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## Bullying: How bad is it really?

### The Guardian

IN the past bullying was seen as a rite of passage that all children went through in the journey to becoming an adult. This has changed drastically due to the way in which children are being bullied today and the reality is that bullying is a serious problem.

Bullying can be described as the repeated unwanted and aggressive behaviour that involves real or perceived power imbalance. This behaviour is intended to cause physical or emotional pain or discomfort to the target.

There are a number of types of bullying which include:

• **Verbal:** Verbal bullying is any verbal abuse of the victim which can include name calling, teasing, threatening, homophobic or racist remarks and generally speaking to the victim in a manner which makes him/her feel unhappy, sad or bad about themselves

• **Physical:** This includes any physical act against the victim in which the he/she is hurt and/or their belongings are damaged or stolen

• **Social:** This bullying is generally harder to recognise and can often be carried out without the victim being present. It involves the lying about the person, spreading of bad rumours, deliberately ignoring him/her, mimicking

unkindly, and encouraging others to socially ostracize the victim.

• **Cyber:** This type of bullying is enacted using digital technology. Can include harassment via a mobile phone, setting up a defamatory personal website or deliberately excluding someone from social networking spaces. Cyberbullying can happen at any time, it can be in public or in private, and sometimes is only known to the victim target and the bully.

The following statistics from Stop Bullying illustrate the severity of bullying at school:

- Only 20-40% of bullying victims actually report being bullied
- 70% of primary school and high school students experience bullying in school
- 7-12% of bullies are habitual and pose a serious threat
- 5-15% of students are constantly bullied
- 27% of students are bullied because of their refusal to engage in common sexual practices

With these statistics it clear that bullying is a major problem in schools these days and the effect of bullying on our children is far greater.

**As a parent how can you identify if your child is being bullied?**

- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- Mood swings

- Feels ill in the morning
- Becomes withdrawn or starts stammering
- Becomes aggressive and unreasonable
- Begins to target siblings
- Continually 'loses' money or starts stealing
- Has unexplained bruises, cuts, scratches
- Comes home with missing or damaged belongings or clothes
- Comes home hungry
- Doesn't want to go to school
- Changes their route to school or are frightened of walking to school
- School grades begin to fall.
- Changes in groups or friends that they associate with
- Sudden or drastic changes in interests or sports

Do you know what your child's school policy is on bullying? Bullying can seriously damage physical, social and emotional health. Students who are bullied are more likely to have low self-esteem and poor assertiveness skills. This can affect their psychological and mental health, and result in academic difficulties due to social exclusion, peer rejection, depression, and negative self-perceptions. They are also more likely to have poorer health and more somatic complaints, more interpersonal difficulties, higher levels of loneliness, suicidal ideation and increased anxiety.



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