

WEAVERBIRD TOP TIPS

Bullying



KEEPING CONNECTED

- When a child is being bullied, you being present and providing a loving home is even more important than ever.
- Listen carefully and really hear what the child is saying. Asking open ended questions will facilitate two-way conversations where you can explore your child's emotions and thoughts.
- Use physical affection to show love and support; sometimes no words are needed and hugging, stroking a child's back etc can be soothing and help to settle any heightened emotional response and restore more balance.
- If possible, stay connected during periods when your child is with the other parent, via phone calls, FaceTime or take the child out for a quick trip to the park.
- Working through [Weaverbirds activities](#) which focus on connection. For example, our 'Always In My Heart' activity is perfect for exploring feelings.
- Advise your child's education provider about the current situation and invite their feedback on how your child is functioning. Always do this in writing so you have a record in case the bullying escalates. The school has a Duty of Care to provide a safe environment.
- Even the most caring teachers and schools can overlook frequent communication with parents. Be proactive in keeping communication with the school regular. Update staff in writing as to changes in the situation and seek feedback on how your child is getting on socially and emotionally.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

- Look to increase your child's confidence in other areas of their life. Children gain confidence through autonomy and accomplishments, so maximise any small ways that you can foster age-appropriate independence. For example, let the child choose the clothes they wear, ask them to help you pack their lunchbox, encourage them to speak up and order their own food at the café etc. Confident children who stand tall are less likely to be singled out.
- Continuing the theme of supporting your child to experiences successes in other areas of their life – especially in older children if they possess a natural ability or special interest like music or drawing, or even better a sport support them to pursue this interest. This not only increases your child's confidence, but also can garner admiration from their fellow peers.

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MANAGING YOUR CHILDS FEELINGS

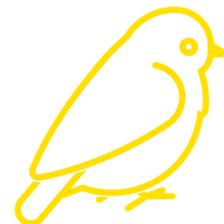
- If there are safety concerns for you child, it is important that you clearly and calmly let them know that you will be stepping-in and speaking with the school, as every child has the right to feel safe at school.
- Listen – stop what you are doing, look at the child and allow them time to explain.
- Help them to understand body clues about feelings in themselves and others. For example, watching TV with the sound off and ask them to guess how the people are feeling.
- Name the emotion your child may be feeling. For example 'I can see you are feeling sad'
- Validating the emotions will normalise the feelings being experienced. For example. 'I know you are worried about seeing the older boy when I drop you off; I am hoping that he won't be there too, but If he is, stand tall and If there are any Issues, tell your teacher'.
- Whilst continuing to validate the child's feelings and experiences, point out that they are not alone, and other children are in a similar position and also share similar feelings.
- Stay connected while patiently managing acting-out behaviours For example. 'I love you and I know you are feeling sad; however, you know that hitting your sister is not ok'.
- Help your child gain a sense of control during the process of addressing issues. For example, These are three things we could try. What do you think we should try next?'
- If you are concerned by continuing or increasing 'big feelings,' seek further support for your child (see Accessing More Help section below).
- Take note of feedback from your child's educational setting; teaching staff work with young children of a similar age to your child daily. They can be a useful source of information and provide an unbiased perspective.

MANAGING YOUR FEELINGS

- Both for your own and your child's emotional and physical health keep active, spending time outdoors and being mindful of healthy eating and sleeping habits.
- Whilst it can be heart-breaking to see your child feeling anxious or sad, and repeatedly having to face bullying at school, it is more helpful for your child if you keep big emotions private; it is natural to share that you are concerned for them, however any blaming of others or hysterical emotions (e.g. sobbing, yelling) can be unsettling for the child.
- Sharing big emotions with children may create an obstacle to your child sharing their own feelings and seeking support. Big feelings from a caregiver can cause a child to worry that you might not be able to tolerate and cope with hearing their concerns.
- Draw on other resources and use others for a debrief or support, recognising when external support of friends or professionals may be helpful.
- Avoid the temptation to approach the other student or their parents, rather look to the school for guidance and an intervention strategy.

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PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

- Just like learning to read, understanding patterns in our behaviour, and articulating and understanding own emotions takes practice.
- You may benefit from reading your Weaverbirds Story regularly, as well as children's books on this topic.
- Use the activities in your story and those on our [website](#).
- Sign up to our [Weaverbird Blog](#) for new tips and activities.

