



Making a Difference in Bullying

**What school bus drivers
need to know**



WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is a relationship problem.

Bullying is a form of abuse at the hands of peers that can take different forms at different ages. Bullying is defined as repeated aggression in which there is an imbalance of power between the child who bullies and the child who is victimized (Juvonen & Graham, 2001; Olweus, 1991; Pepler & Craig, 2000). Through our research, we understand bullying as a disrespectful relationship problem:

- Children who bully are learning to use power and aggression to control and distress others
- Children who are victimized become increasingly powerless and find themselves trapped in relationships in which they are being abused.

Read on to learn about how you can make a difference in bullying. Remember, all children and youth have the right to feel safe at home, at school, and in the community.

Tips to Share with Children and Youth who are Bullied

- ♦ If it's hard for you to stand up for yourself, ignore the bullying and walk away...then tell someone who can help.
- ♦ Talk to someone who can help, like a parent, teacher or coach.
- ♦ If you're scared to talk to an adult on your own, ask a friend to go with you.
- ♦ Go to areas where you feel safe.
- ♦ Stay close to students you can count on to stick up for you.
- ♦ Look confident and tell the child who bullies to back off...bullying is NOT cool!
- ♦ Stay calm...try not to show you are upset when being bullied.
- ♦ Get funny...humour shows you're not bothered.
- ♦ Be assertive, not aggressive...fighting back often makes the bullying worse.
- ♦ Remember that no one deserves to be bullied.

10 THINGS SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS CAN DO TO ADDRESS BULLYING. . .

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

Children watch adults' behaviour closely. If we model respectful and empathic behaviour and positive conflict resolution strategies, then children are more likely to adopt similar behaviours in their peer relationships. On the other hand, if our interactions are critical, demeaning, or aggressive, how can we expect the children around us to behave any better? Think carefully about the words you choose and the way you behave.

ESTABLISH A CODE OF CONDUCT

At the start of the school year establish a respectful climate on the school bus. Discuss with students which behaviours are appropriate and which are inappropriate. If drivers and attendants make it clear that disrespectful behaviours will not be tolerated they are less likely to occur. Post a code of conduct to remind children (and adults) about what will and will not be tolerated on the school bus.

ENCOURAGE CHILDREN TO REPORT

Convey the message that it is a rule to report anything that makes students feel unsafe, and that it is expected of everyone. Clarify the difference between tattling and telling: Tattling is what you do to get someone into trouble, telling is what you do to get someone out of trouble. Providing alternative ways to report bullying, such as an anonymous bullying box, can help reduce the discomfort children feel around reporting bullying.

ACKNOWLEDGE POSITIVE BEHAVIOURS

You can encourage positive connections among children by praising respectful and cooperative behaviour whenever you see it. The more you praise a behaviour, the more often it will happen. Children love praise and they will work hard to get it from you. Try and focus on the positives of children and youth on the school bus, even when they need correcting. Remember, children are works in progress—they can't always get it right.

PREVENTION IS CRITICAL

Learn the names of the children on the school bus. It is important to try to get to know the children to establish a relationship whereby the children feel safe reporting any incidences of bullying. Be observant of all activities on the school bus and let children know that you are monitoring them during their time on the school bus.

Tips to Share with Children and Youth who Watch Bullying

- ◆ Talk to someone who can help, like a parent or a teacher...remember that telling is not tattling.
- ◆ If you walk away and get help, you are part of the solution...if you stay and watch, you are part of the problem.
- ◆ Stand up for children who are bullied...they can't do it themselves.
- ◆ Invite kids who are bullied to play with you somewhere else.
- ◆ Comfort the person who was hurt and make it known that what happened was not fair or deserved
- ◆ The best thing you can do for kids who are bullied is to be their friend
- ◆ If it is hard for you to speak out against bullying on your own, ask a friend to do it with you.
- ◆ Help kids who bully, don't hurt them.. Speaking out helps, bullying back doesn't help.

Tips to Share with Children and Youth who Bully

- ◆ Talk to someone who can help, like a parent, teacher, or coach. They can help you find ways to get along with others.
- ◆ Ask a friend to help you stop if you start to bully others.
- ◆ Set goals each day to make it easier not to bully (e.g., Keep cool; Today I'll help others rather than hurt them)
- ◆ Understand that you may not like everyone around you but you do have to treat them with respect.
- ◆ Appreciate kids' differences...different doesn't mean worse or better than you.
- ◆ Put yourself in other kids' shoes...would you want to be picked on, put down, or left out?
- ◆ Apologize to the kids you have bullied
- ◆ Know that if other children watch and laugh, it doesn't mean they like it when you bully.
- ◆ Be a real leader...Real leaders treat others with respect.

