

## SCHOOL BULLYING

### GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS

#### Index

##### [Introduction](#)

1. [Understanding the complexity of the phenomenon of bullying](#)
2. [How to identify if my child is being bullied](#)
3. [How to identify if my child is a bully](#)
4. [Understanding the consequences of bullying](#)
5. [How to contact the school if I worry about my son/daughter](#)
6. [Incorrect strategies to cope with bullying problems](#)
7. [How to reply if my child is being bullied](#)
8. [How to reply if my child is a bully](#)
9. [What happens when the bullying comes to new technologies](#)
10. [What we can do against cyberbullying and other risks in social networks](#)

#### Introduction

The guidelines involve all the actions which can be put into practice when trying to face the problem of bullying, in its various aspects, from the parents' point of view. The guidelines have taken into account the fact that parents should gain awareness of the many risks and consequences of the phenomenon, not only in the school environment, but also in the wide network of their children's relationships. The suggested guidelines include proposals and possible interventions, but they are also open to contributions coming from experiences and life stories. They try to offer families a complete and comprehensive view on this complex phenomenon in the varied European framework.

## Understanding the Complexity of the Phenomenon of Bullying

Drop out can be caused by bullying experiences both in the role of aggressors and victims. It is important for parents to know this phenomenon well, in order to make the right choices. Thus, although it is clear that parents should act with any bullying event, they also have to prevent it. To do this, the first step is understanding the complexity of bullying. It's essential to know how it affects all of us, and recognize it as a form of aggression: this is the cornerstone of any effort to prevent it. Parents should understand the key concepts of bullying, so that they can discriminate it from other behavioral problems. To let parents reach the aim we can suggest three steps:

- Training activities, in connection with all educational actors and students themselves, who could play the role of tutors, peers and similar
- Building a leaflet, or a book, with a collection of testimonials, case studies but also with a short illustration of the laws concerning bullying – especially the regulations concerning personal responsibility
- Dissemination of the products in periodical events inside and outside schools.

### Resources from the I Am Not Scared Portal

- [Case Studies](#)  
A collection of testimonials and case studies in different countries is available on the I Am Not Scared Portal.
- [Publications](#)  
In order to support parents to understand the complexity of the phenomenon of bullying, several publications are available on the I Am Not Scared Portal.

### Other Resources

- [Success Stories](#), [Training Sources](#), [Publications](#)  
The sections of the School Safety Net Portal provide useful material to understand the complexity of the phenomenon of bullying.
- [Safe@School](#)  
A useful Portal to understand school bullying.

## How to Identify if my Child is Being Bullied

Bullying is always intentional, it rarely happens only once and there is always a power imbalance. The victim will often needs adult help. Your child may not feel comfortable telling you about his pain, but a parent can recognize some signs that show that his/her child is being bullied. Parents might be able to start bullying prevention at home, just observing the child's behaviour. In general, parents should pay attention to a few alarm signals. When victim of bullying the child may often have torn or crumpled clothes, he may have ruined books when he gets back from school, he may have bruises, wounds, cuts and scrapes for which he fails to provide an explanation. He rarely invites classmates at home and he rarely spends time with them, he stops surfing the Internet or checking profiles on social networks. He's afraid of going to school, or attending other gathering places which he used to attend regularly before. In addition, possible alarm signals are stomachache or frequent headaches before going to the places where the incidents may occur (school, gym, meeting places), as well as changeable states of mind, easy irritation or tears outbursts. Too frequent requests for money in the house (or the use of the credit card without the parents' permission) as well as sudden downfalls in school performance are other important signals.

### Publications

- [School violence prevention](#)  
This publication available on the I Am Not Scared Portal deals with "What parents can do: the dangers of violence in school and methods for its prevention".
- [Time magazine](#)  
A series of articles about bullying.

## How to Identify if my Child is a Bully

Kids bully for a variety of reasons. Some do it to feel powerful, others do it because they are bullied themselves. Some believe it will increase their status with peers. Often, kids who bully have a difficult time empathizing with their victims.

