

# Bullying4

---

## What is Bullying?

You may have seen the typical television sitcom bullying scenario where the big burly kid is threatening the little nerdy kid with the oversize backpack and glasses for their milk money. You may have even found yourself smirking or chuckling along with the laugh track. But is bullying funny? Is it about getting spare change or someone's sandwich? Is it just a part of growing up? How has this image found its way into our idea of what bullying is about? How is it similar and how is it different? In order to better understand what bullying is, let's look at a synthesis of the characteristics offered by bullying research:

- Bullying is about power, domination and control:  
The behaviour is repeated and persistent.
- Bullying episodes are short in duration...  
...and frequently takes place in unstructured periods of time...  
...and often occurs out of the sight of authority.
- Bullying can involve physical, verbal or social acts of abuse.
- Bullying may be a direct behaviour (hitting, swearing, put downs)...  
...or an indirect behaviour (damaging property, social exclusion, gossip).
- Bullying is isolating.
- The effects of bullying can last a lifetime...  
... for the victim...  
... and for the bully.
- The problem of bullying extends beyond the bully and the victim...  
...throughout the school...  
...into the home...  
...and into the community

Bullying is about the power, domination and control of an individual with less power. The bully may be bigger or they may have other skills which make them stronger such as language skills. A bully will choose a victim that is not equal in power to themselves and capitalize on this differential.

The Bullying behaviour is repeated and persistent. It is not a one time event like an argument or disagreement between equals. The behaviour is oppressive and discomfoting because it is focused, repeated and with harmful intent.

Bullying episodes are short in duration, from a few seconds... a comment... a nudge... a gesture, to a few minutes of taunting or gossip. The episodes frequently takes place in unstructured periods of time in the classroom, in the hallways and on the playground. Even a few moment between putting away a math notebooks and the beginning of quiet reading offers a window of opportunity. Bullying often occurs out of the sight of authority, when your back is turned or out of your line of sight. If you could see it you would stop it right? But it can even take place in your classroom often right in front of you as you deliver a lesson. What you perceive as an isolated or minor event may be part of a bigger or more pervasive problem.

Bullying can involve physical, verbal or emotional acts of abuse. A nudge, a push, a shove, a gesture, are

easy to identify as physical abuse. Mischief and vandalism such as hiding, damaging, breaking someones possessions are also physical acts but can be more difficult to identify as bullying. Words can be used to bully as well. Put downs, gossip, drawing attention to someone else, snide remarks, threats, swearing, writing notes, graffiti, and email all involve using language to intimidate, oppress or cause harm. Emotional abuse can come in the form of social exclusion, where a bully may involve others in excluding the victim from activities or through the spreading of rumours and gossip.

Bullying may be a direct behaviour (hitting, swearing, put downs) or an indirect behaviour (damaging property, social exclusion, gossip).

Bullying is isolating. It affects an individuals sense of belonging. When you are pushed, or put down or have negative attention directed toward you are being isolated and excluded. What happens when attempts to belong and be included are met with repeated abuse? Do you deserve it? Are you asking for it? Do you accept it? Bullies draw negative attention toward their victim. The victim is isolated because others do not want to be associated with the negative attention; they want to be seen in a positive light and don't want to be subject to that same negative attention themselves. How can we challenge the bystanders to not accept this state of affairs? Some of the approaches to involve bystanders will be discussed later.

So, how is bullying about lunch money? Is it more complex than a half hour sitcom? Can we over come the problems just as easily as they do on TV? Is bullying just a part of growing up that we should accept?

## **What are the consequences of bullying? Why is bullying such an important issue?**

The effects of bullying can last a lifetime for the victim, the bully, and the community.

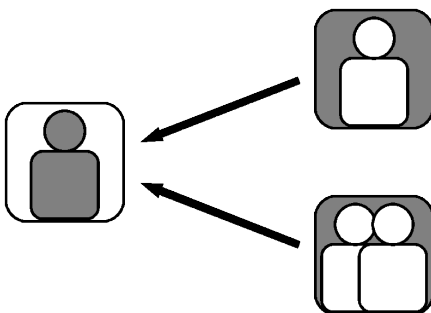
### **Impact on the Bully:**

The bully is engaging in and practising a social behaviour that may affect them later in life. Bullies are likely to be authoritarian, domineering, envious, resentful, have poor social skills, are quick to anger, focus on preserving self image, and easily misinterpret others actions. Bullies are at risk of continuing their behaviour into adulthood and may have increased levels of involvement with the law. They may also carry their bullying behaviour over into the workplace, experience difficulties dating and have marital difficulties. In school, bullies can suffer from their activities as they are not focusing on their studies and distract others. Bullying is both a short term and long term social and mental health issue.

