

Supporting young people on the autism spectrum with... **Bullying**



WHAT IS BULLYING:

For some young people on the autism spectrum, it can be very difficult to recognise bullying. They may need support to understand that:

- bullying is about the misuse of power in relationships
- bullying is when someone experiences repeated verbal, physical and or social behaviour that causes harm
- bullying is mean and can be very hurtful there are different kinds of bullying
- no kind of bullying is ever OK
- bullying should always be reported
- adults will do all in their power to take it seriously and deal with it

Help the young person on the autism spectrum to...

- understand who can be a bully; a classmate or fellow pupil at school, a sibling, an adult or even themselves
- understand cyberbullying and the importance of being cyber-safe
- understand the actions of others and determine when, or if they are being bullied
- understand when they might be being perceived as being a bully
- identify when they are being set up to be a bully by people they consider to be friends

Be observant!

Each young person will react differently to bullying. It's important to look for changes in the following:



Emotional

- non-specific pains, headaches, abdominal pains
- increase in anxiety
- increase in anger



Physical

- unexplained bruises, scratches or cuts
- torn, missing or damaged clothes or belongings



Sensory

- These behaviours may change - the young person may seek out more sensory information (e.g. movement, deep pressure) or they may become more sensitive to noise, touch etc.



Behavioural

- becoming withdrawn
- unexpected mood change
- an increase in fixation on their special interest
- irritability and temper outbursts



Other

- unwilling to go to school
- routine change i.e. changing the way they walk
- home from school
- having few friends

No one deserves to be bullied. It's unacceptable behaviour.

And offer support when...

- they want strategies to help with bullying
- they want to join in with social games and activities
- they need to learn the concept of personal space
- they want to talk to someone about what is happening

What can you do to offer support?

A young person on the autism spectrum can be a victim or a perpetrator. It is equally important to support them in both instances. Listed below are some strategies you can try.

- IMPARTIAL ASSESSMENT**
Conduct an impartial assessment of the bullying occurrence. Focus on the facts.
- CODE OF CONDUCT**
Take time to understand the school (or club) code of conduct and approach to bullying.
- TEAM APPROACH**
Develop a plan within a team to reduce bullying. The team can include parents, teachers, support staff and the young person being bullied.
- TEACH SOCIAL SKILLS**
Support the young person to learn social skills.
- BUDDY UP**
Provide the young person with a buddy who can support and encourage them.
- MAP OUT**
Create a map of the young persons world. Identify places where the young person is safe and places they may be vulnerable to bullying.
- EQUITABLE JUSTICE**
Ensure consequences are given for all young people who participate in bullying.
- VISUAL PROMPTS**
Use visual prompts to help the young person on the spectrum communicate their feelings.
- EMPOWER**
Encourage all young people to speak out about bullying.

For more information about bullying please visit:

Bullying. No Way! www.bullyingnoway.gov.au
Office of the eSafety Commissioner www.esafety.gov.au
Department of Education and Training <https://www.education.gov.au/state-and-territory-anti-bullying-policies>



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The home-school partnership

A healthy respectful home school relationship is so important for supporting young people on the spectrum. Regular opportunities to meet and discuss both positive and challenging aspects of schooling can help keep communication channels open and transparent.

SOME POINTS TO CONSIDER FOR THE MEETINGS:

Prepare - have key points to discuss

- gather information
- consider a support person attending with you

Meet - be confident in discussing issues and strategies

- remain objective and seek to be solution focused

Action - be clear about your next steps and actions following the meetings

If issues continue to occur, ensure you explore other communication channels to discuss your concerns.

The Positive Partnerships Planning Matrix is a great tool that can be used to support conversations about how to best support your child.

To learn more about how to complete a planning matrix and download a template visit www.positivepartnerships.com.au

You will also find exclusive online content, factsheets and information about our upcoming workshops.