



### Resolving Bullying

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The idea of our children being bullied, or accused of being a bully, can be very upsetting for parents. Yet, this is all too often a reality at some stage of our children's school life. Thankfully, we are becoming more aware of the damage that such behaviour can cause and we are gradually becoming better at intervening to sort it out.

Bullying is more than bad behaviour. It is when someone does things to make someone else feel bad about themselves. It might be calling someone's names, hitting or kicking them, or just doing mean things. Whatever the bullying does, it makes the other person feel miserable. The bully seems big and powerful to the other person. They seem to control what the person thinks and does.

People who bully do it to feel better about themselves. They feel good when they have power over somebody else. Feeling bigger than someone else makes them forget how small they feel inside. Bullies want others to pay them lots of attention and to think about how cool, smart, big or strong they are.

When we are bullied, we feel anxious and can't think clearly. Every time we think about or see the bully our brain floods with adrenalin. The focus of our day is all about how this other person acts towards us and our fear of what that action might be. Watching our children going through such trauma, when it occurs, is heart breaking, but, there are things we can do.

Earlier this year I co-created a series of books called the Resolving Book Series. One of the titles was called The Resolving Bullying Book. These books are written for children between 6 and 12 years old and their parents, teachers and health professionals. The content has been developed for the work I have been doing in schools with children, parents and teachers. Here are some of the ideas from the book.

The most important thing to do when a child has been bullied is to listen to them. This immediately helps them feel less isolated and helps restore a sense of self worth. They calm down and start being able to work things out for themselves. This, in turn, gives them confidence.

As listeners, we need to help our children express themselves better so that we can truly understand them. Focusing on them helps children think about their own thoughts and feelings.

**Remember:**

It is important for them to talk about how they feel.

Listening and talking helps children calm their minds and think more clearly.

It can help them decide what to do.

Children can find it hard to understand how they feel themselves, never mind find the right words to describe it to someone else. Be patient and take it gently. You are doing so much good helping them to talk about their experience. I find, if I am worried about either of my two children, it helps to plan a number of natural listening times over a few days when they can speak if they want to but there is no pressure. Sitting down for a few minutes near where they are doing their homework, having dinner together, walking the dog or, sitting on the end of the bed and bed time can create natural moments for a chat.

Here are some good questions:

“How was your day?”

“You seem sad. What’s wrong?”

“Tell me more?”

“What did you think when he did that?”

“How did you feel?”

“What was the hardest thing?”

“What do you think needs to happen now?”

Stay calm and positive, even if you are worried underneath. Assure them that you will help them in whatever way you can. If you feel that you have to act, talk to your child about this. You can say “ My job is to keep you safe. I will need to talk to your teacher about this. What would this be like for you?” Listening to any worries they have and reassuring them that you will do all you can to make sure that they are not realised matters. If your child has been bullied, they will have got used to feeling that nothing is in their control. You can help them regain some sense of empowerment by taking their fears into account as you plan what to do.

## **What Can Parents/Adults Do?**

Prevention is better than cure. Discuss bullying behaviour with children so that they become aware of what kind of effects it can have. Be aware of your own behaviour and lead by example. Encourage children to report incidents. Make sure they know that it is always right to tell when they see something wrong.

### **If you think a child is being bullied, encourage them to:**

1. Act as confident as they can.
2. Face the bully and tell them clearly to stop.
3. Try to be calm and move away from the bully.

### **Also remind the child of the following:**

- Don't hit back. You may get hurt or the bully can use it against you.
- Bullies like to get a reaction; if they don't get one, there is no point in them bullying you.
- If they call you names, try to laugh it off. Don't let them see that they have hurt you.
- Never try to beat a bully at their own game.
- If you need help, tell an adult you know and trust.

## **What should Children Do if They See Someone Else Being Bullied?**

1. Tell an adult. They will help you sort out what is happening.
2. Remember that talking to an adult about bullying is not telling tales.
3. Ask the person being bullied to play with you and your friends.
4. Play fair - don't let the bully change the way you behave.

### **If your child is being accused of bullying.**

1. Stay calm and be prepared to listen to the complaint. If there is a problem you need to have good information so you can help your child come through this.
2. Take time with your child to listen to what they are saying. Help them understand what bullying is and how it makes other people feel.
3. Work with the school to help change your child's behaviour, if this is what it required.
4. Remember that children learn from us and how we cope with such situations.

## **Schools**

All schools are required to have Anti-Bullying Policies. If the bullying is occurring in school, the first thing you should do is ask for this and follow it. It can be hard for schools to catch all bullying behaviour and most teachers will be glad to work with parents to sort any problems out. It is much more beneficial to arrange a meeting with your child's teacher rather than try to catch a word at the start of a busy teaching day.

## **In Conclusion**

If your child is coping with an ongoing problem that is taking a while to be resolved, try and keep family life as pleasant as possible. Don't focus every return from school on 'what the bully has done that day'. Help your child have a happy life outside the school gate. Are there clubs, church groups or events they can be involved in that are fun and introduce your child to new friends? What can you do at the weekends that is relaxing and fun?

We cannot always protect our children from the behaviour of others but we can help them come through these situations and maybe learn a thing or two for their future lives. Never underestimate the importance of simply being there for your child.

For more information:  
[www.resolvingbooks.com](http://www.resolvingbooks.com).