PROBLEM SOLVING

- Bullying is a complex issue and can take many forms. Sometimes there will be one or two children in a class who can repeatedly engage in unkind or aggressive behaviour to several other students in a class. Other times there may be behaviours your child is engaging in that provoke a disproportionate reaction in others. Therefore, there is not a one-size fits all solution.
- Using the label of 'bullying' to your child might not be helpful and can make it seem like a passive process. Do not place your child in the victim role. You, your child and hopefully their school can work together to stop the bullying..
- It is empowering for your child to work with you in trying out different approaches to improve their relationship with more difficult to manage students. In addition to speaking with your child's Class Teacher, or School Principal, there are several ways you and your child can work to tackle the issues, such as:
 - Enrolling your child in a Social Skills Group run by local allied health professionals
 - Encouraging your child to sit in class/ play at recess within eyesight/ear shot of teaching staff
 - Encouraging your child to play with other more friendly students, so they are not left on their own. Check-in with the teacher if there are certain friendships you should support and encourage.
 - Role playing appropriate replies to try out in response to unkind words or behaviours. Some research has found that an effective reaction is to practice responding in the way a confident and socially successful child would respond i.e. appearing dismissive and unphased.
 - Brainstorming ways your child can keep busy in the playground if other students are not behaving in a friendly way (e.g. taking handball)
 - Visualising a protective barrier so as not to take onboard negativity from others.

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PROBLEM SOLVING

- Practicing confident body language, even if your child is not feeling confident inside.
- Actively encourage and support healthy friendships both inside and outside of school, by having friends over to play and family get-togethers with other families with children etc.
- If you and your child feel you have been proactive in tackling the situation without much success or support from the school, you may like to discuss with your family and the school, whether a different school environment may be worth considering. Change is difficult for a child, so this should be a carefully considered decision. Unfortunately, sometimes a child may find the same issues arise at a new school; therefore speak openly with a potential new school about the difficulties your child has experienced, and ensure you are confident in this school's approach to tackling these issues before you enrol your child.

ACCESS MORE HELP

- Make the most of existing social supports and family members.
- Don't be afraid to seek help.
- If you, your family members or school have concerns or are noticing any of the following behaviours, speak with your GP about a referral to a Child Psychologist:
 - Ongoing social isolation or withdrawal
 - Aggressive or acting out behaviour
 - Regression (not being able to do skills previously mastered)
 - Significant distress on separation from caregivers
 - Crying more than usual

OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESILIENCE

- Helping your child manage a bully can assist them to develop resilience and
- lifelong skills. Ever heard of the book 'Your Fantastic Elastic Brain' by JoAnn Deak? – Well, our brain is just that – it can stretch and grow. Just as we exercise our bodies, we can also exercise our brains and learn and master new skills.
- Supporting your child to manage difficult times and ride the waves of emotion, provides them with the confidence that they are able to tackle the challenges that life will throw at them. Try and use this difficult time for your family as an opportunity for growth, so that you are able to experience some positives. There are a number of resources on 'Grit,' 'Growth Mindset' and 'Optimism' for both adults and children.

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FURTHER READING

Children's Books:

- The Recess Queen, Alexis O'Neill (Addressing bullying without adult intervention)
- The Invisible String, Patrice Karst (Useful for Connection)
- The Day the Sea Went out and Never Came Back, Margot Sunderland (Useful for Loss)
- In My Heart, Jo Witek (Useful for Feelings)
- Your Fantastic Elastic Brain, JoAnn Deak (Useful for Perseverance, Growth Mindset)
- What Do You Do With A Problem, Kobi Yamada (Useful for Courage, Facing Fears? Grit)
- Have You Filled a Bucket Today by Carol McCloud (Useful for Feeling Uplifted by Giving to Others)

Weblinks:

- <https://www.maggiedent.com/common-concerns/bullying/>
- <https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/behaviour/bullying/school-bullying-helping>
- <https://bullyingnoway.gov.au/>
- <https://www.stymie.com.au> - report bullying anonymously directly to the school

Podcasts:

Resilience

- <https://www.maggiedent.com/blog/episode-8-how-to-raise-a-resilient-child-parental-as-anything-abc-podcast/>

Cyberbullying

- <https://www.maggiedent.com/blog/episode-4-cyberbullying-what-you-need-to-know-to-keep-your-children-safe-abc-podcast/>

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