school to understand the seriousness of the problem.

### Avoid Speaking to the Bully or their Parents

This can be tempting, but keep in mind that contact can escalate the situation and cause additional problems for your child at school.

### Foster Peer Relationships Outside School

If your child is having difficulty making and keeping friends at school be supportive of them spending time with friends outside school hours. Extra-curricular activities are a good way to help your child develop friendships – if you can find an activity your child is good at this will also help to enhance their self-esteem.

## BULLYING

**Bullying is a serious problem in Australian schools. As many as 1 in 6 kids are bullied at school on a weekly basis, and with the ever increasing popularity of social networking sites like Facebook, bullying is no longer limited to the school environment; many students are now bullied at home as well.**

**Sadly 1 in 5 bullied kids feel too ashamed to speak up and seek help and their bullying continues undetected. Parents and teachers need to be on the lookout for warning signs like:**

- Unexplained scratches and bruises
- Frequent headaches or stomachaches
- Changes to appetite and sleep
- School refusal or anxiety about going to school
- Sadness or irritability

**It can be distressing to discover that your child is being bullied and most parents are confused about what they should do to help.**

**This tips sheet outlines basic strategies for helping your child to manage the bullying. If the bullying continues or if it is affecting your child's happiness you should also speak to your GP about a referral to a Clinical Psychologist.**