

# Stop bullying!

Practical advice for everyone

## Introduction

No one deserves to be bullied!

### If you or someone you know is being bullied...

...tell and get help. When you are being bullied, it is hard to concentrate and you probably feel unhappy and scared. Perhaps you are keeping the bullying a secret because the bully has threatened you. But staying silent means the bullying won't stop.

### If you are a bully...

...you can change your behaviour so that you will have real friends, not people who are only there because they are afraid of you. Becoming a decent person will make you feel better about yourself and you will find some genuine friends.

### If you are a child, young person or adult...

...this booklet will give you some suggestions for stopping bullying. We know that children who are bullied suffer and that bullies are much more likely to end up in prison than non-bullies. So let's not put up with bullying in any way, shape or form. Together we can stop it.

## What is bullying?

### Bullying usually includes:

- deliberate hostility and aggression
- a victim who is less powerful than the bully or bullies
- an outcome which is always painful and / or distressing

### Bullying can be:

**Physical:** pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching, and any other forms of violence

**Verbal:** name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, threats

**Emotional:** excluding, tormenting (i.e. hiding books, threatening gestures), ridicule, humiliation

**Racist:** racial taunts, graffiti, gestures

**Sexual:** unwanted physical contact, abusive comments, homophobic abuse

**Online/cyber:** setting up 'hate websites', sending text messages, emails and abusing people via their mobile phones

### Bullying or Teasing?

It depends on how the **receiver** *perceives* it. This will be determined by other factors such as:

- their previous experience,
- their "personal sensitivity"
- what kind of support they get from their peers.

The giver might think they're being funny, but if the receiver has been affected by previous bullying, he or she might not appreciate or enjoy it.

### Persistent bullying can result in:

- depression
- low self esteem
- shyness
- poor academic achievement
- isolation
- threatened or attempted suicide

Unchecked bullying also damages the bully, who learns that he or she can get away with violence, aggression and threats.

When school bullies carry on bullying as adults they run into all sorts of problems. Kidscape carried out a survey<sup>1</sup> of young offenders that showed that many had been involved in bullying at school. Research shows that adults who were bullies as children have a much greater chance than others of committing violent crimes and have problems with relationships.

<sup>1</sup> Elliot, *Bullying Pays! A Survey of Young Offenders*, 2002 (available from Kidscape website)

## Bullying — possible signs

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. If you are concerned and become aware of any of the following, you may wish to ask the child if he or she is being bullied.

### Children may...

- be **frightened** of walking to or from school
- be **unwilling** to go to school
- **beg** to be driven to school
- change their **route** to school
- begin doing **poorly** in their school work
- come home regularly with clothes or books **destroyed**
- come home **starving** (because dinner money was taken)
- be **frightened** when their mobiles ring or of what is on a website
- become **withdrawn**, start stammering
- become **distressed**, stop eating or even attempt suicide
- **cry** themselves to sleep
- have **nightmares** and even call out 'leave me alone'
- have **unexplained** bruises, scratches, cuts

### Children may also...

- have their money, mobile phone or possessions go '**missing**'
- ask for money or begin **stealing** money (to pay the bully)
- refuse to say **what's wrong**
- become **distressed** or angry with other family members

## Extent of bullying

It is difficult to discover the true extent of bullying because children are often too upset or embarrassed to tell. Research involving pupils aged 10-14 indicated that 30% did not tell anyone when they were bullied.<sup>2</sup>

Kidscape conducted the first UK-wide survey of bullying with 4,000 children aged 5 to 16. That survey revealed that over 60% of children reported being bullied, with 38% being bullied more than twice or very severely.<sup>3</sup> Subsequent studies have found similar results. The Thomas Coram Research Institute of Education found that 51% of Year 5 pupils reported being bullied.<sup>4</sup> Over 50% of the children attending Kidscape ZAP assertiveness course have been cyberbullied.<sup>5</sup>

Kidscape receives 10,000 calls a year from parents of bullied children and ChildLine receives 20,000 calls from children and young people worried about bullying. **There is no doubt that bullying affects the lives of thousands of children in the UK.**

