

# BULLYING IS TOXIC

## A health message to parents

In the last few years you may have heard and/or read stories about suicidal attempts made by children and adolescents who have been bullied. We would like to help you to become aware about the very serious health and safety problems related to bullying and steps that you can take to prevent them.



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## What is Bullying?

A person is bullied when they suffer physical aggression and/or are verbally or emotionally mistreated by one or more people.

### A person is bullied if they are:

- Hit, slapped, pushed, kicked, poked, choked, touched inappropriately
- Threatened or taunted
- Dared to do something dangerous or inappropriate as a condition of friendship or being accepted
- Bothered while using the bathroom
- Made fun of or called nasty names
- Hurt by nasty rumors about oneself
- Left out, ignored, unwelcome or rejected
- Mistreated by having one's belongings stolen, destroyed, damaged or tossed around

### Notes:

- Any person of any age can be bullied and/or bully others. Bullying can happen between people of same or different ages.
- Most of the research indicates that bullying is a "repeated" form of mistreatment. In reality, one single episode of bullying can be enough to hurt, depending on its intensity, sensitivity of the victim and their previous experience with bullying.
- Most of the research indicates that bullying is an "intentional" form of abuse. In fact, a victim can get hurt regardless of if the inflicted mistreatment was accidental.

## Bullying Happens Everywhere

Bullying happens everywhere across different social settings, at all ages and around the world. Most of the research on bullying and related news reports has focused on its occurrence in primary and secondary schools and /or school related activities, with highest occurrence among students who attend 6th to 9th grade. It usually occurs in unsupervised areas or activities like recess, hallways, stairways, cafeteria, locker rooms,

school bus, walking to and from school and sport events. However, bullying also occurs:

- At home between siblings
- In after school programs
- Using internet, social media and cellular phones
- Playing in the neighborhood
- In summer camps
- In athletic activities
- In dating relationships
- At the workplace

## Bullying Happens Around the World

The occurrence of bullying has been reported in at least 66 countries. On average one of every three adolescents reports to have been bullied in the previous two months.

## Bullying is Toxic

Young people who are being bullied and/or bully others have a very high chance of being affected by a wide range of health and safety hazards. They are at risk of:

- Feeling depressed or sad.
- Feeling tired, bored and/or unmotivated
- Being angry, irritable or in a bad mood
- Worrying, feeling nervous and/or having fears
- Having difficulties in falling asleep, at night, and/or staying asleep
- Having frequent headaches; stomachaches; dizziness; and/or backaches

### Young people who are bullied and/or bully others are more likely to:

- Hurt themselves on purpose and/or attempt to commit suicide
- Suffer from accidental injuries
- Run away from home
- Be involved in physical fights
- Carry a weapon to school
- Smoke cigarettes daily
- Abuse alcohol and/or drugs
- Be frequently absent from school
- Experience a decline in academic grades

# WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT THE TOXICITY OF BULLYING?

Become involved in a whole community effort. Three levels of bullying prevention:

## FIRST LEVEL: Prevent bullying from happening

### You can help to prevent bullying incidents from happening by:

- Being aware about the nature of bullying and its serious ill effects
- Sharing this information with children, other parents, friends and neighbors
- Advocating for the teaching of toxic effects of bullying in health curriculums
- Nurturing a home environment that promotes mutual respect, understanding and support of each other, while it disapproves the use of physical or verbal aggression, threats to safety, being made fun of, called derogatory names or being ignored, unwelcome or left out
- Supporting and participating in an ongoing whole-school based program that promotes a physical and emotional safe environment and endorses sensitivity, respect and care. Such a program should include the participation of all students, school personnel and parents in understanding the problem of bullying and its ill consequences.

## SECOND LEVEL: Stop on-going bullying

### You can help to stop on-going bullying incidents by:

- Keeping an open dialogue with your children to find out whether they are being physically, verbally or emotionally mistreated or bullied in and or out of school and or if they are bullying others
- Stopping bullying between siblings by advising your children that this is not "normal sibling rivalry or growing up together" and that bullying can seriously hurt somebody physically and emotionally
- Supporting your child in reporting incidents of bullying to school authorities, in order to ensure that the perpetrator is counseled and sensitized about the ill effects of his or her actions on your child, and that your child is protected from further mistreatment
- Advising your child to stay away from Internet pages, emails and social networking if they are being mistreated
- Avoiding advice to your child that "bullying is part of growing up" and/or that they should learn to endure the bullying by fighting back, ignoring and or teasing those who mistreat them

## THIRD LEVEL: Find medical/psychological treatment for health and safety problems linked to bullying

### You can help to protect your child's physical and emotional wellbeing and safety by:

- Consulting with a health professional if your child is bullied and or bullies others and presents with physical/emotional symptoms and or risks to his/her safety
- Seeking a medical/psychiatric assessment if your child is unable to stop bullying others in spite of school counseling and parental intervention





**FOR MORE INFORMATION  
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