### **Impact on the Victim:**

Being bullied affects an individual's personal feelings and their sense of social belonging. The emotional impact of being bullied can affect future relationships and interactions. For the victim, bullying is isolating. It affects the victims self esteem and causes stress which may be disruptive to their emotional and physical well being. Victims may suffer academically as they become focused on the bullying and are distracted from their work. Bullying can also cause physical damage and material damage. The emotional aspects of bullying may never be forgotten.

## **Who else is involved?**



The bully may engage bystanders in the bullying behaviour, further emphasizing their ability to exert power and control, and further isolating the target.

While teachers may intervene when they witness bullying behaviour, bullying often takes place out of their sight or level of awareness. When teachers become aware of bullying behaviour it may be necessary for them to minimize opportunity for the bully to engage in this type of activity by providing more structure, fewer individual or independent activities, engage the student more frequently and increase levels of supervision and proximity.

Peers sometimes intervene in bullying, however they intervene with a low level of frequency. Two factors that contribute to this low level of response are fear of being bullied themselves and being unsure how to intervene appropriately. Thus it is important that students understand the impact of intervening and practise using language to stop and prevent bullying in role play situations.

### Social Impact:

Bullying has a social impact as it affects relationships at school, work and at home. Bullying may be an indicator of family communication and behaviour patterns that cycle from one generation to the next and affect the whole community. Bullying can impact the relationship of the victim with their peers and within their family. Bullying affects the learning opportunities of the bully, the victim, and the bystanders as time, resources, and energy is devoted to dealing with the problems and issues that arise. As bullying behaviour continues in t adult life it affects workplace relationships and productivity, family relationships and community resources. The problem of bullying extends beyond the bully and the victim, throughout the school, into the home and into the community.

## How can bullying be prevented?

To help the bully, it is important to involve their family, teachers, peers and counselling professionals help them deal with these issues and to create a supportive and positive environment which enables them change and grow up to be positive social contributors.

This also means establishing a supportive and caring classroom, school and community culture through modelling appropriate behaviour and active participation.

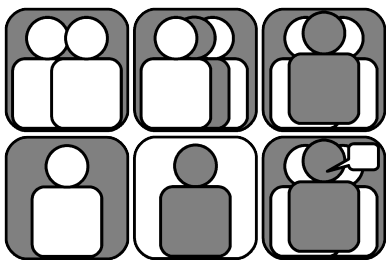
This involves teaching cooperation, building self-esteem, encouraging responsibility, and empowering students through democratic processes. Responses to bullying that are autocratic and disempowering may further contribute to the bullying problem. The solution should engage an atmosphere of social change rather than an atmosphere of social control and restriction. Secure confidence needs to be promoted rather than insecure confidence. Fostering an understanding of the victim's point of view is important for engaging the participation of bystanders in stopping the bully. Responses need to be calm and deal with the conflict in a positive manner. Efforts must focus on the bully, the victim, and the bystanders. It is a community issue and involves a long term community effort.

## The Approach

A system wide approach is important in reducing bullying and effectively managing the problem.

### *Assess + Involve + Implement + Evaluate*

The school, teachers, parents, students and community and must work together to develop and implement a plan. Central support and initiative from the school administration is essential in driving a successful anti-bullying program. One of the beginning steps is to identify and assess the prevalence and nature of bullying within a given environment. This is often done by using an initial survey measurement tool, which is later used during ongoing follow-up assessment to assess the success of the program. Systemic policy, rules, consequences and supports involving all of the stakeholders must be developed and agreed upon. Programming may involve school support staff, police school resource officers, counsellors and other outside supports. These support the teacher in the classroom who adapts and implements the initiative and responds to incidences. The program must be evaluated on an ongoing basis to assess the effectiveness. This evaluation should inform the ongoing implementation of the program.



