

February is Anti-Bullying month!

Bullying what is it and what can I do about it?

Written by school counselor Stephanie Hatten, MEd., CCC.

Every student has the right to go to school and be free from bullying so that he or she can reach his or her social and academic potential. When a student is bullied, he or she may feel withdrawn, suffer from low self-esteem, fall behind and even stop going to school. Some students may even become physically ill, depressed or suicidal.

What is Conflict? Is it Bullying?

No. Conflict is a usual interaction between friends, family and teachers. It happens when we don't agree about something and can be worked through in a respectful way by talking and negotiation. It is hard to be close to someone without having some conflict. But bullying is completely different and not an acceptable part of our interactions.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is different. Bullying is an aggressive act, such as:

- Intimidation, nasty jokes, using gestures, threats or exclusion (emotional bullying)
- Hitting or punching (physical bullying)
- Teasing or name calling (verbal bullying)
- Sending insulting messages by phone or computer (cyber bullying)
- Spreading rumours/ lying

Unlike conflict, bullying usually has two of these three main characteristics:

- An imbalance of power (someone has more authority, is more popular or larger than the other)
- Intentional
- Repeated

What can you do if you are being bullied?

1. Stop - at first you can tell the person to stop bothering you.
2. Walk- if it continues, walk away
3. Talk - if the bullying continues, talk to an adult you trust such as a school counselor, teacher, your parents or a coach. It's important not to keep the bullying a secret.

What is a bystander?

A bystander is someone who knows someone is being bullied but doesn't do anything to stop it. Even if you aren't being bullied but know someone who is, you can help. Don't go along with the bullying. If you feel safe to do so, you can tell the bully you don't like what he or she is doing and ask them to stop. You can also tell an adult you trust, such as your school counselor or teacher, that someone you know is being bullied.

Parents: If your child is being bullied, listen to your child and speak to the school counselor and vice principal.

You don't have to be alone and sad. Together we can prevent students and our friends from being bullied.

For more information about bullying, check out **E.R.A.S.E.** : <http://www.erasebullying.ca/>

BCTF: <http://www.bctf.ca/parents.aspx?id=3616>