Helping students navigate bullying experiences

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

Explore the problem

- What happened? How can I help?
- What were you thinking/feeling then?
- How are you thinking/feeling now?
- Has anyone else been affected?
- What do you need to make things right?

Avoid minimizing the problem

- Focus on how the student is feeling and provide support
- Ask questions to explore the situation and their relationships

Plan & practice responses

- Ignore, be assertive not aggressive, talk it out
- Talk to a trusted adult
- Check-in even after bullying has stopped
- Validate the student's feelings and social motivations

Separate the deed from the doer

- Avoid hurtful bully/victim language
- Focus on what makes a meaningful relationship
- Emphasize learning

Celebrate student's resilience

- Discuss the ways that the student is protecting themselves (even in subtle ways)
- Provide choices that emphasize the student's agency

Stay calm & avoid rash responses

- Refrain from banning access to technology and friends
- Work together to come up with solutions
- Share your decisions/actions with the student

Negotiate rules & remain positive

- Negotiate rules when required
- Remain positive about student's interactions online/offline
- Ask non-judgemental questions
- Approach conversations with curiosity

Avoid blaming/labelling language

- Think about the words you are using
- Emphasize that bullying is a behaviour, not a person

Discuss outside factors

- Consider outside factors (pressures to belong, fitting in, media, etc.) in discussions of why children may bully others
- Emphasize that the student is not to blame

Learn about student's friendships

- Ask about the student's understandings of friendship and their friendship experiences
- Provide opportunities for building other friendships so that the student can see themselves in positive and reinforcing ways

KAREN BOUCHARD & HEATHER WOODS
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Resources

PREVNet.ca

mediasmarts.ca

cyberbullying.org



Ontario Ministry of Education
www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/safeschools/prevention.html

Research-informed Articles and Books

Craig, W. M., & Pepler, D. J. (2007). Understanding bullying: From research to practice. Canadian Psychology, 48(2), 86-93.

Espelage, D. L., & Swearer, S. M. (Eds.) (2011). Bullying in North American Schools. Oxon: Erlbaum.

Mishna, F., Pepler, D., Cook, C., Craig, W., & Wiener, J. (2010). The ongoing problem of bullying in Canada: A ten-year perspective. Canadian Social Work, 12, 22-33.

Rigby, K. (2008). Children and bullying. How parents and educators can reduce bullying at school. Boston, Blackwell/Wiley.

Shaheen, S. (2015). Sexting and cyberbullying: Defining the line for digitally empowered kids. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Swearer, S. M., Espelage, D. L., Vaillancourt, T., & Hymel, S. (2010). What can be done about school bullying?: Linking research to educational practice. Educational Researcher, 39(1), 38-47.

Swearer, S. M., & Hymel, S. (2015). Four decades of research on school bullying. American Psychologist, 70(4), 293-299.