## Setting the Stage

### *Teach -> Model -> Practise*

In addition to the principal and administration, who are key in establishing a healthy school wide

learning environment, the individual teacher can play a fundamental role in setting the tone of the classroom learning environment, modelling appropriate behaviour and developing a culture of caring and respect. Students are supported and empowered to help each other and intervene in an appropriate manner. Individuals are empowered and have a network of support to rely upon.

## **Identifying the Problem, Focusing on the Issues, Empowerment**

*Define -> Identify -> Act*

Teachers and Students must be able to identify bullying. Having a sound definition enables individuals to identify bullying when they see it and empowers them to act upon it.

*Feeling = Understanding -> Intervention*

Teachers and students must be made aware of the social and emotion and damage that bullying causes. Many don't realize the effect they are having on others through their bullying, labelling and gossip. Having this visceral understanding enables them to act appropriately and intervene to stop bullying

*Knowledge + Practice -> Action*

Many students don't realize they have the power to stop bullying by telling the bully to stop and by telling others. Many know they should do something, but they are not sure what to do or what to say. When students are provided with the appropriate language of intervention and engage in practise using this language they are empowered to act appropriately in any situation.

## **Intervention and Connection**

Once an incidence of bullying is identified, it must be tracked and followed up on. Remember, bullying is a repeated behaviour. Steps need to be taken to support the bully in changing their behaviour and the victim needs to be empowered and protected. The family and support professionals need to be involved. The root cause of the bullying behaviour may stem from or be a symptom of other circumstances in the bully's life which may need to be identified and addressed. Setting up a plan for changing the behaviour may require a team approach. The "Assessment Toolkit for Bullying" (cpha p14) outlines a cognitive behavioural approach combined with parent training which involves modelling, social problem solving, cognitive restructuring and self-management.

## **Bullying and the Law: Is Bullying a Crime?**

While bullying is not an offence under the Criminal Code of Canada, many of the behaviours that may be part of the bullying are. These patterns of behaviour that are rehearsed or normalized as a youth may have serious consequences when they are carried over into adulthood. Here are a few examples of potential bullying related offences and the adult consequences:

\*\*You may view individual sections of the criminal code online via the Canadian Legal Information Institute <http://ijican.org/ca/sta/c-46/>

**Criminal Harassment** (CCC 264 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec264.html>). It is unlawful to make a person fear for their safety or the safety of another person by: repeatedly following them or watching their home or places they frequent; repeatedly communicating (directly or indirectly) with them; or directing threatening conduct toward them. Punishment: Summary conviction or Indictable offence - up to ten years imprisonment.

**Mischief** (CCC 430 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec430.html>) is the damage or destruction of property or interference with the use operation or enjoyment of the property. Punishment: Summary conviction or Indictable offence - imprisonment two years, to ten years up to life (depending upon monetary value and level of danger to life involved).

**Theft** (CCC 322 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec322.html>). Punishment: Summary conviction or Indictable offence - imprisonment two years, to ten years (depending upon monetary value involved).

**Uttering threats** (CCC 264.1 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec264.1.html>) includes threatening to harm or kill another person, threatening to burn, damage or destroy their belongings or property, and threats to harm one of their pets. Punishment: Summary conviction - imprisonment up to 18 months or Indictable offence - imprisonment up to five years.

**Assault** (CCC 265,266 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec265.html>, <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec266.html>) is intentionally applying force without consent, threatening to apply force (this includes gestures) or impeding another person while carrying visible weapon. Punishment: Summary conviction or Indictable offence - imprisonment up to five years.

**Assault with a Weapon or Causing Bodily Harm** (CCC 267 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec267.html>). This includes an assault where the weapon may not be used but is merely carried or there is a threat to use the weapon or imitation of a weapon. Punishment: Summary conviction - imprisonment up to 18 months or Indictable offence - imprisonment up to five years.

**Aggravated Assault** (CCC 268 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec268.html>). This includes causing a wound, disfigurement or endangering a life. Punishment: Indictable offence - imprisonment up to fourteen years.

**Sexual Assault** (CCC271 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec271.html>). This would include sexual harassment, unwanted sexual touching and dating violence. Punishment: Summary conviction - imprisonment up to 18 months or Indictable offence - imprisonment up to ten years.

**Sexual Assault with a Weapon, Threats to a third party or causing bodily harm** (CCC 272 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec272.html>). Punishment: Indictable offence - imprisonment up to fourteen years.

