

# Beating the Playground Bully Part 2

In last month's article, we introduced the five stages of bullying. We explored how difficult it is for the person being bullied to gain the strength to alter the current course of events as the situation escalates. The overwhelming short term psychological impact of bullying leads to the gradual erosion of a person's inner strength and self esteem. Additionally, for the person being bullied, it is often very difficult to realise that the torment can, and indeed will, eventually end.

So what are some of the strategies that we can use to minimise the impact that a bully has on our lives?

Firstly, it helps to recognise the type of bullying we are experiencing. There are three categories, and in any given situation, a target of bullying may be experiencing only one of the categories, or all three.

## 1. Direct Physical Bullying

This includes hitting, tripping or pushing a person. It also includes forcibly taking possessions or damaging the property of another.

## 2. Direct Verbal Bullying

Direct verbal bullying can include name calling, and offensive, threatening or insulting remarks directly to the person. Topics may include homophobic, sexist and racist remarks. It can also involve highlighting special needs, personal physical attributes or physical disabilities, as well as general targeted abuse.

## 3. Indirect Bullying

This form of bullying is more difficult to recognise and manage. It is sometimes carried out behind the bullied person's back. It is designed to harm someone's social reputation and/or cause humiliation. Not restricted to the school yard, this is the most common type of bullying experienced in adulthood. Indirect bullying can include lying and spreading rumours or playing nasty jokes with the aim of embarrassing and humiliating

another. It also includes mimicking, ostracising and encouraging others to socially exclude the person as well. In the modern world, it can also take the form of cyber-bullying or text bullying to humiliate and distress.

As discussed in last month's article, victims of bullying need support, understanding and where necessary, protection. It's this last one – protection - that can gain headlines in bullying situations. As a parent or loved one of a victim of bullying, your first instinctive response is likely to be to intervene quickly and wield your power. You may want to storm into the school or workplace, approach the child directly or contact the parents. In actual fact, none of these reactions will help your child. It will simply take the focus off the actual problem and place it squarely onto you. It can also provide further fuel for continued bullying.

The first step in helping your child address this issue is to talk to them about it. It will help to understand that they may be embarrassed of being bullied and be reluctant to talk about it. They may also feel apprehensive of your response and the possible action you want to take. Be accepting and understanding, and reassure them that you will decide together how best to proceed. You may find you need to make a number of attempts to open communication about this situation, but be careful not to force the issue

as this just creates more pressure. This is a difficult balance and this situation is never easy. Unless you feel that your child is in impending physical danger, it is vital that they feel that they have some control over the information they provide to you.

Once your child starts to open up, document as many incidents as they can remember. If you can identify dates, locations, times, who was notified, those involved, witnesses etc, do so. Document both the incidents and their effects on the child. Categorise the bullying so you can start to identify the bully's strategy. Focus on the behaviour, not the individual. As it's already a highly charged situation, the less additional negative emotion you introduce the better.

If your child is at school, including their teacher is a must. Depending on the nature of the threat, school councillors, nurses or senior teaching staff may also be included. But initially, a discussion with your child's primary teacher or year advisor is the first step. Bring your documentation to the discussion. Continue to focus on the behaviour, not the person. Make sure you are calm and constructive in all discussions, with a clear focus on finding solutions and moving forward.

At the same time, develop a strategy with your child. It is good to include your proposed strategy in the documentation and discussion with

the school. They may be able to add further ideas or provide assistance with the implementation of the strategy. Potential strategies could include avoiding the bully, techniques to increase your child's self esteem and confidence or practicing a range of positive and firm assertive techniques.

This strategy is only applicable to your child's behaviour. The strategy for managing and improving the bully's behaviour is an issue for the school and the parents of the bully. You have the right to know that action is being taken, but it is for others to decide on what is an appropriate action for another child. The key to ensuring that the situation is treated seriously enough to

warrant action by the school and other parents, is to present your case in a calm, clear manner, fully documented and focused on a solution. Evidence is key. The more accurate and specific the documentation, the less denials and excuses the bully can make, and the more information everyone has to work with.

Where bullying exists in the environment, it affects everyone. Pretending it isn't happening or brushing it off as part of growing up can support the existing destructive environment and negatively impact on everyone involved. However, an extreme emotional reaction is equally destructive. Stay calm, communicate

and formulate a plan. Let your child know that you are in the situation with them, they can trust you not to make things worse, and that this will pass.💡

© Successful Minds – April 2011



e: [info@successfulminds.com.au](mailto:info@successfulminds.com.au)  
w: [www.successfulminds.com.au](http://www.successfulminds.com.au)