

Bullying – Generation Next

Ken Rigby , author, research professor and a leading educational expert based at the University of South Australia, has defined bullying as

“an initial desire to hurt, this desire is expressed in action, someone is hurt, the action is directed by a more powerful person or group, it is without justification, it is typically repeated, and it is done so with evident enjoyment.”
Ken Rigby (1998).

Face-to-face or direct bullying involves physical contact such as punching, kicking, direct verbal abuse and taking a child’s property.

Covert or indirect bullying is usually done on the sly and not easy to detect. It includes excluding people, spreading lies and playing humiliating tricks. Sometimes it is a secret clubs where the bully is the leader and they exert their power and influence over others in the club.

Boys are more likely to use direct bullying, while girls will often engage in indirect bullying. Bullying mainly occurs in the last years of primary and the first few years of secondary school. Children with positive relationships with their parents are less likely to bully.

Cyberbullying is where bullies use digital forms of communication such as SMS, social media sites, chat rooms and mobiles to intentionally and repeatedly humiliate and cause distress to another person. It can be anonymous and easily broadcast en-masse.

Impacts

Bullied children can feel insecure, unhappy, stressed, anxious and depressed.

They often lack self confidence, dislike taking risks, have fewer friends and lack age appropriate social skills.

According to Dr Rigby, they also have higher rates of worry, self-harm and suicidal thoughts, poor physical health, impaired academic performance and greater school non-attendance. Young people can be left with a deep sense of isolation, distress and anger as a result of being bullied.

Positive and supportive school relationships between principals, teachers, students and parents can have a positive impact on reducing bullying.

Top tips & resources: help kids who are bullied

1. Encourage values of harmony, tolerance, honesty, responsibility and respect within the students. Values based curriculum ideas, lesson plans, and interactive web-based programs can be accessed at **Values Education** (run by Dept of Education, Employment & Workplace relations).
2. Encourage positive social interactions. Implement pro-social strategies that promote positive social interactions, and foster responsibility and power sharing. There are bullying surveys and resources at **BullyingNoWay**.
3. Get parents onboard. **Cybersmart** provides valuable tips for parents, such as keeping computers in visible places in the home, switching off laptop computers and mobile phones at night or removing them from bedrooms.
4. **Psych4Schools** has excellent resources and fact sheets for teachers on how to combat bullying in schools.
5. **National Safe Schools Framework** can help form school policies. The framework consists of nationally agreed principles and appropriate responses to bullying to create a safe and supportive school environment.
6. **Reachout** has great resources on bullying.
7. **Wired Safety** is the World's first internet and safety help group based in the USA.
8. **Bullying** has a section on school related bullying and resources for helping to develop social resilience in students.
9. **Kids Help Line** or phone 1800 55 1800.

Source: Generation Next