**Aggravated Sexual Assault** (CCC 273 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec273.html>). Punishment: Indictable offence - imprisonment up to life.

**Fraudulent concealment** (CCC 341 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec341.html>) Taking, removing or concealing something for fraudulent purposes. Punishment: Indictable offence - imprisonment up to five years.

**Unauthorized use of a computer** (CCC 342.1 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec342.1.html>) Fraudulently obtaining computer service, for example using someone else's computer password and account without permission. Punishment: Summary conviction or Indictable offence - imprisonment up to ten years.

**Robbery** (CCC 343 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec343.html>) This is theft for the purposes of extortion or with the use of force or violence. Punishment: Indictable offence - imprisonment up to life.

**Extortion** (CCC 346 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec346.html>) Getting someone to do something or obtaining something from them without a justifiable reason or excuse by means of accusations, threats or violence. Punishment: Indictable offence - imprisonment up to life.



**Forgery** (CCC 366 <http://ijcan.org/ca/sta/c-46/sec366.html>) Making a false document with the intent that it will be considered to be genuine. Punishment: Summary conviction to Indictable offence - imprisonment up to ten years.

## **Youth Consequences**

The punishments described above are based on adult sentences. While a youth may be charged with the same offences, youth sentencing options and criteria would apply. The youth may be dealt with under the extrajudicial measures program, or they may receive an extrajudicial sanction and a record. If they have to go to court, they may receive up to a two year maximum sentence for a single offence or three years for several offences plus a court record. For repeated violent offences and aggravated sexual assault, the crown may apply for a youth over 14 years of age to receive an adult sentence. While the consequences are not equal to the adult consequences they are very real. Bullying behaviour may be the expression of other issues in the youth's life that need to be addressed. If left unchecked, these behaviours have serious adult consequences.

## **Bullying By-laws**

A number of communities in Alberta have instituted a bullying bylaw. Section 7(a,b,c) of the Alberta Municipal Government Act R.S.A 2000, c. M-26 <http://www.qp.gov.ab.ca/Documents/acts/M26.CFM> enables municipalities to regulate issues relating to health, welfare and safety; people and activities in public places; and public nuisances. The following are instances where Municipalities in Alberta have considered this act in addressing bullying:

### **Edmonton:**

In Edmonton, bullying is addressed in the Public Places Bylaw #7608 <http://www.edmonton.ca/bylaws/C7608.DOC>. Part 4, Article 407(1-2).

This bylaw relates to repeatedly communicating with minors in public places in such a way that the minor may feel harassed. Offences carry a \$250 fine.

### **Grande Prairie:**

The Article 10 of the City of Grande Prairie's Noise, Nuisance and Public Disturbances bylaw, #C-1103 <http://www.cityofgp.com/citygov/dept/cityclerk/bylaws/bc1103.htm> specifically mentions bullying. It expands the scope to include incidences of bullying in public places and on public property, as well as via written or electronic communication. They identify the scope of bullying to include comments, conduct or displays towards a person that may cause physical or emotional distress. The fine for first offence is \$250, and for a second offence from \$500-2500, however, at this charge may be withdrawn if the individual is offered and attends an educational anti-bullying session.

### **Rocky Mountain House:**

Rocky Mountain House has a comprehensive bullying bylaw, bylaw 04/05V <http://www.rockymtnhouse.com/Word-pdf/By-0405V-Bullying.pdf>, which also applies to those who encourage or cheer on a bully. The bylaw includes communication with a person that makes them feel bullied or encouraging or cheering on a person who is bullying. The definition of bullying includes real or threatened physical abuse, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, and extortion, be it in person, written or electronic.

The fine for a first offence is \$250 and for a second offence up to \$1000 (or six months imprisonment for non-payment). For bystanders the fine is \$100 and \$250 respectively.

### **Calgary:**

The city of Calgary does not have a bullying bylaw. The decision to not have a bullying bylaw was was a



conscious and purposeful decision based on consultation with various organizations within the community and informed by current research of bullying prevention. Their intentions actively support anti-bullying programs through other means and strategies which speak to taking a comprehensive approach to correcting behaviour rather than punishment and zero tolerance policies. For more background on this decision visit the Action Committee Against Violence Website <http://www.acav.org/bullyingHarassment.php#background>.

## **Why do bullies do what they do?**