<sup>2</sup> Smith and Shu, *Childhood*, 7 (2). 2000

<sup>3</sup> Elliott, *Bullying: A Practical Guide to Coping for Schools*, 2002

<sup>4</sup> Oliver and Kandappa, *Tackling Bullying*, 2003

<sup>5</sup> Kidscape ZAP 2009

## Suggestions for parents / adults

- If you are **worried** that a child is being bullied, ask him/her directly.
- Be aware of the **signs and symptoms** of bullying.
- Don't agree to keep the bullying a **secret**.
- If it is **school bullying**, talk to a member of staff you trust.
- Ask to see the **Anti-Bullying Policy** - all schools must have one by law.
- **Keep copies of emails** & letters to the school, doctor and A&E reports and photographs of physical injuries.
- **Cyberbullying** is a big problem. Put computers in family rooms & ask children to tell if anyone bullies them online. More information is available on the Kidscape website.
- Use **Kidscape** anti-bullying programmes and materials in schools.
- Help children **practise strategies** such as shouting 'No', walking with confidence and getting away.
- Give children a chance to **vent their feelings** about being bullied.
- Get other parents together and **discuss** ways to stop the bullying.
- Talk to a parent governor and explain your **concerns**.
- Arrange to meet your child, if the bullying is happening on the way to or from school.
- Ask that the bullies be kept at school until everyone has had a chance to get home.
- If you feel it would help your children's **confidence**, ask them if they would like to take self-defence classes.
- Check that the child is not **inadvertently encouraging** bullying because of some habit that can be corrected such as spitting or runny nose etc.
- Keep a written **diary** of all incidents - see the bully log on Kidscape's website.
- Invite children over to help your child **make friends**.
- If you need **advice**, contact the organisations listed on Kidscape's website.

## Suggestions for children & young people

- **Stop thinking like a victim** - you do not deserve this. Walk tall: pretend you are confident, even if you are not. Look at the bullies as if they are not frightening you, even if you do not feel that way inside.
- **Laugh** at or ignore comments. Bullies are ignorant and cowardly. They want your scared reaction - humour or silence might throw them off.
- You can shout 'No' or 'Go away'. But say it forcefully and walk away immediately. Practise in the mirror.
- If bullies are bothering you, do not react. Walk away as calmly and quickly as possible.
- Sign up for **self-defence courses**. These lessons don't mean you 'fight back', but they can help your confidence.
- Stay with a crowd - bullies usually pick on kids who are alone.
- Tell your parents or another adult and get their advice and ideas. You **need their help** and support.
- Keep a **diary** of all the events - time and place and what is said. This will help to document the bullying when your parents contact the school.
- If there is a pattern to the bullying, alert teachers so they can catch the bullies without you being seen to be telling.
- Play "What would you do if...." with trusted people so you have ready answers to situations that might occur

## Why do children bully?

Some children may become temporary bullies after a traumatic event, such as a divorce, the death of a loved one or because of boredom and frustration.

Other children become chronic bullies because they:

- Like the **feeling of power**
- Are **spoilt** rotten and expect everyone to do what they say
- Feel **insecure**, inadequate, humiliated
- Have been **abused** in some way
- Are **scapegoats** or bullied at home
- Are under **pressure to succeed** at all costs
- Don't fit in with the other kids
- Feel no sense of accomplishment.

### Helping Bullies

If you discover someone is a bully and want to help him or her:

- Remain **calm**
- Don't bully the child - it will make it worse
- Try to **find out** why the child is bullying, but don't turn it into the "Spanish Inquisition"
- If the situation is not serious, give it time to sort itself out
- If it is serious, don't hesitate to **get help**. Get in touch with the educational psychologist or seek help through the child's GP
- Set realistic, firm **guidelines and rules** to help the child control his/her behaviour
- Ensure that the child **apologises**, either in person or in writing to the child he/she bullied.

Bullies need to achieve some success to make them feel good about themselves. Help them to find something they can do well and often their behaviour will change.

## What ifs?

*What If?* questions can help you think about what to do in case of bullying. There are no right answers because every case is different. Use the questions to decide what you think might work. Think of your own solutions and ideas.