Nobody wants to hear that their child is a bully. Yet, parental involvement is a key factor in stopping the cycle.

We must always give priority to dialogue. Even focusing attention on “positive” friendships can be of great help. Bullies often do not act alone, rather they perform their acts together with other bullies. Thus, they feel stronger and supported. The best suggestion is try to expand the kids' circle of acquaintances, letting the children spend time with precious and inspiring people that can provide them with different examples.

### Online Resources

- [Not My Kid: What to Do if Your Child Is a Bully](#)  
A website providing resources, expert advice and also a virtual community for parents.
- [Actors and victims of violence amongst pupils : relational and emotional characteristics](#)  
Bullies and victims of violence among pupils: relational and emotional characteristics. This survey shows specific relational and emotional dynamics among bullies and their victims.

## Understanding the Consequences of Bullying

In the case of bullying it is important not to underestimate the problem and act quickly, since the consequences of this phenomenon at a psychological level - both in the short and in the long term - can be serious for the victims, the bullies and for observers.

For the victims, the risk is to express discomfort primarily through physical symptoms (e.g. stomachache, headache) or psychological ones (e.g. nightmares, anxiety attacks), coupled with a reluctance in going to school. In the event of abuses endured over time, victims can glimpse the changing of school as the only possibility to escape bullying. In some cases it can lead to drop out of school as the victims show a devaluation of themselves and their abilities, the lack of self-confidence or problems in interpersonal relationships. In a few cases they can show real psychological disorders, including anxiety or depression.

Bullies, on the other hand, may show a drop in school performance, difficulties in relationships, behavior disorders when failing to comply with the general rules. This may lead, in the long run, to a real deviant or anti-social behavior and to an aggressive and violent behavior in the family and on the job.

### Online Resources

- [Identification of Students at Risk](#)  
The first module of the online training course hosted on the School Inclusion Portal deals with the identification of the students at risk.
- [Emotions of aggressors and victims of cyberbullying: a preliminary study of Secondary students](#)  
This article presents a study on cyberbullying over the Internet, conducted with students of secondary school in southern Spain (Andalusia).
- [Consequences of bullying](#)  
An interesting article which explain the consequences of bullying.

## How to Contact the School if I Worry about my Son/Daughter

Contact with the school is essential for parents, as soon as the first signs of a bullying situation, either as a victim or as a bully, appear. The first contact passes through teachers, who live day by day the relationship with the students. However, bullying can also occur out of the classroom, or even out of the school. In such cases, the school and the parents should have first of all unity of purpose, showing no hesitation in talking about the problem. They should try as much as possible to be clear about the objectives of their intervention.

Each school can have its own tools to provide practical help to families, but one of the most effective is a kind of Listening Desk which collects the students' problems and requests. For this reason it is important that, as shown in the first step, parents are familiar with the support they can receive from the school in the case of the slightest concern and suspicion. School must listen carefully to the concerns of families and the two of them – family and school- should join their resources and share a plan of action aimed primarily at solving the problem.

### Online Resources

- [Communication](#)  
The second module available on the online course hosted in the School Inclusion Project Portal offers good examples of communication between parents and school.
- [RK Project Seat Belt](#)  
An interesting US example concerning the terms of collaboration between school, parents and society for a better prevention of school bullying

## Incorrect Strategies to Cope with Bullying Problems

Parents of young bullies do not have to hide behind the problem. They should not simply think: "it's a joke, it's nonsense". Only by recognizing that the child may be wrong you can really help him/her. The mistake that the teacher should not make is to show lack of interest, put up a wall of indifference, because the kids, even if they themselves will never admit it, do not accept adults' carelessness. Often kids do provocative actions just to see how far they can go. From this point of view it would be wrong to be too good. Instead, as an educating family, you have to perform well the task: fixing rules and setting limits. It would be wrong, for the parents, to be on the same level of the guys, just claiming to be their friends. Kids have their own friends, on the contrary, they need someone to tell them what to do and remind them what the rules are. Kids, in fact, unconsciously expect that someone fixes limits, or they will not even be able to develop their own internal limits.