REDUCE THE CHANCES FOR BULLYING

Organize seating arrangements on the school bus to prevent bullying. Do not sit young students with older students, strategically seat new students, and talk with children who appear to be stressed out. Create a school bus consequence plan with school administration so children are aware that they will be held accountable for their actions.

KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR SIGNS OF BULLYING

Bullying on the school bus differs as it is the least supervised. The following are signs of bullying specific to school buses:

- A child being "escorted" to a different seat by another child
- Older/larger child focusing on a younger/smaller child
- A child being tripped or slapped while going up the aisle
- A child with damaged or missing pieces of clothing, books, or other belongings
- A child unusually quiet or upset

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

If you suspect that a child is being bullied, you're probably right. Children will often deny bullying out of shame or fear. If it looks like bullying and feels like bullying, it most likely is, even if children and youth deny it. Trust your instincts and intervene as soon as possible.

BE READY TO LISTEN AND HELP

If a child reports being bullied, be ready to listen right away. Don't put it off. Thank the child for having the courage to come forward and explain that it is his/her right to feel safe. Ask for details about the incident and convey your concern. Be willing to respond to all reports, even the seemingly trivial ones such as name-calling. Consistency matters!

ESTABLISH A POLICY WITH THE SCHOOL

It is not the school bus driver's job to conduct an in-depth investigation. It is important to report any observations to school officials or your supervisor as soon as possible. Develop a school policy about how to report and respond to bullying. Bullying prevention efforts on the bus should be included in programs to prevent bullying in the classroom.

THE MANY FORMS OF BULLYING IN CHILDHOOD:

Physical bullying

- ◆ Hitting, kicking, shoving, spitting, beating up, stealing, or damaging property

Verbal bullying

- ◆ Name-calling, mocking, hurtful teasing, humiliating or threatening someone, racist or sexist comments

Social bullying

- ◆ Excluding others from the group, gossiping or spreading rumours, setting others up to look foolish, and damaging friendships.

Cyberbullying

- ◆ Using email, cell phones, text messages, and internet sites to threaten, harass, embarrass, socially exclude, or damage reputations and friendships

HOW DO SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS KNOW IF A STUDENT IS INVOLVED IN BULLYING?

Bullying is a covert behaviour and is usually hidden from adults. Look for the following clues:

SIGNS OF BEING BULLIED

- ☑ Afraid to go to school or other activities
- ☑ Appear anxious or fearful
- ☑ Low self-esteem and make negative comments
- ☑ Complain of feeling unwell
- ☑ Lower interest in activities and performance
- ☑ Lose things, need money, report being hungry
- ☑ Injuries, bruising, damaged clothing or articles
- ☑ Appear unhappy, irritable
- ☑ Trouble sleeping, nightmares
- ☑ Threats to hurt themselves or others
- ☑ May appear isolated from the peer group

SIGNS OF BULLYING OTHERS

- ☑ Aggressive with parents, siblings, pets, and friends
- ☑ Low concern for others' feelings
- ☑ Bossy and manipulative behaviour
- ☑ Unexplained objects or money
- ☑ Secretive about possessions and activities
- ☑ Holds a positive view of aggression
- ☑ Easily frustrated and quick to anger
- ☑ Does not recognize impact of his/her behaviour
- ☑ Has friends who bully and are aggressive
- ☑ Child has trouble standing up to peer pressure

WHY SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS SHOULD CARE ABOUT BULLYING

Many people feel that bullying is "*just kids being kids*" and that it's "*harmless.*" In fact, bullying is anything but harmless.

RISKS FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE BULLIED:

- ☑ Depression (low mood, a sense of hopelessness)
- ☑ Social anxiety, loneliness, isolation
- ☑ Poor health (e.g., headaches, stomach aches)
- ☑ Low self esteem
- ☑ School absenteeism and academic problems
- ☑ Aggressive behaviours
- ☑ Contemplating, attempting, or committing suicide

RISKS FOR CHILDREN WHO BULLY OTHERS:

- ☑ Not knowing the difference between right and wrong
- ☑ Delinquency and substance use
- ☑ Academic problems and school drop out
- ☑ Adult criminality
- ☑ Difficulties in their relationships with others
- ☑ Being bullied at the hands of others