

# BULLYING – PREJUDICE AND DIFFERENCE

## BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE

- Recognise the signs of bullying
- Understand how often this is driven by prejudice or about a child being 'different'
- Know what to do to help your child

## WHAT IS BULLYING?

**Bullying is when someone is deliberately hurtful to others over a period of time.**

**The person being bullied usually finds it difficult to defend themselves.**

**There are different forms of bullying, but these are the main ones:**

- **Physical – hitting, kicking, taking belongings.**
- **Verbal – name calling, insulting, making offensive remarks.**
- **Indirect – spreading nasty stories about someone, not including them in social groups.**
- **Cyberbullying – bullying via Information and Communications Technology (ICT), usually mobile phones or the internet.**

## WORRIED YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED?

Bullying is a serious problem and it can be very upsetting for both you and your child. Children may find it hard to talk about being bullied or bullying others, and you may not be sure that your child is being bullied but there are some signs that may suggest there is a problem. Look out for:

- Excuses to miss school, such as stomach complaints or headaches (or your child may be skipping school altogether).
- Torn clothes, school things that are missing or broken, or lost money.
- More bruises and scrapes than usual.

- Signs of stress – being moody, silent or crying, or bullying a younger sibling or friend.
- A change in eating habits.

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**She cries every day before and after school. She says that children are horrible and call her names and won't play with her.**

”

## DIFFERENCE, PREJUDICE AND BULLYING

Many children, and adults, are bullied because they are seen to be 'different'. This is usually referred to as prejudice-driven bullying. It may be that your child is seen as different because of their race, religion or culture, because of their sexuality, because of their gender, or because of any special educational needs or disabilities they may have.

Some children are singled out by bullies because they are overweight, affluent, deprived, in care or young carers themselves, or for a variety of other reasons. Sometimes the person bullying cannot even explain the reasons – they just perceive their target as 'different'.

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**She was new to the school. Had come from another country – had to be put down a year. Was tallest in class; bottom of class. She had victim written in large letters across her forehead.**

Mother

”

There are many words that bullies may use to be hurtful. Examples include 'gay', 'spaz', and a host of racial insults. Primary-aged school children may use such words without any understanding of their meaning. They will say whatever has the most effect, using the words that get the most reaction from the child they are bullying.

In secondary school, name-calling and prejudiced attitudes can be more complex. However, terms may still be used without their full meaning being understood or considered. Remember, just because a child is being bullied, it does not mean that what the bullies are saying is true.

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**Everything is gay. No one thinks it's a form of bullying.**

16 year old

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## WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED

Whatever the reason your child is being bullied, they will need to know you are there to listen and support them. They need to know that you believe that bullying, whatever the reason, whether it is from an adult or another child, is completely wrong and that prejudice-driven bullying is the worst kind.

Your values and beliefs will rub off on your children. Your attitude to people who are different will shape how your child feels about other people's differences as well as their own. If you respect others and accept how they are, your child will learn to appreciate others' right to be different.

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**A young person who knows they are worthwhile, loved and respected doesn't need to push others around, understands that every individual is different, and can cope better when someone tries to bully them.**

Mother

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## WHAT YOU CAN DO IF YOUR CHILD IS BULLYING OTHERS



If you feel unsure about issues around sexuality or racism, for instance, you could talk things through with other members of your family or friends. It helps to understand and learn more about the issues, especially if you are worried about your child being bullied.

### ↓ Tips for parents

**Here are some ideas to help you listen and talk to your child about bullying and difference:**

- ✓ Value your children for who they are and show you love them.
- ✓ Make it clear you are there to listen and that you will not judge or be angry if your child talks to you about being different.

- ✓ Try not to focus too much on the names your child is being called but reassure them that bullying is always wrong, whether what the bullies say is true or not.
- ✓ You could use topical news items or soap stories to start the conversation about bullying and prejudice.
- ✓ Find out how the school are working to stamp out bullying and talk to them about your worries around prejudice.

- ✓ Contact your local council to find out about what youth groups or services there are for children with disabilities, from ethnic minority communities or who think they may be gay.
- ✓ Talk about how you feel with a friend or family member. Coping with your child's bullying may be very stressful, especially if it brings back memories of your own experiences.

## FURTHER HELP FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILD

### Parentline Plus

If you need someone to talk to, try Parentline Plus, free on **0808 800 2222**, or the free textphone on **0800 783 6783** (for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment).

For email support contact **parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk**

Parentline Plus produces information and materials on a range of parenting issues and specific information and materials on bullying.

→ Website: **www.parentlineplus.org.uk**

### Anti-Bullying Alliance

The website provides information and advice for parents, children and schools on tackling bullying.

→ Website: **www.anti-bullyingalliance.org**

### Bullying Online

Useful information and links for parents and children on how to deal with all types of bullying, including racist bullying.

→ Website: **www.bullying.co.uk/parents/racist\_bullying.php**

### ChildLine

Sometimes your child may want to talk to someone completely different from you or the school. ChildLine offers free and confidential support to kids ringing about bullying. Make sure your child knows the ChildLine number and website address:

→ Freephone: **0800 11 11**

→ Website: **www.childline.org.uk**

### Schools Out

Provides a support network to raise the issue of homophobia and heterosexism in education.

→ Website: **www.schools-out.org.uk**

### Stonewall

Working for positive change for gay, lesbian and bisexual people in the UK, with an education programme: Education for All.

→ Website: **www.stonewall.org.uk**

### Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

Dedicated to supporting parents and their gay, lesbian and bisexual sons and daughters.

→ Tel: **0845 652 0311**

→ Website: **www.fflag.org.uk**

Parentline Plus: 520 Highgate Studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, Kentish Town, London NW5 1TL

Free Parentline: **0808 800 2222**

Free textphone for people who are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment: **0800 783 6783**

Web: **[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)** Email: **[parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk](mailto:parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk)**

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**children, schools and families**

