



BULLYING

Parents' Guide



Scouting is an educational movement that seeks to develop young people socially, physically, intellectually, character, emotionally and spiritually. In the scouting programme, presented to young people, we explore many of these qualities and seek to provide young people with the many life skills and positive traits that can be used in their future adult life.

Scouting is but another in this process – the family, school and personal interaction with peers are also major influencers as a young person develops. It is hoped, of course, that all of these influences will be positive in nature. There will be negative influences also and through strength of character we enable young people to overcome these in favour of the positive.

Bullying is a negative threat that exists within our society causing unhappiness and despair. In recent times, with the escalation of social media and technology the potential to bully in a clandestine way have increased. It is currently estimated, in recent studies, that 31% of Primary and 16% of Secondary school students are bullied daily and the practice of bullying is not confined to the school place. In fact, bullying is present in all walks and features of life.

This parent's guide is part of a special programme initiative that will be used with your child over the next few weeks. The programme will explore bullying with your child, and through participation, it is hoped to change behaviour and provide insights into our actions. A young person participating in Scouting does not do so in isolation. The Scout group will consist of friends and supporting adults. The Scout group itself will exist within a community and its members will come from families and also attend the same schools. So, the matter of bullying is in fact everyone's problem and everyone has a part in resolving the issue.

In order for bullying to thrive it requires a number of ingredients – bullies, victims and those who support and condone the behaviour. It is also important to remember, and again this is borne out with research, that bullies are not born but are made. The process of becoming a bully stems from many factors and social influencers. Young people who bully typically have a need to feel powerful and in control.

In a lot of cases, the path of developing bully tendencies begins in the immediate and wider family environment. Children are in a constant state of learning, watching and imitating. General comments and remarks about all sorts of things, individuals and groups are internalised and adapted as normal. Young people, in their formative years, have not yet gained the capacity to rationalise what is happening around them. Attitudes and behaviour are adopted as normal. Within this context they will experience the negative and positive. Interpersonal skills, desirable personal traits of respect, awareness and kindness to others, friendship and understanding will be passed onto young people in positive family environments. These can be balanced against negative situations of family conflict, lack of love and attention and degrading of people both in and outside of the home.

Parents and families therefore have a massive job to do in rearing a child to become an adult with positive personal traits. Schools and other organisations, such as Scouting, can play a role and help, encouraging and supporting this process but the primary influencers are by and large the family setting.

In this regard therefore, we would like all parents to be aware of the programme that will be run in the next few weeks. We encourage you to talk to your child about it and the issues and situation that will arise as a result of the programme.

All parents will be surprised to discover that one of their children is a bully, but you need to be

prepared for this situation as there is likely to be a 30% chance that it could be your child who is the bully. Likewise, there is also a good chance that your child will be a victim of a bully at some stage in their life. Your child will need your support in all cases.

The basis of the programme will be discussion, exploration and discovery. Attitudes and behaviour to others will be explored. Some young people may be awakened to these discoveries and others might be ashamed of their actions in the past perhaps. It is hoped that through the programme that real and positive actions will result that will bring all involved to a new place that is driven by friendship, inclusion and mutual support.

We really value the support and care that you as parents can bring to your children. Please talk to your child, understand their life in today's world – it will be totally different to your experience. If you do not understand new technology ask them to teach you about it.

Understanding Bullying

To understand bullying you need to be aware of the nature of human interactions. Power is a key feature of human life and structure - it is ever present in our interaction with others. The desire to influence people and empower oneself is a unique human trait we all display. Controlling our destiny and fulfilling our ambitions cannot be exercised without some sort of 'power play' in our relationship. Power plays are the things we do, often unbeknown to ourselves, to place ourselves in a superior position in relation to others. These can be very subtle actions, comments etc. that can be physical or psychological in nature. Through subtle use of 'power plays' we influence, change ideas and gain the support of others to causes and actions. We can also use 'power plays' in a negative context to 'put down' or suppress those who might upset our plans and ambitions.

All the human states come into play as we progress through life – envy and resentment, gaining prestige over others, honour and reputation, desire and greed, equality and place in society, position and leadership within a group, friendships and social acceptance - all are driven by a desire to empower oneself.