**1. You are walking to school and a gang of older bullies demands your money, skateboard, mobile phone, etc. Do you:**

- a. Fight them?
- b. Shout and run away?
- c. Give them the money?

*Give them the money or other possessions if you are scared - your safety is more important than money.*

**2. You are on the school playground and someone accidentally trips you. Do you:**

- a) Hit the person hard?
- b) Give him or her a chance to apologise?
- c) Sit down and cry?

*Give the person a chance. If it was an accident, then he or she should say sorry.*

**3. You are in the school toilet and a bully comes in, punches you and then tells you not to do anything or 'you'll get worse'. You know who the person is and you have never done anything to him/her. Do you:**

- a) Wait until the person leaves and then tell a teacher?
- b) Get in a fight with him/her?
- c) Accept what happened and don't tell?

*You didn't deserve to be punched and the bully was wrong to do it. If you don't tell, the bully will just keep on beating up other kids.*

**4. A gang of bullies gets you alone and starts beating you. Do you:**

- a) Do nothing - just take it?
- b) Fight back?
- c) Shout to attract attention?
- d) Watch for your chance and run away?

*You must decide, but c) & d) together could work very well. It would be quite difficult to fight a whole gang of bullies and you might be hurt badly if you did.*

**5. Someone in your class always makes rude comments about you and says them loud enough for you (and others) to hear. It really upsets you. Do you:**

- a) Ignore the comments?
- b) Confront the bully and tell him/her off?
- c) Tell the teacher?
- d) Punch the bully in the nose?

*You may feel like punching the bully, but you'll probably be the one to get into trouble if you do. Try a) first - ignoring comments is difficult, but can work if the bully gets tired of trying to get you to be angry or cry or show some reaction. Your teacher should be told about the comments because no one should make hurtful comments to others. If you are feeling brave, tell the bully off. Try practising in the mirror to get the right effect!*

**6. You see someone being bullied. Do you**

- a) Ignore it, walk by and be thankful it isn't you?
- b) Stop the bully?
- c) Get help?

*Ignoring the bullying is cowardly and unfair to the victim. You can try to stop it, if you can do so without getting hurt. Perhaps getting other children to help stop it would work. At the very least, yell to the victim that you are getting help and get a teacher or other adult to intervene.*

**7. Your former 'best' friends start to exclude you. This hurts your feelings and you are quite miserable. Do you:**

- a) Tell your parents?
- b) Do nothing?

- c) Ring one member of the group and ask why they are doing this?
- d) Try to find a new group?

*Do talk to your parents and try to get to one or two members of the group who were nicer to see if you can stop their behaviour. It sometimes works to get the parents, if they are friends, to talk. You can also try to find a new group because this group may not be worth having as friends if they are so cruel to you.*

**8. A new student comes into your class in the middle of the year and some kids are bullying him/her. Do you:**

- a) Make an effort to be friendly and invite him/her to play or eat lunch with you and your friends?
- b) Join in the bullying?
- c) Ignore it - everyone gets bullied at first, so don't join in, but don't help the new student either?

*Remember how hard it is to be new and do everything you can to make the new student feel welcome by inviting him/her to join in with you. If you see that the new student is being badly bullied, do tell the teacher.*

**9. You know the identity of the bully who set up a 'hate website' and is sending abusive texts to someone in your school. Do you:**

- a) Ignore it?
- b) Join in?
- c) Let adults know what is happening?

*This is a very vicious and hurtful thing to do. Tell your parents and a teacher or the police. Keep copies of everything as evidence.*

**10. Kids in your school make racist or homophobic insults. Do you:**

- a) Ignore it and don't get involved?
- b) Enlist the help of other kids and teachers to stop the bullies making these comments?
- c) Hit the kids making comments?

*These comments are wrong and hurtful. Try b.*

**11. An adult is bullying you. Do you:**

- a) Say nothing?
- b) Tell another adult you trust?
- c) Get some kids together and tell the adult to stop?

*This is very difficult for children. Best to try to get another adult to help.*

**12. A bully has threatened your little brother. He has begged you not to tell your parents. Do you:**

- a) Tell him to handle it?
- b) Confront the bully?
- c) Tell your parents?