### Online Resources

- [Help Your Child Cope with Bullies](#)  
Useful indications about this topic
- [The Wrong Way to Handle Bullying](#)  
An interesting link on common mistakes parents should avoid when dealing with bullying.

## How to Reply if my Child is Being Bullied

What can you do when you are worried about your child being bullied?

There are several paths to follow: the first is certainly the one to investigate the context in which the child victim is found. Then you should make contact with the school and also ask yourself questions about his/her life.

It may help children sharing feelings and memories with their parents. Interesting comparisons could be made, and perhaps we could realize that we, in our turn, were victims or bullies. Awareness and communication are definitely the main keys to address the problem.

### Online Resources

- [10 Actions Parents Can Take If Their Child Has Been Bullied](#)  
An interesting article with many useful indications for parents.

## How to Reply if my Child is a Bully

How can we tell if our child is a bully?

The bully usually has an aggressive attitude that does not disappear by magic when he leaves the favorite place of his bravado. There are always some signals, as long as parents try to carefully observe the behavior of their children at home, in everyday life. They cannot avoid to realize.

What can we do concretely, then ?

The answer is starting to assume that the bully needs help, just as much as the victim. The first step is to look for the best strategy to fight the school bullying atmosphere created in the classroom.

A psychological intervention from the outside might be appropriate and effective.

### Online Resources

- [\(Gulp!\): What to do When Your Child is the Bully](#)  
An interesting article for parents.

## What Happens When the Bullying Comes to New Technologies

We are all using the Internet, mobile phones and other technologies more than ever. While such technologies bring many benefits to our lives, such as connecting with friends, entertainment, research and accessing support services, their growing use means that cyberbullying sets increased risks and dangers, particularly for young people.

Cyberbullying is a particular kind of bullying that happens online and via cell phones. Websites like Facebook, and similar social networks allow kids to send harmful, ongoing messages to other kids 24 hours a day. Some sites allow messages to be left anonymously.

Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying doesn't require physical strength or face-to-face contact and isn't limited to just a handful of witnesses at a time. Cyberbullies come in all shapes and sizes - almost anyone with an Internet connection or mobile phone can cyberbully someone else, often without having to reveal their true identity. Cyberbullies can torment their victims 24 hours a day and the bullying can follow the victim anywhere, so that no place, not even home, ever makes him/her feel safe, and with a few clicks the humiliation can be witnessed by hundreds or even thousands of people online.

### Online Resources

- [Technology: Our Cyber Bully](#)  
This article provides a general definition of the problem
- [La Web Ethique](#) and [Click safe](#)  
References to the correct use of new technologies.
- [Case Studies](#)  
Interesting information about cyber-bullying can be found in the Case Studies section of the "I Am Not Scared" Portal.

## What We Can do Against Cyberbullying and Other Risks in Social Networks

No matter how much pain it causes, kids are often reluctant to tell parents or teachers about cyberbullying, because they fear that doing so may result in losing their computer or cell phone privileges. While parents should always monitor a child's use of technology, it's important not to threaten to withdraw access or otherwise punish a child who's been the victim of cyberbullying. The continuous technological advancement requires a constant path of digital literacy for the families, and it also requires a constant upgrade that allows them to be aware of the risks of using different types of networks.

Among the possible strategies of mediation, except the mere repression with restraining orders, parents should monitor online activities of their children, even with the use of parental control software.

Parents should be recommended to be aware of the safest social networks and of the privacy settings to be used in order to give good advice to their children.

Among the most interesting practical steps we report the Europe Safer Internet Programme, which established the European Day of network security, to promote safe and responsible use of new media among young people.

### Online Resources



#### [Safer Internet Day](#)

Safer Internet Day (SID) is organized by Insafe in February of each year to promote safer and more responsible use of online technology and mobile phones, especially amongst children and young people across the world.