Of course we would all like to believe that we are 'perfect' human beings who exhibit all of the positive traits but in reality everyone is in a constant state of using subtle 'power plays' to achieve our aims and ambitions.

Bullying is the lust for power and control in a negative space and with a lack of understanding of the rules for social dialogue and interaction. Subtle power plays are abandoned in favour of more direct aggressive and calculated destructive power plays. Bullies will use whatever means they can to gain power and control over others and they will use verbal, psychological and physical conduct to achieve the result they seek. They are clever and will operate in such a way as to not draw undue notice or superior authority on them. In the main bullying is a covert activity and the bully will seek out people who can be easily subdued and controlled.

The gathering together of a gang is common. This gang can be comprised of young people who perhaps have been initially bullied to submission and now support the actions of the bully in fear that they might become the focus of attention. By condoning the actions of the bully the members of the gang are in fact also become bullies in the process, although their motive is to protect themselves through fear. They will experience power and control over others and perhaps be corrupted by that experience. They are followers and will adopt the attitudes and behaviour of the gang. Anybody who is different is a likely target - if they cannot stand up for themselves, and have the confidence to resist.

Bullying is not confined to males, everybody can become a bully. Males will favour physical over psychological whereas the reverse is often the case with females who will favour exclusion and social actions such as gossip and lies over physical aggression. However, in the actions of bullying everything is a possibility to gain the power and control they desire.

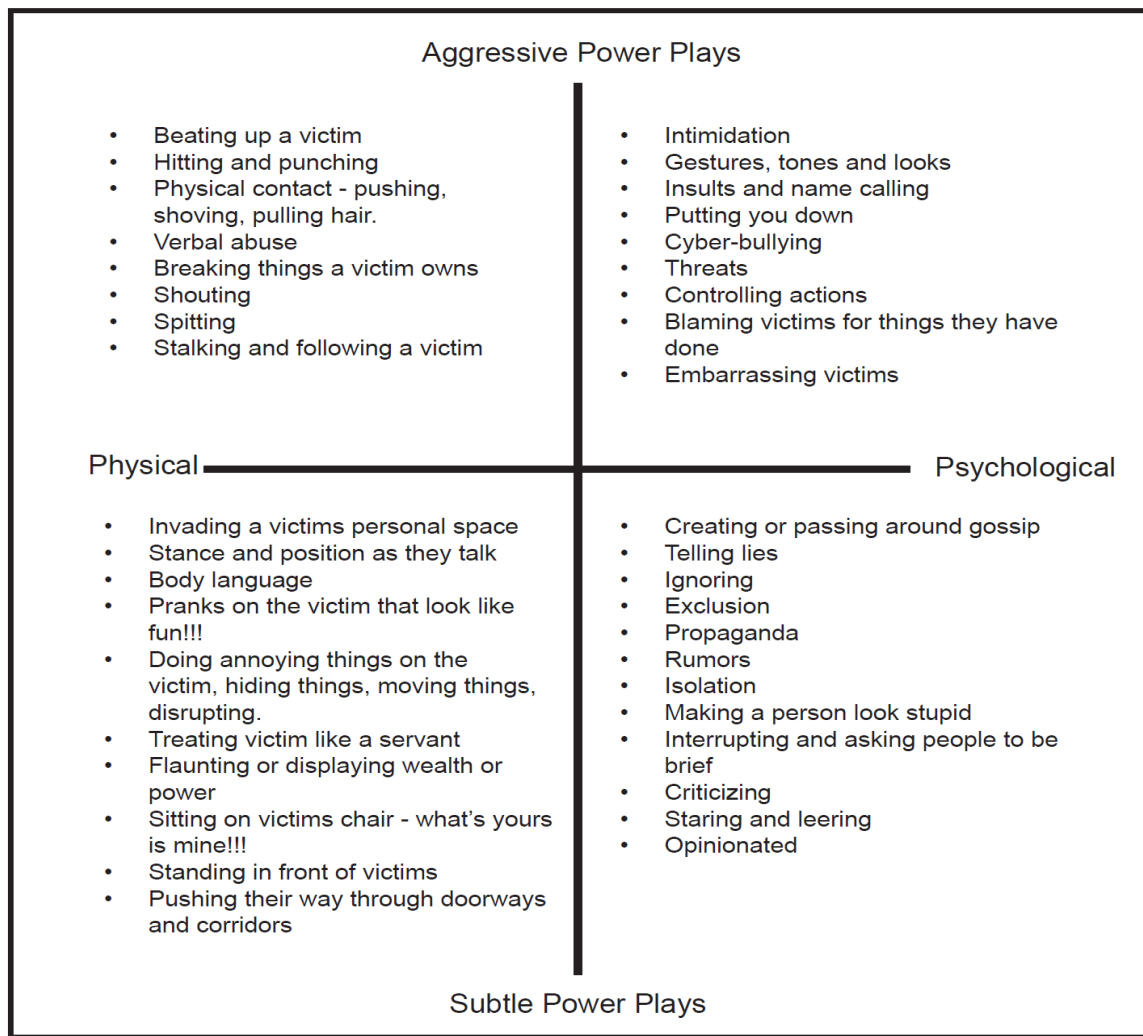
Bullying is learned behaviour and it can be changed and replaced with more positive behaviour.