*Your brother cannot handle it or he wouldn't have told you. If you confront the bully, the bully might get a gang together against you. Talk to your brother and see if he'll come with you to tell your parents because they should know so they can help.*

## Suggestions for teachers

- **Tell pupils** from Day One that bullying is not tolerated in the school. Everyone has responsibility to tell and help if they see bullying.
- In class and assemblies, **get pupils to discuss bullying**: what it is, what can be done, etc.
- Do a **school survey** to find out if pupils, teachers and staff think bullying is a problem.
- Ask pupils to **compile the survey** and allow them to call a school assembly to announce the results.
- Ask classes to make up **rules for behaviour**. Agree a class/school set of rules.
- Agree possible solutions (or punishments if necessary) within your **anti-bullying policy** so everyone is clear about consequences to bullying.
- Ask for ideas from pupils to find **ways to help bullies** become part of the group.
- If bullying is happening, find out the **facts**, talk to the bullies and victims individually. If the bullying is about a particular issue (e.g. death, divorce, disfigurement), mount an education programme about the problem, but not focused on a particular child. Call in parents, ask their suggestions and solicit their support.
- Break up the **group dynamics** by assigning places, changing lunch/break schedules etc. Most bullying groups have a leader with others 'hanging on'. Turn peer pressure against bullying and break up groups.
- Teach children to be **assertive** using Kidscape programmes. Differences should be acceptable and never a cause for bullying. Reward individuality and encourage it.

## Playground suggestions

- Conduct a **survey** of pupils and playground supervisors to discover if there is a problem on the playground
- Work with pupils to make up a list of **playground rules**
- Use an assembly to enable pupils to present the rules
- Photocopy the rules and get every child to **sign** them. Keep a copy in their files so that no one can say 'I didn't know the rules!'
- Stagger **break times**, if necessary and possible
- **Set out areas** of the playground for games, quiet activities, playing with balls, talking etc. Trouble arises because pupils run into each other while playing. Activities, such as clubs, could be set up with parent helpers during breaks to give pupils a choice.
- Ensure that the playground supervisors understand that they have a role in **monitoring behaviour**
- **Deal** with bullying and intimidation **immediately**. Telling pupils to 'go and sort it out' almost ensures that a fight will follow.
- It is important to have clear **procedures** for the supervisors to report incidents
- If you have a bad problem with bullying on the playground, keep a **camera** handy and take pictures. Works wonders sometimes just to point the camera at the trouble spot - no one wants a photo proving they were the cause of the trouble.
- Put up a fake camera 'focused' on the playground. Tell pupils it is there, but not that it is fake - watch bullying incidents decrease overnight!

## Breaking up bully groups

- Meet separately with the **child being bullied**; the child writes down what happened
- Meet with each **member of the group** individually - get them to write down what happened
- **Agree** with each child or young person separately what you expect and discuss how he/she has broken the school guidelines
- Meet with **the whole group** and get each young person to state what happened in his/her individual meeting. Ensure that everyone is clear about how they will act from that moment on.
- Prepare them to face their **peer group** - "What are you going to say when you leave here?"
- Reiterate to all pupils that they are all **responsible** if anyone is being bullied - there are no innocent bystanders

- **Talk to parents** of all involved - show them written statements
- **Keep a file** on bullying with all statements and penalties
- Teach bullied children **strategies** (as in Kidscape lessons)
- Do not accept **false excuses**
- If the bullying was an accident, did the children act by helping the victim or getting help or giving sympathy?
- If it was just a **laugh**, was everyone laughing?
- If it was a **game**, was everyone enjoying it?
- If a child is **injured**, parents should take photographs of the injury
- If groups of bullies from **outside your school** appear, take photographs - they tend to run when they see the camera
- If there is **serious injury**, contact the police
- Ensure bullied child is protected from any **retaliation**
- **Assign** group members to different classes, lunch times, break times etc.

## Kidscape

Kidscape has lots of advice online and in print.

For more information about all the books, DVDs and other publications available, visit the Kidscape website. There you can also download copies of our booklets. Alternatively for a free single copy of our booklets, send a large addressed envelope with 6 loose first class stamps to the address below.

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## Help

Please visit our website, [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk), and go to the Links section for further details of other organisations.

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