

## **Bullying: Information for Parents – Part II**

### ***How to best help your teenager to cope***

- Encourage your child to talk through it as far as he or she wants to, so you get the basic facts straight
- Try to keep an open mind, remembering you are hearing one part of the story only
- Ask questions gently
- Avoid the use of blaming language (eg: “*why didn’t you just stand up for yourself?*”)
- Listen to your child and take his/her feelings and fears seriously. Validate their feelings (eg: “*you sound pretty angry about how you’ve been treated*”)
- Try not to take everything into your own hands, unless it is absolutely necessary, because this is likely to make your child feel less in control
- Help your child work out what else might be done – Eg: things she/he has used successfully/unsuccessfully/could try in the future
- Work on building your child’s confidence in things she/he does well
- Never try to sort out the bullies yourself. This rarely works and often makes matters worse
- Once you have a clear picture of the situation, and some idea about how you and your child would prefer to handle it, contact the school
- Make an appointment to see the year coordinator. He/she will involve other appropriate people, depending on the seriousness of the issue
- Present the information you have as calmly as possible
- Do it in a way that makes it clear to the school that you see yourself and the school as partners in trying to address this issue
- Read the school’s bullying policy, which is located in the student diary
- The school will need time to investigate the matter, and speak to those involved
- Be very careful that your child does not feel that being bullied is his/her fault

### ***Empowering your Teenager***

- Invite school friends home to strengthen the relationships begun at school
- Talk to your child about possible strategies that may be effective: eg: pretending not to hear hurtful comments; using silent ‘self-talk’ such as, “*that’s their problem, not mine*” or “*I’m ok*” or “*I’m a good person*”, to reinforce self-confidence
- Assist them to develop greater self-assertiveness, so as to be able to face the bully without becoming scared, upset, abusive or violent (eg use a strong voice, stand up straight, eye contact, etc)
- Reinforce to your child that it is ok to tell someone when bullying happens – that it is not ‘dobbing’. It is important that your child understands the difference between ‘dobbing’ and reporting something that is serious. Bullying is serious because people get hurt, and some are

harmed for a long time. Children and adolescents have said that being bullied is almost the worst thing that can happen to them

- After you have taken some action, it is also important to maintain a sense of normality. Allow your child to initiate any discussion related to how things are going at school. Placing too much emphasis on the process or over-questioning your child, specifically on the bullying can:
  - Promote a 'victim' mentality
  - Set up attention-seeking behaviours (that may not have existed before)
  - Omit sharing other, more positive, aspects of the child's school life

**REMEMBER:**

***Bullying is only successful if people don't do anything about it.***