Training is social and personal skills based on shared friendship and respect are useful, as are no tolerance policies and actions towards unsociable behaviour. Offering and exploring alternatives, which allow young people to realise their ambitions. Gaining an understanding of the consequences of behaviour, and the long term isolation and lack of friendship of others that ensues.

Some explanations

Bullying is defined as repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conduct by an individual or group against others. Bullying is sustained and repeated behaviour.

Cyberbullying is bullying carried out on technology in its many forms.



Discovering how do you know if your child is been bullied

- Your child will be unhappy and show changes in behaviour – mood,
- They may appear anxious about going to school or going out to socialise with others
- They may become secretive
- Unexplained marks, bruises cuts and scratches
- Possessions such phones, money, jewellery become lost, broken or are missing without valid reason.
- Physical complaints are increased – headaches, nightmares, stomach pains.
- Becoming upset or moody after receiving a text message or going online.

- Many other minor indicators can be present and it is important that parents can pick up on these and talk to their child as quickly as possible to understand what is going on.

Technology

Technology has added an increased likelihood for all sorts of bullying from passive to aggressive behaviour. As it is not face to face it can be used as a means of psychological bullying far more easily than other methods. By its nature things are hidden and personal. The context of messages and actions can be misunderstood as normal. Social interactions are missing – body language, tone of voice, eye contact. It is also absorbing to a young person to keep up and be on top of everything that is going on – ‘I don’t want to miss anything’ – so there is a constant obsession to keep looking at the phone or device for updates etc.

Young people are using technology without any training or guidance. They learn quickly how to use it but lack the social, moral and ethical rules that are present in society – because in the main they are still learning them. Technology therefore is ‘not real life’ and to some people that means that they can do and say anything the like and that is bringing out the worse in some people.

As a parent you should also be aware that all items posted on social media are permanent and reside, in most cases, on computer servers forever. Funny or silly pictures posted on social media can be discovered by anyone and can play a part in your future life ambitions with regard to careers and personal relationships. Young people live in the minute and of course do not consider the consequences of their actions in this regard.

If you discover your child is being bullied or abused in any way, on technology, advise your child to do the following:

Don’t reply
Keep the message (or take a screen shot of the message)
Tell someone about it
Block the sender
Report the problem (Reporting is stating that someone’s hurting you and you’re trying to get help)

As a parent you should supervise but not invade their personal space by constantly ‘snooping’. Confirm that any messages or actions are in fact bullying – this can be done by confirming along the following lines

It is targeted at your child or another child
Is it happening over a sustained period of time
The frequency of the action
The intention of the action to harm

Sometimes one-off actions are a result of something else and not in fact bullying. In order for bullying to be determined it must have – target, duration, frequency and intention. However, all insults, negative comments and perceived bully like activity should be stopped at the very first sign.

In general terms parents should get involved in their child’s online life, they should listen and observe what is going on. Young people should be told about respecting other people, sensible use of technology, ethical rules of behaviour and also the need for them to detach from technology. Young people are still learning the skills of communication and social interaction and this is best done away from technology with friends and family.

Encourage friendship
Teach children to express themselves and engage in discussions with others
Teach self-respect for others and opinions
Stress the importance of real life – face to face, body language and other communication signals
Start teaching your child the art of dialogue.