

**Managing Bullying (When Your Child Is the Bully)**

Discovering that your child is bullying others can be overwhelming for any parent. However, it's important to approach the situation with care and understanding, so your child can learn and develop empathy for others.

**Why Do Children Bully?**

There are many reasons why a child may engage in bullying behaviour. Often, it stems from feelings of insecurity, isolation, or difficulty expressing emotions. While these reasons don't excuse bullying, understanding the root cause is essential in addressing it.

Some common reasons children and young people engage in bullying include:

- **Peer Pressure:** Wanting to fit in with a group that is picking on one classmate.
- **Power and Control:** Trying to regain a sense of power by acting aggressively toward others.
- **Attention-Seeking:** Looking for attention from teachers, parents, or classmates but struggling to get it in positive ways.
- **Impulsivity:** Being naturally more assertive or impulsive than peers.
- **Lack of Awareness:** Not fully grasping how their behaviour impacts others, particularly in younger children.

**Signs That Your Child May Be Engaging in Bullying**

Recognising bullying behaviour in your child can be difficult, as they may not openly admit to it. However, certain signs may indicate a problem:

- **Aggressive Behaviour:** Frequently using physical (hitting, pushing) or verbal aggression (teasing, name-calling, threats).
- **Frequent Complaints About Others:** Regularly mocking or making negative comments about certain individuals.
- **Sense of Superiority:** Expressing that they are "better" than others or belittling peers.
- **Manipulative or Controlling Behaviour:** Trying to dominate friendships, isolate certain peers, or force others to do things.
- **Avoiding Responsibility:** Consistently blaming others, refusing to acknowledge wrongdoing, or lacking remorse.
- **Changes in Social Interactions:** Frequent conflicts with friends, difficulty maintaining relationships, or exclusion from groups.
- **Revenge Mentality:** Feeling justified in hurting others as "payback."
- **Lack of Empathy:** Showing little concern for the feelings of others.
- **Enjoyment from Others' Discomfort:** Finding satisfaction in making others feel scared, upset, or powerless.

## **What Can Parents Do?**

### **Stay Calm and Avoid Shaming**

Reacting with anger or shame may cause guilt, resentment, or confusion. Instead of focusing solely on punishment, try to understand the underlying cause of the behaviour.

### **Have an Open Conversation**

Create a calm and safe space to talk. Ask your child about what happened, how they see the situation, and why they acted the way they did. Listening without immediate judgment can help uncover any underlying frustrations or insecurities.

### **Help Them Understand the Impact**

Explain how their actions affect others. Encouraging empathy by helping them see things from the victim's perspective is crucial. You can use real-life stories or examples to highlight the consequences of bullying.

### **Set Clear Expectations and Consequences**

Make sure your child understands that bullying is unacceptable. Set clear rules and consequences while focusing on guiding them toward positive behaviours rather than just punishment.

### **Teach Positive Conflict Resolution**

Bullying can stem from a lack of social or problem-solving skills. Help your child learn appropriate ways to express feelings and handle conflicts. Practicing scenarios through role-playing can be helpful.

### **Model Respectful Behaviour**

Children learn from the adults around them. Demonstrate kindness, inclusivity, and respect in your interactions so your child can mirror these behaviours.

### **Encourage Healthy Friendships**

If your child struggles socially, support them in finding positive friendships. Encourage involvement in activities that promote teamwork, such as sports, clubs, or group projects.

### **Seek Professional Help if Needed**

If bullying continues, or if there are deeper emotional or behavioural issues, seeking support from a professional (such as a counsellor) may be beneficial.

### **Work with the School**

If the bullying occurs at school, collaborate with teachers or administrators. Schools often have policies to address bullying and can help implement strategies for change.

### **Final Thoughts**

Children learn and grow through mistakes. How we help them navigate these mistakes matters. With guidance, understanding, and appropriate intervention, children who engage in bullying can develop empathy and learn to make better choices in their interactions with others.